

Trans-Atlantic Migration and the Printing Trade in Revolutionary America

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ABSTRACT During the American Revolutionary era, immigrant printers and their North American-born counterparts faced many struggles to secure sufficient business to remain solvent and simultaneously navigated complex political situations. Immigrant printers also faced the challenges of integrating themselves into extant commercial and political networks. They formed a substantial minority within the trade, making up nearly one-fourth of the master printers between 1756 and 1796. This essay examines the experiences of this group of printers, including Mathew Carey, and it focuses on their individual efforts to succeed in founding and furthering the publishing industry in the United States. In so doing, it explains how immigrant printers integrated themselves into American political and commercial information networks and highlights the vital role of their social capital and skills in achieving these printers' goals during this era.

Mathew Carey's voyage to Philadelphia in the fall of 1784 was his second political exile from his native Dublin. Only twenty-four, he had already been to France for a year in 1781 to escape prosecution for advertising a pamphlet that British officials in Ireland saw as a rallying cry for Roman Catholics against the established order. His departure for North America

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came on the heels of prosecution against him for sedition that was based on his editing and publication of the *Volunteers Journal*, a Dublin newspaper that supported the anti-British Volunteer movement. After several months of imprisonment at Newgate, he was freed when the parliamentary session ended before he could be formally charged. He was soon on board a ship, appropriately named the *America*, headed for the United States.¹

Carey was just one immigrant who came to British North America and the United States during the era of the American Revolution to undertake a career in the printing trade. Arriving relatively late in the period, Carey represented a new trend in immigration among printers, arriving with significant printing experience and skills that made success possible in a new land. More than one hundred printers, editors, and publishers emigrated from Europe to North America during the Revolutionary era, defined here as the period between 1756 and 1796.² This essay describes their collective experience as they arrived in North America. It suggests that these printers integrated themselves into the colonial part of an imperial communications

1. James N. Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), 3–4; Edward C. Carter II, “Mathew Carey in Ireland, 1760–1784,” *Catholic Historical Review* 51, no. 4 (1966): 503–27. The pamphlet was *The Urgent Necessity of an Immediate Repeal of the Whole Penal Code Candidly Considered* (Dublin, 1781), of which the only known copy is housed at the Library Company of Philadelphia.

2. The research for this essay is supported by a database of 756 printers, editors, and publishers active during the American Revolutionary era, broadly defined as 1756–96. It includes almost exclusively those who were master printers and therefore excludes those who never advanced past an apprenticeship and those who remained journeymen or laborers throughout their printing careers. I constructed the database using several sources. First among these is the Printers’ Card File at the American Antiquarian Society. I would like in particular to thank Ashley Cataldo, who helped me enormously in locating the files of additional printers held separately from the main catalog. To supplement those files, I consulted numerous works on bibliography and the history of printing, including Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, with a Biography of Printers & an Account of Newspapers*, ed. Marcus McCorison from the 2nd ed. (New York: Weathervane Books, 1970); Leona M. Hudak, *Early American Women Printers and Publishers, 1639–1820* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1978); Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751–1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1952); Benjamin Franklin V, ed., *Boston Printers, Publishers, and Booksellers: 1640–1800* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980); Frank Cundall, *A History of Printing in Jamaica from 1717 to 1834* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1935); Howard S. Pactor, *Colonial British Caribbean Newspapers: A Bibliography and Directory* (New York: Greenwood, 1990). I have also consulted numerous monographs and articles on individual printers.

structure and then into a new national communications structure in order to establish their businesses. These printers formed an important group within the trade, and as a group they appeared to face many of the issues that confronted all printers. At the same time, the essay highlights the stories of numerous individual printers, many of whom faced challenges because of their immigrant status as they struggled to gain access to American social and economic circles. Yet even as their numbers declined as a proportion of the printing trade after the Revolutionary War, immigrants such as Carey formed the backbone of much of the early United States publishing industry.

Historians have amply demonstrated that the eighteenth-century Atlantic economy depended heavily on the social and cultural capital that people amassed through their connections and networks.³ This reliance was even stronger in the printing trade because the trade depended on the circulation of news, information, and ideas to provide the raw material for its products. To maintain a business, one had to cultivate relationships with other printers, ship captains, leading commercial men, and far-flung correspondents as sources of news and literary production. Immigrants by and large started at a slight disadvantage to their native-born competitors because they for the most part lacked these connections in a North American context. On the other hand, by the end of the Revolutionary War a cohort of immigrant printers arrived with an enormous advantage in the skills, experience, connections, and credit networks they had developed in Europe, which they parlayed into commercial and political success once they landed in North America.

3. Jack P. Greene, "Social and Cultural Capital in Colonial British America: A Case Study," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 3 (1999): 491–509; Sherylyne Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community, 1760–1810: Men, Women, and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 109–41; Jennifer J. Baker, *Securing the Commonwealth: Debt, Speculation, and Writing in the Making of Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992); Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998); Toby L. Ditz, "Secret Selves, Credible Personas: The Problematics of Trust and Public Display in the Writing of Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia Merchants," in Robert Blair St. George, ed., *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 219–42; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1725–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Thomas Doerrfingler, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 11–69.

A well-developed literature on the book trades underpins this analysis. In particular, historians have used the networks of printers to better understand the political development of the new United States. Scholars have, for example, examined the close relationship between printers' networks and the development of political parties in the 1790s; how the circulation of print linked disparate arguments for and against ratification of the Constitution; and the formation of American national identity through rituals of public celebration publicized through print.⁴ The trans-Atlantic nature of printing and publishing has also become a matter of great interest to scholars. The first volume of the *History of the Book in America* series situates the book and publishing in the context of the Atlantic world, and scholars have examined connections among printers, booksellers, and readers for a number of sites around the Atlantic rim, for particular individuals, and for various ethnic or national groups.⁵ This essay brings these studies together by

4. Marcus L. Daniel, *Scandal and Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Jeffrey L. Pasley, “The Tyranny of Printers”: *Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788–1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). For the colonial and Revolutionary period, see Stephen Botein, “‘Meer Mechanics’ and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers,” *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 127–225; Botein, “Printers and the American Revolution,” in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 11–57; Charles Wetherell, “Brokers of the Word: An Essay in the Social History of the Early American Press, 1639–1783” (Ph.D. diss., University of New Hampshire, 1980); Carol Sue Humphrey, “*This popular engine*”: *New England Newspapers during the American Revolution, 1775–1789* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

5. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 1, *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For examples of connections, see James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002); Richard B. Sher, *The Enlightenment & the Book: Scottish Authors & Their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, & America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Michael O'Connor, “‘A Small Cargoe for Tryal’: Connections between the Belfast and Philadelphia Book Trades in the Later Eighteenth Century,” in Leslie Howsam and James Raven, eds., *Books between Europe and the Americas: Connections and Com-*

focusing on the experience of immigrant printers as immigrants: how they integrated into American commercial, political, and cultural contexts to create and sustain reading communities and how they established and cultivated the business networks that were crucial for their professional survival.

Printers in colonial North America occupied a liminal space in the socio-economic spectrum that required them to be flexible enough to maintain connections with laborers, professionals, and elites in order to develop information and customer networks. On the one hand, they were manual laborers, setting type and pulling the press for hours every day. Yet as artisans who frequently owned their own businesses, they ranked above the poorest laborers, even if their status did not match that of merchants or other elites. Furthermore, master printers had to be broadly literate. That is, they had to be both capable readers and at the same time aware of trends in the arts, sciences, politics, the law, and other areas of culture. In their role as information gatherers and distributors, printers maintained steady contact with people across a wide range of the socioeconomic spectrum, from mariners carrying news from abroad to wealthy merchants wishing to advertise their ships' goods. To reach all these constituencies, customers, and contacts effectively, printers thus employed a range of strategies.

Out of necessity most printers, whether born in North America or Europe, were mobile. Many towns could support only one printer (if even that), so an apprentice or journeyman who wanted to open his own office typically had to move to a new town, sometimes at a great distance.⁶ As a result, printers were among the most mobile occupational groups in the colonies. Frequent travel meant that printers could develop a broad range of contacts before they ever opened offices. In this regard, immigrant printers greatly resembled their native-born counterparts. At the same time, immigrant and native-born printers differed in the types of capital they

munities, 1620–1860 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 187–211; Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012); Sarah Crider Arndt, “The Book Trade and Print Culture: A Comparative Analysis of Belfast and Baltimore, 1760–1825” (Ph.D. diss., University of Dublin, 2012); William Slauter, “News and Diplomacy in the Age of the American Revolution” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2007); Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); Edwin Wolf, *The Book Culture of a Colonial American City: Philadelphia Books, Bookmen, and Booksellers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

6. David D. Hall, “The Atlantic Economy in the Eighteenth Century,” in Amory and Hall, *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 155–59.

brought with them. Native-born printers frequently traveled to a new locale with a recommendation or useful knowledge in hand. Like immigrants in many other trades, most printers migrated with few solid connections within the trade, and so they had to integrate themselves into commercial and social networks from scratch. In doing so, they lacked the cultural capital that their native-born peers developed through apprenticeships, working as journeymen, and otherwise integrating into North American communities. On the other hand, several important printers immigrated with substantial European capital, either in the form of money and a supply of books or through the support of a bookseller or printer in the printer's hometown in the British Isles.

At its heart, printing—like most artisanal pursuits—remained a family business throughout the colonial period.⁷ Apprentices were fed and clothed as members of the household unit. The master's wife often became involved in the business, sometimes keeping track of accounts or other work short of the physically strenuous task of running the press. A family connection thus provided one of the surest paths into the printing trade. Many printers served their apprenticeships in their fathers' or uncles' printing offices; intergenerational kinship ties helped transmit skills and provided a built-in support system. These young printers had the advantage of stepping into a network of business connections already established by their relatives and their relatives' partners. As was the case in other trades, printers used marriage as a tool to solidify commercial connections or even simply to enter the business in the first place. A number of printers met their future wives while still working as apprentices, typically because their master had a

7. Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680–1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On the importance of family in establishing business connections, see Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 69–100; Peter Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise," in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan, eds., *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15–35; Toby L. Ditz, "Formative Ventures: Eighteenth-Century Commercial Letters and the Articulation of Experience," in Rebecca Earle, ed., *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600–1945* (London: Ashgate, 1999), 59–78; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 329; Patricia Cleary, "Making Men and Women in the 1770s: Culture, Class, and Commerce in the Anglo-American World," in Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone, eds., *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and the History of Gender* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 98–117.

daughter of marriageable age. Marrying into a printing family could greatly increase the business prospects of a printer in a competitive marketplace by ensuring a future partnership or the inheritance of a printing office, its machinery, and its clients. For the master printer, in turn, taking a young printer into the family could increase the possibilities for bequeathing the office upon retirement (especially if the master lacked sons), and otherwise created a stable environment for his commercial enterprises.⁸

THE CONTOURS OF THE IMMIGRANT PRINTER POPULATION

Immigrants constituted a minority but significant portion of the population of the printing trades during the Revolutionary era. Of the 756 printers, editors, and publishers active in the North American colonies and the United States between 1756 and 1796, 475 have known birthplaces, and so we can identify the native-born American printers and those who immigrated from Europe. During the period 116 printers are known to have immigrated, or about 24 percent of the 475 printers with known birthplaces. Over time the number of immigrant printers increased, from 18 active in 1756–60 to 75 active in 1791–95 (see figure 1).⁹ The pace of immigration also increased during the period, though in this small sample it does not appear to have increased a great deal. We know, however, that some new printers came to North America nearly every year between the 1750s and 1790s.¹⁰

The composition of the immigrant population of printers also shifted over time as the sites from which immigrants came changed (see figure 2), though it largely mirrored that of the broader immigrant population. The

8. On marriage as a means of extending business ties, see Richard Grassby, *Kinship and Capitalism: Marriage, Family, and Business in the English-Speaking World, 1580–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Rosalind J. Beiler, *Immigrant and Entrepreneur: The Atlantic World of Caspar Wistar, 1650–1750* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 89–108; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 43; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2002); Natasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660–1720* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: Boydell Press, 2006), 13–16.

9. This number includes all printers who were active at a given time on the basis of their immigration status. That is, it counts equally for the 1780s Hugh Gaine, who had been printing in New York since 1752, and Thomas Dobson, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1784.

10. It should be noted that in nearly half of cases (fifty-four), the actual date of immigration is not known, but rather the date of first activity in the printing trade. This makes it difficult to make an accurate estimate of the pace of immigration.

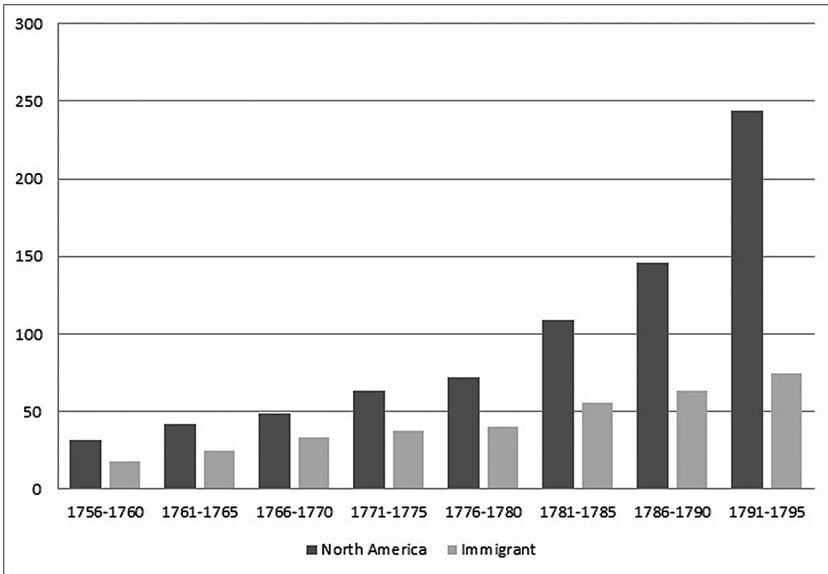


Figure 1. Master printers active in North America by birthplace, 1756–95. For sources of the data see note 2.

largest number came from England, Scotland, and Ireland. A large group hailed from Germany, and smaller numbers came from France, Holland, Switzerland, and even Russia.¹¹ In the late 1750s over one-third of foreign-born printers were German and published largely in Philadelphia and its hinterlands, where the preponderance of the North American German population lived. In the 1750s and 1760s Pennsylvania boasted several German-language newspapers, including the *Philadelphische Zeitung*, published by

11. James Horn and Philip D. Morgan, “Settlers and Slaves: European and African Migrations to Early Modern British America,” in Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas, eds., *The Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 19–44; Aaron Fogleman, “Migrations to the Thirteen British North American Colonies, 1700–1775: New Estimates,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 22, no. 4 (1992): 691–709; Marianne Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). See also Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 76–149; H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood Jr., eds., *Ulster and North America: Transatlantic Perspectives on the Scotch-Irish* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

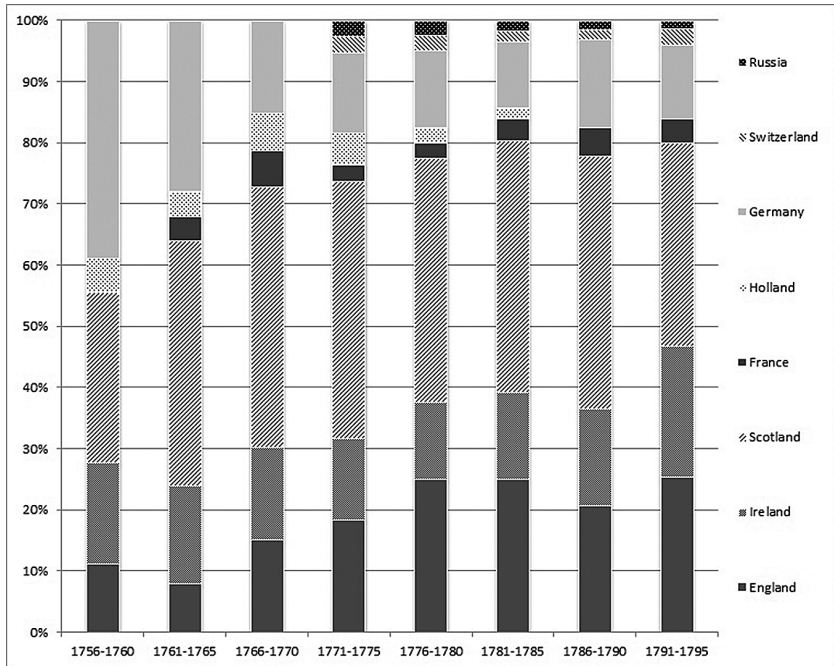


Figure 2. Birthplaces of foreign-born printers, 1756–95. For sources of the data see note 2.

Anthony Armbruster; the *Pennsylvanische Berichte*, published in Germantown by Christopher Sower Jr. and his son, Christopher Sower 3rd; and the *Wochentliche Pennsylvanische Staatsbote*, published in Lancaster by John Henry Miller. After the war, however, the number of German immigrant printers declined as the flow of German immigrants slowed.¹² The German printers active in the 1780s, therefore, were primarily the veterans of that earlier generation of migration. Several Armbruster and Sower apprentices

12. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers*, 45–46; Horn and Morgan, “Settlers and Slaves,” 20–23; Fogleman, “Migration to the Thirteen British North American Colonies,” 698–99. On the German printing trade in North America, see A. Gregg Roeber, “German and Dutch Books and Printing,” in Amory and Hall, *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 298–314; Robert E. Cazden, *A Social History of the German Book Trade in America to the Civil War* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1984), 3–31; Edward W. Hocker, *The Sower Printing House of Colonial Times, Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings and Addresses* (Norristown, Pa.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1948).

also entered the trade, but by the early 1790s Germans made up barely an eighth of the immigrant printers in the United States.

By contrast, the proportion of immigrants from the British Isles (including Ireland) rose steadily through the second half of the eighteenth century. Whereas in the late 1750s British and Irish printers represented about half of the immigrant printers in the colonies, by the early 1790s they accounted for nearly 80 percent of immigrant printers. This growth came in particular from English and Irish immigrants, who arrived in increasingly greater numbers after the Revolution, while the number of Scottish printers largely held steady.¹³ Not surprisingly, there was an influx of printers just after the end of the Revolutionary War; fifteen printers arrived between 1783 and 1785. These arrivals into the new United States did not reflect much difference in the relative numbers of immigrants from the British Isles, but at the same time the cohort included several noted printers and publishers in the early United States, such as Mathew Carey, Samuel Campbell, Thomas Allen, and Thomas Dobson, all of whom came from Ireland or Scotland.

The proportion of immigrants within the printing trade declined over time, from 36 percent in the late 1750s to 25 percent in the early 1790s (as can be seen in figure 1). Whereas the population of immigrant printers was growing in a linear fashion, the population of American-born printers grew exponentially after the Revolution. New entrants flooded the printing trade at that time for two reasons. First, Americans and immigrants alike began their inexorable march westward into and across the Appalachian Mountains. As new towns sprang up, they rapidly sought to acquire printing operations to publish necessary forms, almanacs, and newspapers, and to bring books, newspapers, magazines, and other publications from larger towns.¹⁴ Second, the economic barriers to entry into the trade decreased rapidly after the war, in particular with the growth of American manufacturing. Until

13. Horn and Morgan, "Settlers and Slaves," 21–22. On Scottish and Irish immigration, see David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607–1785* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994); Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

14. On the spread of printing to rural areas in the early republic, see Jack Larkin, "Printing is something every village has in it: Rural Printing and Publishing," in Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, eds., *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790–1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 145–60; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780–1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

the 1770s no sets of type were manufactured in North America, so all had to be purchased from Europe. The first American typefounder was Abel Buell of Killingworth, Connecticut, a watchmaker who produced his first batch of type in 1769. Still, until the 1790s, most printers had only two options for acquiring type: buy up used sets from another printer or order them from England. Because a printing press was made largely of wood, most of it could be built in the colonies. No American manufacturer, however, produced the necessary iron screws until at least 1775.¹⁵ At the same time, one should not be fooled into thinking that every printer who entered the trade in the 1780s and 1790s was a master craftsman. The quality of the printing often was minimal, at least for those whose printing careers should be numbered in months rather than years.

Those printers who immigrated to North America were part of a large group of artisans and tradesmen making the trans-Atlantic voyage. The majority of European immigrants, according to James Horn and Philip Morgan, traversed the ocean “under some form of labor contract as indentured servants, redemptioners, soldiers, felons, or political prisoners,” and it is therefore likely that many arrived with debts to pay or work off.¹⁶ Because of limited information about the circumstances of immigration for most printers, however, it is unclear under what status they traveled across the Atlantic. Nonetheless, most of the printers in this study group came over with or for the purpose of acquiring trade skills, which put them in a better position to make headway once they reached North America. Bernard Bailyn, who tracked thousands of English and Scottish immigrants to North America during the 1760s and 1770s, found that more than half were artisans or tradesmen in roughly the same social stratum and occupational fields that printers occupied.¹⁷ They were, Bailyn noted, a group that saw emigration “not so much a desperate escape as an opportunity to be reached for.”¹⁸ Printers in this regard were no different from their fellow travelers.

Upon their arrival in North America, the vast majority of immigrant printers stayed along the Atlantic coast. By far their most common destination, and the site of their first work as printers, was the mid-Atlantic region,

15. John Bidwell, “Printers’ Supplies and Capitalization,” in Amory and Hall, *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 168–71; Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Charlottesville, Va.: Dominion Books, 1964), 82–85, 98–102.

16. Horn and Morgan, “Settlers and Slaves,” 27.

17. Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 147–60.

18. *Ibid.*, 160.

where sixty-eight had their first opportunity to run an office. Philadelphia was the most popular single destination, with forty printers; New York City had thirteen. They were therefore far less likely than native-born printers to work during this period in new interior territories such as Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio—in fact, only four are known to have done so, and they migrated to the interior in large part on the basis of connections they made once they arrived. Joseph Charless, for example, began his career in Dublin but was forced to flee Ireland in the mid-1790s. He headed for Philadelphia, where he worked in the print shop of Mathew Carey for several years before establishing himself in the early nineteenth century in Louisville, Kentucky, and St. Louis, Missouri.¹⁹

IMMIGRATION AND CAREER STAGE

Printers traveled throughout their lives. Of the 116 identified as immigrants, 47 are known to have emigrated from Europe as adults, 35 as apprentices or young adults, and 6 as children.²⁰ Although these printers do not represent the proportionality of their home populations in Europe, they do mirror in their distribution the ages of the emigrant population as a whole.²¹ Just over half of the printers who immigrated (63) did so after the age of twenty-one. These printers arrived under a wide variety of circumstances, but they can largely be divided into three groups. The first two include those who had apprenticed as printers in Europe before their emigration and then set themselves up in business or used existing strong connections to gain entry into the trade. For them the task upon disembarkation was to establish a printing office and operation to support themselves and their families. The third group of adult immigrants numbered those who migrated without printing training, entered North America with the intention of working in some other trade or pursuit, and took up printing

19. Mary Pollard, *A Dictionary of Members of the Dublin Book Trade, 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 103; David Kaser, *Joseph Charless: Printer in the Western Country* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963).

20. For the categories of adult, young adult, and children, I have followed roughly the model of Bernard Bailyn in describing the age distribution of English and Scottish emigrants. Adults are therefore those ages twenty-five and over (the oldest known immigrant is Joseph Carr, who came to the United States in 1793 at the age of fifty-four); young adults are those between fifteen and twenty-four, some of whom came over as apprentices; and children are fourteen or under (the oldest known child was Samuel Neilson, who emigrated from Scotland to Quebec at age nine). Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 128.

21. *Ibid.*, 127–29.

(usually for a rather short time) as part of a sequence of careers that often included migration within North America after their trans-Atlantic voyage.

Because immigrant printers frequently lacked ties within their new communities, they drew on networks of kin and common nationality in their new homes. In fact, like many other immigrants, printers often faced exclusion within their adopted homes. They therefore turned to fellow immigrants for not only social but also professional connections. Scottish printers were particularly close-knit. For those on whom data are available, more than half of their connections with other printers were with other immigrants, and nearly all those were with fellow Scots. Printers also tapped into ethnic networks within their communities. In Philadelphia, for example, several of the Scottish printers found a network that extended beyond the trade in the St. Andrew's Society, a group that celebrated Scottish heritage and provided support for Scots living in Pennsylvania.²² Mathew Carey became heavily involved in Irish organizations and was among the founders of the Hibernian Society for the Relief of Emigrants from Ireland, charged with helping immigrants who came to Philadelphia.²³ Germans made connections to one another through religious sects such as the Moravians and Dunkers.²⁴ In so doing, these printers began to build networks through the characteristics they shared with other recent immigrants.

Nonetheless, several printers were able to marry into printing families to help secure their places in the trade. Joseph Royle, an Englishman, worked as the foreman in William Hunter's Williamsburg, Virginia, office for three years and married Hunter's half-sister, Rosanna. After Hunter died in 1761, Royle took over the office, running it in part for the benefit of Hunter's infant son, William Jr., left without support upon the death of his father.²⁵

22. [Robert B. Beath, comp.], *An Historical Catalogue of the St. Andrew's Society of Philadelphia: With Biographical Sketches of Deceased Members, 1749–1913* ([Philadelphia]: Printed for the Society, 1907); Sher, *Enlightenment & the Book*, 503–40. On the importance of civic associations in colonial Philadelphia, see Jessica Chopin Roney, "First Movers in Every Useful Undertaking: Formal Voluntary Associations in Philadelphia, 1725–1775" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2009). I am very grateful to Jessica for sharing her data on the affiliations of those involved in the book trades in Philadelphia.

23. Carey, undated letter, in *Autobiography* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Eugene L. Schwab, 1942), 29.

24. On the Moravians in Pennsylvania, see Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

25. Thomas, *History of Printing in America*, 555. After Joseph Royle died, Alexander Purdie took over the office on behalf of William Hunter Jr. and Rosanna

Another Englishman, Eleazer Oswald (who dueled with Mathew Carey in 1786), married John Holt's daughter, Elizabeth. When Holt died in January 1784, Oswald ran the New York office for three years for the benefit of his mother-in-law, also Elizabeth, after her own retirement from active work.²⁶ Female immigrants could marry into the trade as well. Just as both Elizabeth Holts entered printing through their husbands, so too did Anne Catharine Hoof, a Dutch immigrant who met Jonas Green while working in Benjamin Franklin's printing office. They set up a printing office in Annapolis, and when Jonas died in 1767, Anne took it over. She kept the government contracts held by Green and continued the *Maryland Gazette* until her own death in 1775.²⁷

Like other immigrant tradesmen, printers sought to integrate themselves into the economic, political, and social fabric of their communities to secure business. The best way to do so was to seek a portion of government printing, a key source of revenue for colonial printers. Anthony Henry, an Alsatian German who worked for James Parker in New Jersey, took over the Halifax printing office of John Bushell when the latter died in 1761. He sustained his office in Nova Scotia largely on government work. His contract—which gradually increased from £50 annually in the 1760s to £100 by 1790—required him to print “the basic work, the printing of the sessions laws, the Assembly *Journal*, Proclamations, and certain [*Halifax*] *Gazette* insertions.”²⁸ Several immigrants served as local postmasters, including William Dunlap of Philadelphia and Alexander Purdie of Williamsburg; Peter Timothy of Charleston served as secretary for the Southern Department of the Post Office during the late 1760s and early 1770s.²⁹ Several immigrants

Royle. A few months later, Rosanna married John Dixon, who then became partners with Purdie.

26. *Ibid.*, 506. Coincidentally, Elizabeth Holt Oswald ended up running the Oswald shop in Philadelphia when Eleazer died in 1795.

27. Berger, “Innovation and Diversity”; Hudak, *Early American Women Printers and Publishers*, 265–99. Green commissioned a portrait by Charles Willson Peale now owned by the National Portrait Gallery.

28. Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 662.

29. On the post office during the Revolutionary era, see Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Wayne E. Fuller, *The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Richard B. Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700–1860s* (New York: Greenwood, 1989); Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Joseph M. Adelman, “‘A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence,

gained access to Continental Congress printing. Attaining such a contract epitomized the integration of immigrant printers into the local society.

For about one-fifth of the immigrant printers in the study, the experience of immigration occurred early in life, that is, before the age of legal majority. That is, they came from Europe to North America as young adults, teenagers, or children, before undertaking any extensive training in printing or the book trades. By birth, therefore, they were immigrants, but even those with memories of growing up in Europe for the most part lacked professional training, skills, or contacts that could help them into the trade. They therefore represented a transitional generation, one that had one foot in North America and the other reaching back across the Atlantic to Europe. Those who arrived and took up apprenticeships with unrelated printers faced somewhat steep hurdles to success—though in this regard they were no different from their North American-born brethren. Nearly twenty printers came to North America and either immediately or shortly after their debarkation took up apprenticeships with American printers. Of this group, thirteen arrived in North America before the Revolution, and their national makeup reflects the larger population of immigrants during that period: four Scots, four Germans, and a smattering of English, Irish, and other nationalities. Like those who came as children, these printers therefore began to develop their professional networks in much the same ways as their native-born counterparts.

Only six of the printers in this study are known to have immigrated to North America as young children (under the age of ten). Of those, six came with a strong connection to the trade in the form of an immigrating relative. Such was the case with Robert Aitken Jr. (son of Robert Aitken), who arrived in Philadelphia at the age of four; Peter Timothy (son of Lewis Timothy), who came to Charleston by way of Philadelphia at the age of six; and Christopher Sower Jr. (son of Christopher Sower), who arrived in Pennsylvania at the age of three. Samuel and John Neilson were ages nine and five, respectively, when they emigrated from Scotland to Quebec and took up an apprenticeship with their uncle William Brown (himself a Scottish immigrant).³⁰ Anne Catharine Hoof Green came from Holland as a child to Philadelphia. Then there is the curious case of Archibald Loudon,

Public and Private': The Post Office, the Business of Printing, and the American Revolution," *Enterprise & Society* 11, no. 4 (2010): 709–52.

30. On the Neilsons, see Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 663. According to Tremaine, Samuel Neilson died of tuberculosis on January 12, 1793, age twenty-two.

the only printer in this study born at sea, while his parents were en route from Scotland to Baltimore.³¹ For this group the work of establishing connections and a commercial network relied largely on the efforts that their older relatives undertook while they were children and apprentices. In each case the young printer inherited his relative's office and usually served as his elder's partner for a short time at the start of his career. Immigration was never an easy process, but doing so early in life provided a few opportunities. Most important, younger immigrants had more time to develop their skills, learn about the printing trade, and establish American connections before they had to support themselves or their families. Simply having an American master and co-apprentices conferred on them the most fundamental connections that their native-born fellow tradesmen had when they started out. It could not by itself guarantee success, but it did provide a small leg up in a difficult trade.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

For printers of all ages, the skills and capital they brought with them to North America largely determined the likelihood that they would be able to sustain their businesses. Such was the case, as Thomas Doerflinger found, with eighteenth-century Philadelphia merchants. Those who did well in commerce had a combination of plentiful business skills, access to financial resources, and the social and cultural capital to maximize their talents.³² For a trade such as printing that required a large financial outlay in order to undertake a venture and that thrived on networks among printers and other information masters, these connections were similarly vital. Those who did best among the immigrants were in many senses "citizens of the world" who constantly strove to improve their situations.³³

Children and apprentice-age immigrants had time to learn the differences between the American and European printing trades in terms of both

31. The only information on Loudon comes from the American Antiquarian Society's Printers' File; given the unusual circumstances surrounding his birth, I wish there were more. He was not, as far as can be determined, from a printing family; his parents, James and Christiania Loudon, lived in Baltimore and then interior parts of Pennsylvania in the 1750s and 1760s, probably as farmers. He apparently enjoyed a long career in Carlisle, Pa., including service as the town's postmaster. He is not known to be related to the Irish-born Samuel Loudon, who printed in New York for over twenty years during and after the Revolution. Little is known about Archibald Loudon's career before he opened a printing office in Carlisle in 1795, so analysis with regard to his career must be limited.

32. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 45–57.

33. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*.

scale and resources, and to seek the connections that could increase the likelihood of success.³⁴ Peter Timothy, for instance, took over the family printing office in Charleston (one of Franklin's first partnerships) from his mother, Elizabeth. She operated the office under her name from 1739, when her husband, Lewis, died, until 1746, when Peter attained legal majority. Both Robert Aitken Jr. and Christopher Sower Jr. partnered with their fathers before embarking in business on their own, as did John Neilson with his uncle. In Aitken's case, that partnership led to an undistinguished career as a publisher and bookseller in Philadelphia.³⁵ For Sower, a lengthy career in Germantown was interrupted by the Revolution just as he had taken on his own son, Christopher Sower 3rd, as a partner. The father (Sower Jr.) remained neutral as a Dunker, which led to the seizure of his property in 1778. Sower 3rd sided with the Loyalists, moved to New York, spent time in England, and eventually settled in St. John, New Brunswick, where he resumed his printing career and served as postmaster of that town.³⁶

Serving an apprenticeship in America was not a guarantee of success. William Dunlap, an Irishman who had apprenticed with William Bradford in Philadelphia, worked his way into Benjamin Franklin's printing network through his marriage to a cousin of Franklin's wife, Deborah. He managed

34. On the British press during this period, see Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2000); Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Michael Harris, *London Newspapers in the Age of Walpole: A Study of the Origins of the Modern English Press* (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Troy Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009); J. A. Downie, *Robert Harley and the Press: Propaganda and Public Opinion in the Age of Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

35. See Robert Aitken Waste Book, Library Company of Philadelphia; Willman Spawn and Carol Spawn, "The Aitken Shop: Identification of an Eighteenth-century Bindery and Its Tools," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 57 (1963): 422–37.

36. On the experience of Loyalists in New Brunswick, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Knopf, 2011), 177–209; see also Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, at the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pa.: AO 12/38/291, 109/270; AO 13/70B/250, 72/106–23, 102/643–89.

to parlay this connection into an appointment from 1757 to 1764 as the deputy postmaster for Philadelphia, which stretched his very limited skills. He left the office deeply in debt to pursue a printing opportunity in Barbados, before leaving the trade altogether to become the rector of an Anglican church in Virginia. Frederick Shober apprenticed with the sometimes-insolvent Anthony Armbruster in Philadelphia before starting his own office with Robert Hodge in Baltimore in 1772. After a short stint there and in New York, Shober left printing entirely in favor of farming in New Jersey.

On the other hand, Dunlap made at least one savvy business decision for one of his immigrant apprentices. Born in Scotland in the late 1730s, William Brown came to America with his family.³⁷ For a short time he attended William and Mary before he was apprenticed as a printer in Philadelphia to William Dunlap, himself an Irish immigrant. Once Brown reached his legal majority, Dunlap arranged to send him to Bridgetown, Barbados, to open a printing office there. After three years, Brown returned because of poor health and “decided to go live in a more hospitable climate.”³⁸ In lieu of the tropics, he chose to move to Quebec, which had just come under British rule with the end of the Seven Years’ War, and which lacked a printer.³⁹ He made a partnership agreement with Thomas Gilmore in which each put up £72. Dunlap also offered a guarantee of £150 to support the endeavor.⁴⁰ Brown, meanwhile, traveled to Quebec with a broadside in hand to solicit subscriptions for the *Quebec Gazette*, a bilingual newspaper that the partnership began publishing in June 1764.⁴¹ As the only printer in the

37. Francis-J. Audet, “William Brown (1737–1789). Premier imprimeur, journaliste et libraire de Québec. Sa vie et ses oeuvres,” *Royal Society of Canada Transactions*, 3rd ser., 26, no. 1 (1932): 97–112; André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, *La presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, 2 vols. (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1973), 1:1–4; Ægidius Fauteux, *The Introduction of Printing into Canada* (Montreal: Rolland Paper, 1930), 71–77.

38. “[I] décidait d’aller vivre sous un climat plus hospitalier”; Audet, “William Brown,” 97.

39. François Melançon, “The Book in New France,” in Patricia Lockhart Fleming, Gilles Gallichan, and Yvan Lamonde, eds., *History of the Book in Canada*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 45–56.

40. One scholar has posited that Franklin knew about the arrangement because he had sent Dunlap to scout the possibilities for a post office in Quebec. The proposition is further supported because Gilmore went to London to acquire type from William Caslon, one of the leading typefounders in England.

41. The *Gazette* continued publication until 1874; Audet, “William Brown,” 111.

town (Gilmore died in 1773), Brown was enormously successful, amassing a fortune of about £10,000 at his death in 1789, thanks in part to the connections he had built as an apprentice and journeyman. John Neilson, Brown's nephew, took over his successful Quebec printing office—the first in the colony—and established himself as an important figure in Canada; he served in the assembly of Lower Canada from 1818 to 1834 and again from 1841 to 1844.⁴² In each case, therefore, the young relative faced little of the uncertainty that older immigrants had had to overcome.

The Revolutionary War and its settlement provided opportunities for young and business-savvy printers. James Hayes, who arrived in America sometime just before 1775, immediately set to work for John Dunlap, establishing an office for him in Baltimore and starting a newspaper, *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*. After the war Hayes set himself up in Richmond, Virginia, where he enjoyed a lengthy career. Working for the right printer was largely a matter of chance, but it could provide advantages when an apprentice was ready to set out on his own. Anthony Haswell was one of Isaiah Thomas's first apprentices in his Boston shop at the height of the imperial crisis, and during the war he was one of the leaseholders on Thomas's newspaper, the *Massachusetts Spy*.⁴³ Once the war ended, Haswell joined the massive internal migration of Americans, forming a printing office in Springfield, Massachusetts, before settling into life as a printer in Bennington, Vermont, where he published the *Vermont Gazette* for over twenty years and edited and published several magazines.⁴⁴ Even though his relationship with Thomas soured after his tenure with the *Spy*, Haswell could still rely on decent training, and he positioned himself to take advantage of demographic and geographic shifts in the population in the 1780s.

Fleury Mesplet, on the other hand, had connections that led him out of the United States just as it emerged. He came to Philadelphia from France in 1774 (possibly after an encounter in London with Franklin) and printed

42. On Brown see Audet, "William Brown." On Neilson see Francis-J. Audet, *John Neilson* (Ottawa: n.p., 1928). Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 663.

43. Thomas, however, held no love for Haswell. In his *History of Printing in America*, he wrote about Haswell's tenure that "owing to unskillful workmen, bad ink, wretched paper, and worn down types, the *Spy* appeared in a miserable dish-bille during the two years for which it had been leased." Thomas, *History of Printing in America*, 277.

44. On Haswell's life, see John Spargo, *Anthony Haswell: Printer, Patriot, Balladeer* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1925).

several letters for Congress addressed to the residents of French Canada.⁴⁵ When the Continental Army was on the verge of capturing Montreal, the Continental Congress offered Mesplet two hundred dollars and reimbursement of expenses to move his operation there so that the city would have a French-language printer, a job for which he was uniquely suited. Unfortunately, he arrived just as the Americans abandoned the town. He chose to stay, agreed not to criticize British officials, and spent decades trying to get repaid the expense of moving.⁴⁶

Having preestablished connections or experience in either North America or Europe could be a boon for a printer's career. Several printers could draw on European experience in bookselling, including Robert Aitken, James Rivington, Thomas Dobson, and Samuel Campbell. Aitken, who trained as a bookbinder in Edinburgh, came to Philadelphia in 1769 to set up a bookselling operation. He soon returned to Scotland for his family and immigrated permanently in 1771, settling into a long and productive career as a printer and bookseller.⁴⁷ Dobson, as Richard Sher and Warren McDougall have explained, arrived in America with a large parcel of books worth two thousand pounds and orders from his employer, the Edinburgh publisher Charles Elliot, to sell the books as if he owned them, and to send back a large proportion of the profits (predictably, Dobson neglected to reimburse Elliot, not paying off the debt until some two decades later).⁴⁸ This group of printers and booksellers not only brought with them to North America the connections and expertise they had gained in the trade in Ireland and Scotland, but in fact introduced the book reprinting trade to the

45. "Lettre adressée aux habitans de la province de Quebec" (Philadelphia: Fleury Mesplet, 1774), *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1, no. 13740; "Lettre adressée aux habitans opprime de la province de Quebec" ([Philadelphia]: [Fleury Mesplet], 1775), *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1, no. 14575; "Aux habitans de la province du Canada" ([Philadelphia]: [Chez Fleury Mesplet & Charles Berger], 1776), *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1, no. 15123.

46. On Mesplet, see *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, www.biographi.ca/009004-119.01-e.php?id_nbr=2066; Worthington C. Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904-37), 4:173 (February 26, 1776).

47. Sher, *Enlightenment & the Book*, 531-41.

48. *Ibid.*, 545-46; Warren McDougall, "Charles Elliot's Book Adventure in Philadelphia, and the Trouble with Thomas Dobson," in Barry McKay, John Hinks, and Maureen Bell, eds., *Light on the Book Trade: Essays in Honor of Peter Isaac* (Newark, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2004), 197-212.

United States. That trade grew during the early republic into the fundamental base for the publishing industry, as James N. Green has shown.⁴⁹

For those who published newspapers, European connections could also be a beneficial source of news. Printers therefore did their best to make and keep the transoceanic connections that were vital to gathering the latest news from London. Some simply subscribed to papers like the *London Gazette* to get the “freshest advices,” but others engaged agents in London to gather a variety of newspapers and magazines to send to them by the monthly packet ships. Some immigrants were in a particularly advantageous position to gain this exclusive information. The Philadelphia printer David Hall had perhaps the best trans-Atlantic connection. His agent in London was his good friend William Strahan; the two had apprenticed together in the Edinburgh printing office of Mosman and Brown before Hall migrated to America to work for Benjamin Franklin. Strahan remained in London, where he operated an enormously successful printing office and served in several government positions during the 1770s and 1780s.⁵⁰ Hall and Strahan were very close friends: Strahan addressed his letters “Dear Davie,” and Hall named one of his sons William.

Strahan’s letters were enormously useful to Hall as sources of political news for his newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. In the 1760s and early 1770s Hall received nearly four dozen letters from Strahan that contained parliamentary news, business accounts, and family anecdotes.⁵¹ Hall edited the newsworthy parts for inclusion in the *Gazette*, quickly providing his readers with fresh on-the-ground accounts of the latest updates from London. Because of the exchange practices of the day, these accounts frequently then appeared in other newspapers up and down the Atlantic seaboard. Hall

49. James N. Green, “The Rise of Book Publishing,” in Gross and Kelley, *An Extensive Republic*, 75–128.

50. Ian Maxted, comp., *The British Book Trades, 1710–1777: An Index of Masters and Apprentices Recorded in the Inland Revenue Registers at the Public Record Office, Kew* (Exeter: published by the author, 1983), 14. Strahan’s career arc resembles those of the subjects of David Hancock’s excellent study of Scottish merchants in London during the eighteenth century, *Citizens of the World*.

51. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) owns a collection of letters that William Strahan sent to David Hall (Am. 162). Many of these were published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 10 (1886): 86–99, 217–32, 322–33, 461–73; 11 (1887): 98–111, 223–34, 346–57, 482–90; 12 (1888): 116–22, 240–51; and 13 (1889): 484–85. The American Philosophical Society owns the letterbooks of David Hall, which contain numerous letters to Strahan (David Hall Papers, B H142.1).

also utilized his attachment to Strahan to supply his shop with imported English books. By the time of his death in 1772, he and Strahan had an account running into the thousands of pounds.⁵² Hall also cast a wider net, particularly at times when his relationship with Strahan was rocky. For example, during the 1760s he cultivated relationships with Alexander Kincaid and other booksellers from his native Edinburgh. Even two decades after his emigration, therefore, Hall continued to leverage his status as a Scot to the advantage of his business.

The case of James Rivington is somewhat more complicated because his reputation preceded him to America. Born into a prominent London book-selling family, Rivington made a name for himself in England during the 1750s by pirating major works with great success.⁵³ As a business model, his plan was as simple and elegant as it was unethical (at least in the eyes of his rivals). He took the most popular books of the day, created cheap pirated editions, and then undersold his rival booksellers. His competitors and mounting gambling debts drove him from London in 1760, nearly £30,000 in arrears. Rivington moved to New York and continued his business along the same lines, beginning with the large parcel of books he had secretly transported with him. He opened satellite bookstores in Boston and Philadelphia with the printer-booksellers William Miller and Samuel Brown, but he made few other friends among America's printers.⁵⁴

Like Rivington's, Mathew Carey's reputation took shape in America before his appearance there, though to better ends than Rivington's. In the

52. Robert D. Harlan, "David Hall's Bookshop and Its British Sources of Supply," in David Kaser, ed., *Books in America's Past: Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gjelness* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 2–23.

53. On Rivington generally, see Leroy Hewlett, "James Rivington, Loyalist Printer, Publisher, and Bookseller of the American Revolution, 1724–1802: A Biographical-Bibliographical Study" (D.L.S. diss., University of Michigan, 1958); Hewlett, "James Rivington, Tory Printer," in Kaser, *Books in America's Past*, 165–94; Charles R. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers and Printing in Colonial New York* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1895), 105–32. On the bookselling scheme, see Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 182–83.

54. Hewlett, "James Rivington, Tory Printer," 168–70; William Strahan continued to hold Rivington in extremely low esteem. He wrote to David Hall in 1767, "J. Rivington, I find, is gone to pieces with you; an Event, which I wonder did not happen sooner. He owes a vast deal of Money here; but as those who gave him Credit knew whom they trusted, nobody pities them." Strahan to Hall, June 12, 1767, Hall-Strahan Letters, HSP. See also Amory, "The New England Book Trade," in Amory and Hall, *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 331–33.

early 1780s he established himself in Dublin as an important printer and editor of the *Volunteers Journal*, a major publication in the Volunteer movement agitating for reform of the British laws governing Ireland.⁵⁵ Having already spent time in Paris in exile for publications defending Irish Catholics (where he worked at Franklin's Passy press and met the Marquis de Lafayette), a brief imprisonment at Newgate on charges of libel in 1784 convinced him that it was time to leave the British Isles. He settled in Philadelphia, he wrote in his autobiography, because he "had lately received a parcel of papers from [there]" that "contained an account of the proceedings of the House of Commons against me." He reasoned that "the oppression I had undergone . . . would probably make me friends there."⁵⁶ Such impulsive thinking was out of step with his ocean-crossing brethren. In fact, by the 1780s many Irish immigrants to the United States used a broad base of information to make careful choices about where to immigrate.⁵⁷

Lacking formal connections, Carey relied on the trans-Atlantic circulation of news and what he assumed was a wave of republican sentiment to provide him the social capital to secure a place in Philadelphia's oversaturated media market. And he was right. Exactly the support he was looking for materialized serendipitously. A fellow passenger on board his ship happened to encounter Lafayette on a visit to Mount Vernon. Already aware of Carey's work in behalf of the Irish freedom movement, Lafayette met with Carey when he came to Philadelphia, and hearing of his plans for a newspaper, agreed to recommend him to the political leaders Robert Morris and Thomas Fitzsimmons. Lafayette also (famously) gave Carey a four-hundred-dollar check to start his business.

Even with this support, establishing a printing office was not without challenges. Carey immediately set about publishing a newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, a decision he regretted in retrospect: he admitted in his autobiography that "foolish pride" led him to avoid working as a journeyman for a few years until he "had become acquainted with the country and those among whom [his] lot was cast."⁵⁸ In the first issue of the newspaper, published less than three months after his arrival in North America, Carey attempted to leverage what he assumed to be his readers'

55. James N. Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), 3–4.

56. Mathew Carey, *Autobiography*, 9.

57. Maurice J. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-invention of America, 1760–1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 94–99.

58. Carey, *Autobiography*, 11.

knowledge of his previous life. He suggested that he would strive to earn the *Evening Herald* “that degree of celebrity the Volunteer’s Journal acquired” and reassured his customers that the newspaper’s quality was less than he intended only because “The circumstances under which he left Ireland, precluded him from bringing materials.” He promised that a “sufficient assortment” would appear in the spring.⁵⁹ Carey began to expand his network quickly, actively seeking out subscribers for the *Evening Herald* and then for his magazine project, the *American Museum* (1787–92).

By chance, the publisher and bookseller Robert Bell died just around the time of Carey’s arrival in Philadelphia, and his press and materials became available through an estate sale. Carey acquired the press, but he was bid up by a rival printer, Eleazer Oswald, and paid substantially more than he had hoped. His fortunes turned shortly thereafter when he received (through Lafayette’s influence) a subscription and implicit endorsement to surpass all others: George Washington’s.⁶⁰ Most immigrants did not establish themselves with the financial support of Lafayette and the endorsement of Washington, nor did they have the previous publicity and notoriety that could produce connections without a personal relationship. Carey was also a more skillful printer and businessman than other immigrants. Yet he was typical of adult immigrants in his aspirations for his business, his choice of Philadelphia as a site to establish himself, and his lack of formal connections. In addition, he had to adapt his skills and knowledge learned in Europe to novel political and commercial circumstances in the United States. His success—and that of his peers—depended primarily on his ability to integrate himself quickly into American networks of printing, commerce, and politics. Through a combination of political savvy and good luck, Carey rapidly gained supporters, investors, and the reputation necessary to establish himself and then build on that success.

THE PRICE OF LOYALTY

Because of their status as figures with ties to two worlds, it is important to briefly take note of immigrants’ position on the major political issue of the era. It is rather difficult to quantify the political leanings of printers during the Revolution for several reasons. First, most were not particularly prominent, and so their political leanings were not at stake in a public way. That is, without a newspaper or major pamphlet publications, it can be hard to

59. *Pennsylvania Evening Herald*, January 25, 1785.

60. George Washington to Mathew Carey, March 15, 1785, Mathew Carey Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

discern how they felt without some other corroborating information. More important, printers—like everyone else—often fell somewhere toward the middle of the political spectrum, or leaned in different directions at various times. Furthermore, the lines of “Patriot” and “Loyalist” did not become fully obvious in many ways until 1774. Finally, many printers subscribed publicly to a free press doctrine that insisted that printers not appear to take sides, but merely provide a “free and open press” in which a variety of political parties could join the debate. That said, there were some for whom political loyalties can be clearly defined. Several immigrants were among the important Patriot printers. Peter Timothy served as secretary for the Charleston Committee of Correspondence; John Dunlap printed the Declaration of Independence; Robert Bell published the first edition of *Common Sense*. Last, about 40 of the 756 printers served in the Continental Army, the British Army, or a local militia (including those who would not take up the printing trade until after the war).

As a group, however, immigrants were somewhat more likely to be Loyalist than North American-born printers. Of the 756 men and women in the study, 186 were active in the trade during the Revolutionary War (49 were immigrants and 97 North American-born; the status of the other 40 is unknown). Of that 186, approximately 39 identified as Loyalists (I have classified 2—Hugh Gaine and Benjamin Towne—as “both” because they at various times identified publicly with each side), and about one-third of them were immigrants.⁶¹ After the conclusion of the war, 19 printers filed claims with the Loyalist Claims Commission seeking payment for losses incurred during the war, 8 of whom had immigrated to the North American colonies.⁶² Among immigrants, about 40 percent each identified as Patriot

61. On the ratio of Patriots, Loyalists, and neutrals, see Robert M. Calhoun, “Loyalism and Neutrality,” in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 247–59. On Loyalist printers, see Robert M. Calhoun and Janice Potter, “The Character and Coherence of the Loyalist Press,” in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds., *The Press and the American Revolution* (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 229–72; George Edward Cullen Jr., “Talking to a Whirlwind: The Loyalist Printers in America, 1763–1783” (Ph.D. diss., West Virginia University, 1979); James E. Mooney, “Loyalist Imprints Printed in America, 1774–1785,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 84, no. 1 (1974): 105–218; Timothy M. Barnes, “Loyalist Newspapers of the American Revolution, 1763–1783: A Bibliography,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 83, no. 2 (1973): 217–40.

62. Peter Wilson Coldham, *American Migrations: The Lives, Times, and Families of Colonial Americans Who Remained Loyal to the British Crown before, during, and after the Revolutionary War, as Related in Their Own Words and through Their Corre-*

and Loyalist, as compared to a 2:1 ratio for native-born. Nearly all the Loyalist printers hailed from Scotland (11 of 13), and 9 of the 13 came to North America after 1763.⁶³ As a group, therefore, they had not put down deep roots or made strong connections among North American printers or within local communities.

Loyalism was thus the most obvious way in which immigrants revealed the important ties—both commercial and emotional—that immigrant printers maintained with their European homes. For some, it forced their permanent departure from their homes. Several evacuated with British forces and left for England, the Bahamas, or Nova Scotia.⁶⁴ The brothers James and Alexander Robertson, for instance, had arrived in New York together from Scotland in the late 1760s, purchased the office of the recently deceased William Weyman, and intended to start a newspaper, the short-lived *New-York Chronicle*.⁶⁵ They then established offices in both Albany, New York (according to one historian, at the suggestion of Sir William Johnson), and Norwich, Connecticut, the latter with the printer John Trumbull.⁶⁶ The outbreak of war had an immediate effect: the *Norwich Packet*, they claimed, “yielded them a very handsome profit; but when they found they could no longer carry it on without making it subservient to the Cause of Rebellion, they gave up their business at Norwich and resided at Albany, where they imagine they could be of more immediate Service to Governmt.”⁶⁷ As recent immigrants, they found their attachment to Britain outweighed and overcame the anti-imperial rhetoric they encountered in America.⁶⁸ Eventually, James Robertson was forced to evacuate Albany,

spondence (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000), passim. On the Loyalist Claims Commission, see Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 113–45.

63. On the relationship between Scots and Loyalism, see Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

64. Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*.

65. Cornelius Bradford to Thomas Bradford, April 1, 1769, Bradford Family Papers (Collection 1676), HSP.

66. On the Johnson connection, see Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 666.

67. “Memorial of Alexander and James Robertson, Printers,” March 25, 1784, Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, AO 12/19/279, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pa.. On the Robertsons, see Marion Robertson, “The Loyalist Printers: James and Alexander Robertson,” *Nova Scotia Historical Review* 3, no. 1 (1983): 83–93.

68. Claim of James and Alexander Robertson, March 25, 1784, Loyalist Claims Commission, PRO AO 12/19/280. It appears that the Robertson brothers received approximately £250 in compensation; AO 12/109/256–57.

leaving his paraplegic brother behind. According to their claim for compensation, Alexander was arrested, imprisoned in Albany, and left for dead when the jail caught on fire. He saved himself only “by lying on his belly and chewing [on cabbages] to prevent being suffocated.”⁶⁹ The pair claimed to have lost more than £600, including £311 for their printing office and nearly £78 in wages they owed to two journeymen.⁷⁰

Robert Wells undertook a similar journey, even though he had been in America for nearly twenty-five years. He had operated a successful printing and bookselling business in Charleston since the early 1750s, but his Loyalism made it difficult to remain there once war broke out. He quickly left for London, taking his son William Charles and sending him to study at the University of Edinburgh. His son John remained behind to run the printing office and stayed in place when the British took Charleston early in 1780. To take advantage of the new royal government, the Wells family revived their newspaper under the title *Royal Gazette*, and William Charles returned to South Carolina to represent his father’s interests. As they did in New York and Savannah, the British eventually ceded control of the city back to the United States, and the Wellses moved their operation to East Florida—becoming the first printers in that colony—and then to Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas.⁷¹ Meanwhile, one of Robert Wells’s apprentices, Alexander Aikman, left for Jamaica at the outbreak of war in 1775 and established an office in Kingston.⁷² In 1782 Aikman formalized his relationship with Wells by marrying his daughter, Louisa Susannah, who had left Charleston in 1778. As others have argued, the Scottish immigrant population overall had a higher rate of Loyalism. That these printers, even after decades in North America, chose allegiance to the Crown suggests that they had not fully severed their ties to Europe, whether familial, commercial, or simply emotional.

The story is more complicated for those printers who professed loyalty but remained in the United States after 1783. James Rivington, once the

69. *Ibid.*, 282.

70. *Ibid.*, 284–85.

71. Rollo G. Silver, “Aprons Instead of Uniforms: The Practice of Printing, 1776–1787,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 87, no. 1 (1977): 156–59.

72. Louisa Susannah (Wells) Aikman, *The Journal of a Voyage from Charlestown, S.C., to London Undertaken during the American Revolution by a Daughter of an Eminent American Loyalist in the Year 1779 and Written from Memory Only* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1906), 111–12.

most hated man in America because of his popular loyalist newspaper, *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, departed New York shortly after a mob destroyed his office in November 1775. When the British took the city the following year, he returned and took up a commission as King's Printer during the occupation and revived his paper as the *Loyal Gazette* and then the *Royal Gazette*. It is also rumored that Rivington was a double agent, serving as a spy for Washington even as he was the official printer for the British Army's North American headquarters.⁷³ He remained in New York after the British evacuation despite vigorous campaigns against him by Patriot printers such as John Holt. Just returned from an upstate exile, Holt described Rivington and Hugh Gainé, another immigrant Loyalist who remained in New York, as "*felons—both traitors, whose lives are forfeited to justice.*" He also suggested that Rivington had not completely surrendered his allegiance to the British Crown by remaining in New York after the army's evacuation: "The sudden transition of Mr. *Rivington* from *his most excellent Majesty's printer*, to being a *republican printer*, and several other circumstances, has given cause of suspicion to many, that he is still a *printer to the British court*, and a *secret emissary*, that is, to watch every opportunity to serve them, at our expence."⁷⁴ Rivington stayed in New York until his death in 1802, but he left the trade for the mercantile and auction business.

For the printer James Johnston, returning to Savannah after the war served the mutual interests of his business and the state of Georgia. Because of its remoteness from Atlantic commercial and information networks, Savannah was never an ideal location for printing, and Johnston relied heavily on government patronage to survive. Once the Revolutionary War began, the new state assembly banished Johnston from Savannah for Loyalism, and he fled. When the British took that town in 1779, he, like Rivington, returned to print a Loyalist newspaper, the *Royal Georgia Gazette*. He left again in 1782, when the United States retook the port, but he was allowed to return shortly thereafter. The state needed someone to undertake its official printing, and its remote location and minimal prospects for success made it difficult to attract anyone other than the politically pliable Johnston.⁷⁵ Interests could overlap and conflict, and especially in locations where

73. On Rivington's life and career, see Hewlett, "James Rivington," and Hewlett, "James Rivington, Tory Printer." On the rumors of espionage, see Catherine Snell Crary, "The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington," *William and Mary Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1959): 61–72.

74. *Independent New-York Gazette*, December 27, 1783; emphases in original.

75. Silver, "Aprons Instead of Uniforms," 149–52.

printing was not as obviously lucrative to newcomers, commercial interests could elide political interests if necessary.

For Mathew Carey, status as an immigrant led to two distinct reactions. On the one hand, he became an enormous promoter of the United States through early efforts in the *American Museum* to generate nationalism in the wake of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution and his later writings on American political economy and manufacturing. At the same time, Carey remained devoted to Irish-American causes. He helped found the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick, a Philadelphia social organization of Irish immigrants and descendants, as well as the Hibernian Society, the latter of which he served as its first secretary.⁷⁶ He also promoted immigration in his writings, suggesting in an 1826 pamphlet, for example, that “there is probably no country where the same degree of comfort and enjoyment can be procured by the working classes, with the same degree of exertion.”⁷⁷

Immigrant printers faced many of the same challenges as native-born printers: they had to amass enough capital and credit to open a well-provisioned office. They needed to establish themselves and their publications as trusted sources and hubs of information. They had to develop networks within the printing trade and with leading figures in the political and commercial worlds wherever possible. And of course it helped if they were savvy businessmen and had a keen eye for local, regional, and imperial politics. At the same time, the population of immigrant printers confronted these challenges in ways that differed from their colleagues of North American heritage and faced numerous difficulties that stemmed from their status as immigrants. Most had to amass capital from scratch, including financial resources and cultural credit to establish themselves; a fortunate few arrived with networks already available. Many formed connections within their ethnic groups to provide mutual support in the face of exclusion. To succeed, therefore, immigrant printers needed to bring to bear more skill and commercial know-how to establish themselves and make the social and cultural connections that solidified their businesses. Finally, as Mathew Carey’s career suggests, despite these challenges, immigrants played a vital role in turning the colonial printing trade into a burgeoning national publishing industry.

76. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia, and the Re-invention of America*, 151–62.

77. Mathew Carey, *Reflections on the Subject of Emigration from Europe, with a View to Settlement in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Carey & Lea, 1826), ix.

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