

Part of an Almanack

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This article was printed in an abridged form in the
Yale University Library Gazette for October, 1942.

THERE has recently come to light among the Ezra Stiles papers in the Yale University Library an almanac which is unique in its form and of much historical interest. Its first peculiarity is that it is issued in broadside form. That is, instead of being made up as a small book, as were most early American almanacs, it is printed on one side only of a sheet of paper, the printed sheet measuring $6\frac{1}{4}$ by $12\frac{5}{16}$ inches. In this form it could easily be fastened to the wall, so that it might be readily consulted without the trouble of turning leaves or otherwise handling it. Early American almanacs issued in this form are of great rarity. Less than a half dozen such almanacs issued in or for the colony or state of Connecticut in the eighteenth century have survived; the one now under consideration being the earliest known example.¹ Its second peculiarity is that it contains the calendar for the months of September, October, November, and December only of the year 1752, followed by an explanatory note of some length addressed to the "Reader." The heading or title states that it is "Part of an Almanack for the Year 1752." Upon examination it is to be noted that the calendar for September contains but nineteen days

¹ Although William Pierce's Cambridge Press almanac of 1639 is supposed to have been printed in broadside, the next mention of an almanac printed in the colonies "after the London Manner" is a newspaper advertisement of one at Boston for 1725. The earliest extant example seems to be a copy of James Franklin's Newport almanac for 1731, now in the Shepley Collection of the Rhode Island Historical Society. Several, including one by Benjamin Franklin for 1741, were advertised in the Philadelphia press during the next decade, but no copy is known to have survived.—Ed.

instead of the usual thirty; Wednesday, the second of the month, being followed by Thursday, the fourteenth, and there are only two Sundays in the month. This strange break in the numbering of the days of this month was caused by change from the Julian or "Old Style" to the Gregorian or "New Style" calendar. Under the old style not enough time had been allowed to a year and in consequence over a long period the calendar had run behind eleven days as compared with the true siderial time. To correct this the Parliament of Great Britain, at the session ending in January 1750/51, passed "An Act for Regulating the Commencement of the Year and for Correcting the Calendar now in Use." In addition to dropping the eleven days the Act also decreed that beginning with 1752 the legal year should begin on January first and not on March twenty-fifth, as previously. The effect of the Act was to do away with the necessity of using double dating, stating both years, for all dates falling between January first, which was commonly regarded as the beginning of the year, and the legal beginning on March twenty-fifth. Timothy Green of New London, the only printer working in Connecticut at this period, reprinted this Act of Parliament for and at the expense of the colony previous to October, 1752, in an edition of eighty-six copies, only one of which is now known to be extant.

But to return to the broadside almanac. It certainly was printed for use in Connecticut as it gives all the times and places when the courts in the colony were to be held. The question at once occurs to the student of printing and the bibliographer, where and by whom was this almanac printed? Unfortunately it bears no imprint and a study of it fails to give positive or convincing evidence on these points. In type and style it is not similar to such almanacs as are available that were printed in New York or in Newport, Rhode Island; nor is the type similar to that used by J. Draper, who printed

the popular Ames and most of the other almanacs issued in Boston at this period. The type and style also differ in most particulars from the Roger Sherman almanac for 1753 printed by Timothy Green in New London, as well as from the reprints of the Ames almanacs issued by him in New London during the decade next following. Thus far no probable printer of the 1752 broadside has appeared; but let us approach the question of a printer from a different angle. In the spring of 1709 Thomas Short, the first printer in Connecticut, came from Boston and set up his press in New London. He continued in the work of printing in that town until his death on September 27, 1712. The inventory of his estate includes four cases of type, doubtless indicating that he had four fonts or sizes of type. He is known to have had two sizes and is believed to have also had some old type that may have belonged to his deceased brother-in-law, Bartholomew Green of Boston. The type with which the broadside almanac was printed was evidently old, as it shows wear and some of the letters are imperfect. The long note which follows the four months calendar explains the change of style and also states that all dates of agreements, bonds, indentures and fairs after September second should be reckoned by adding eleven days, while festivals of the church and courts "are to be observed on the same nominal Days as before." As Green had already reprinted the Act of Parliament in New London he would be familiar with these regulations which it contained. May it not be reasonably assumed that Green printed this broadside almanac in New London and, perhaps because his regular type was tied up in other work, used the old type which had formerly been in one of the cases of his predecessor, Thomas Short? In fact we know that he had not yet at this time completed the printing and binding of the 1750 revision of the *Acts and Laws* of the colony.

The almanac almost universally used in Connecticut at this period was that of Nathaniel Ames, printed in and calculated for the meridian of Boston. As the true time of eastern Connecticut, the region of New London, is only about four minutes different from that stated by Ames, his almanacs could be used in Connecticut without apparent error. The times of the sun's rising and of the moon's rising and setting as given in the broadside are evidently newly calculated for that almanac. Occasionally they are the same as those given by Ames; but usually they are from one to five or six minutes different. The broadside also gives the correct date for the session of the General Court at New Haven, October 12, the second Thursday, whereas Ames gives it as October 14, the second Wednesday, which is incorrect. The date of the freemen's meeting, September 19, is also noted. The dates for holding the Inferior and Superior Courts in the different counties of Connecticut are given, followed usually by a notation of what the date would have been in the "old style" of reckoning. These various features would seem to indicate that the broadside was especially prepared for Connecticut and so probably printed in the colony and by its only printer Timothy Green of New London. Comparison of the broadside with the "Confession of Faith," better known as the "Saybrook Platform," printed by Thomas Short in 1710, reveals a number of letters and figures incidentally used in the latter publication which appear to be identical with similar letters and figures used in printing the broadside almanac. However, individual type forms are tricky things on which to base any positive statement, and perhaps too much reliance should not be placed on these apparent identifications.

The question naturally arises, who was the author of the almanac, the compiler of the astronomical calculations and the writer of the explanatory note to the reader? Could

printer Green, like Goldsmith's village schoolmaster, "time and tide presage"? It is not impossible, but in the opinion of the writer, it seems much more likely that the author was none other than Ezra Stiles himself. He had been graduated from Yale in 1746; became a tutor in the College in 1749; was much interested in astronomy and mathematics, as is evidenced by his observations of the comet of 1759 and of the transit of Venus ten years later. His diary has extensive notes of this latter occurrence. While a tutor he conducted a thorough course in mathematics and natural philosophy, and during this period of more than six years "he paid particular attention to the study of philosophy and astronomy; and his experiments in the one science, with his calculations in the other, compose a manuscript quarto volume." What more natural or more likely than that he should have compiled this "Part of an Almanack"?

The copy being considered was found among Doctor Stiles' papers and doubtless belonged to him originally. It has on its margin four pen annotations. The first, against October 23, reads "Journeying Newp and Providence." It is known that Stiles visited Newport in 1754 and he probably already had many friends there, for in the following year, 1755, he was settled as minister over the Second Congregational Church in that place. The second, against October 28, is "Mortlake," a locality now a part of the town of Pomfret, never incorporated as a separate town. The third annotation is against November 7 and reads "Arrivd To Y. C.," which can only be taken to mean Yale College. The fourth annotation is the word "Gown" written against the date of December 20. This is explained by an entry in Doctor Stiles' diary. On November 14 he undertook the instruction of a class of thirty-four freshmen in Virgil and the Greek Testament. Four weeks later they were assigned an order of precedence. Six days after this, on December 20,

the diary states that "They presented me with a Gown." For this gift he returned them thanks in Latin. These annotations are in Doctor Stiles' handwriting and would indicate the taking of a two weeks' respite from his duties as tutor.

Apparently the Act directing the change of style was not known in this country until after the regular almanacs for the year 1752 had been issued, for no American almanac has been found in which the eleven days are omitted from September, although copies are known in which the change has been made with pen. Green's bill for reprinting this Act is dated August 17, 1752.

The note to the Reader on the broadside says that this is "a year that has Remarkables in it, such as you never saw before, or ever will see again." Joshua Hempstead of New London says in his diary under date of September 14, "Such a Day as wee never had before (by act of Parliament to bring old Stile into New Stile. 11 Days is taken out of this month in this pla[ce] & then the time to go on as heretofore." Some resented the change of style, and in parts of England the populace shouted "give us back our eleven days."

The text of the note to the Reader is as follows:

READER

You are now presented with a part of an Almanack, for the Year 1752, a Year that has Remarkables in it, such as you never saw before, or ever will see again; for notwithstanding it is Bissextile or Leap Year, yet you will have but 355 Days instead of the usual Number 366; tho' every succeeding Year will have it's full Compliment of Days, as heretofore

This Alteration is occasioned by an Act of Parliament lately passed, whereby it is Enacted, That the Old Stile, or Julian Account hitherto used by all subjects of the Crown of Great Britain shall from and after the 2d Day of September 1752, be rejected, and the New Stile, or Gregorian Account, assumed in it's Stead; which last, being 11 Days before the former, is the Occasion why that Day which ought (according to our Old Way of Reckoning) to have been in Course the 3d of September, will this Year be the 14th of the said Month. Moreover by the abovementioned Act of Parliament for regulating the Commence-

ment of the Year & correcting the Calendar now in Use, the year 1752 is to begin on the First Day of January, and likewise every succeeding Year; which will effectually remove the Absurdity so long and so justly complained of, I mean of beginning the Year on the 25th of March; which, having not by far the larger Number been adhered to, has occasioned so much Confusion in Chronology, Book Debts, Instruments in Writing &c The taking 11 Days out of September this Year need not give you the least Uneasiness; for it neither hastens the Payment of money, the Freedom of Servants or Apprentices, or the coming of Age of Minors; but the Number of natural Days included in all Agreements is to be fulfilled: Thus a Bond which, if the Alteration had not been made, would have become due on the First of October, is now payable on the Twelfth; and so in every other Case, after the said 2d of Septemb 1752, add 11 Days to the Time when the Date of any Bond, Indenture &c would have expired without such Alteration, & it gives you the true Day. By this Act the fixed Fasts & Festivals of the Church, and all Courts are to be observed on the same nominal Days as before: But the Fairs, after the said 2d Day of September are to be held on the same Days they were originally granted to be kept on; that is 11 nominal Days later.

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