WILLIAM McCULLOCH'S ADDITIONS TO THOMAS'S HISTORY OF PRINTING

Isaiah Thomas published "The History of Printing in America" in 1810, in two volumes. The material for this work he gathered partly from personal interviews with printers and memoranda furnished by them, but chiefly from his own memory, extending over a period of half a century, and the facts obtained from his own vast collection of American printed books, pamphlets and newspapers. Although he must have received various written communications from other members of the craft, there is no such evidence remaining today; the Thomas correspondence now in the possession of the American Antiquarian Society, profuse as it is for the period of 1800-1810, contains no letters designed to aid him in his history of printing.

Two years after the History was published, William McCulloch, one of the leading printers of Philadelphia, wrote Thomas a letter, dated September 1, 1812, offering a few additions and corrections. This was followed two years later by a communication written at various times toward the close of the year 1814 and in the first months of 1815, the whole contained in a manuscript volume of 296 pages, and headed "Additional Memoranda for the History of Printing by Isaiah Thomas, communicated by Wm. McCulloch." Later came four additional letters, dated February 22, June 5, June 12 and June 19, 1815.

These six communications are herewith printed, as a valued addition to the history of American printing. They concern largely the single Colony of Pennsyl-

vania, and often the facts are of minor importance or somewhat afield from the subject, but much that is of historical interest is preserved and the letters furnish a sprightly picture of Philadelphia in the eighteenth century. Thomas himself, in a prefatory note to the "Additional Memoranda" has written "The History was intended to go no further back than the Revolution. Many articles in this ms. are of course not adapted to the work, and many of the anecdotes, &c. are more calculated for private perusal than for publication, and were written principally for the amusement of I. Thomas, author of the work above mentioned."

Some of the material in these communications was used or abridged by Thomas in preparing the manuscript of a second edition of the History, never published, however, during his lifetime. When the second edition was finally published in 1874, by the Antiquarian Society, as volumes 5 and 6 of its Transactions, Thomas's additions were utilized, but merely as part of the narrative and not specifically credited to McCulloch.

In this printing of the McCulloch letters, a few footnotes have been inserted to correct or enlarge certain information, and in a few cases long extracts from printed volumes now easily accessible have been omitted; otherwise the letters have been printed as written, with their admitted lack of orderliness, and with their original orthography and graphic expression.

C. S. B.

Philadelphia,
September 1, 1812

Mr. Thomas,

SIR

I have been reading your History of Printing. While I confess having obtained much satisfaction in the perusal, I cannot but regret its deficiency in some respects; and although it is an excellent performance, and as complete, perhaps, as

your first range of materials would permit, yet it would be rendered much more valuable, if a few of the craft would transmit you such additional information as may be diffused through different individuals. With this view, I have concluded to send you a few sketches of facts that have come within my observance, as well as such remarks on your work as may occur. When I began the reading of your book, I had no idea of writing you a critique, or would have been more particular in noting some things that have now slipped my recollection. I observe no order in this communication, but give you statements as they occur to my mind.

You mention that the laws of Connecticut were revised, and ordered to be printed in 1715. My date of the first impression is 1672; and I believe it correct, but know not the printer's name. The legislature of that colony caused a great number of copies of that impression of the laws to be distributed among the people; and it is from this circumstance that the citizens of Connecticut still continue to dwell on legal carps, and remain so fond of the law.[1]

Some data respecting early printing in America is to be found in Loskiel's Moravian Mission among the Indians. They were dates of execution, and my memory cannot retain them. The copy I had is sold, and taken to the westward. I cannot now refer to it, but perhaps you have a copy.

Conrad Weisser, of whom you make mention, was the first promoter of missions to the aboriginals from this city. He was Indian interpreter to the government of Pennsylvania, and a magistrate of Philadelphia. In 1735 he was deputed to treat with the Iroquois. The fatigues of a wilderness journey of 500 miles, forcing his way through snows and mountains, and rivers, almost broke him down. Two Indians, whom he happened to meet, seeing him almost overcome, bade him to take courage, "for that," said they, "which a man suffers in the body cleanseth his soul." These words made such an impression upon him, that he wrote to Germany for agents to christianize these thinking Indians.

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[1]Thomas notes that this edition of the "Connecticut Laws," printed at Cambridge in, 1673, had been noted by him in vol. 1, p. 260. In all references to volume and page numbers, in the text of these letters, the reference is to Thomas's "History of Printing," the 1810 edition.

Mr. Wilcox, who erected a mill on Chester creek, 20 miles southwest of Philadelphia, about the year 1723, was the first paper maker in Pennsylvania. He arrived in America, from England, about 1712, and died about 1732. His son, Mark Wilcox, present judge in the county, and now a very aged man, still continues to make paper in the same old mill. He manufactures almost all the bank paper used in the middle states.[2]

Mr. Rittenhouse, brother to the philosopher, erected the second mill in Pennsylvania, (some short time after the Wilcox) near Germantown. That building is now a grist mill.

Frederick Bicking erected the third mill of this state, on Mill Creek, 8 miles north of Phil. He died in 1811. (He had two sons paper makers. Frederic employs his father's mill. Joseph is on Brandywine.)

The paper makers of Pennsylvania and Delaware formed themselves into a Society in 1810. The number of paper mills in these two states, according to a return made in 1812, is 76. The number of vats in operation 93.

By the census return of manufactories to the general government in 1811, it appears there were 190 mills in the U. States.

You make no mention of the very ingenious Justus Fox, a type founder for many years in Germantown. The types of his casting were a shaving higher than the standard, but of excellent wear. He died about 1790

Sower, of Germantown, was a passive Menonist. When plundered, during the war, he would make no resistance, nor would he embrace any opportunity that presented, of rescuing his property. "Let him that taketh my cloak have my coat also," was his maxim. He (as well as all his posterity and relatives to this day) seemed to lay too much stress on the vindictiveness of British vengeance, and magnify too much her power. However, he was an honest upright man in business, and a useful member of the community. All his

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[2]McCulloch's notes on early paper-makers were much enlarged and corrected in his next letter.

transactions were conducted with the usual gravity and decorum of a German. A printer of South Carolina once sent to Mr. R. Hodge (now or lately of New York) then working at Mr. Bailey's, desiring he would procure and forward, with all despatch, a fount of types. Hodge posted off to Germantown, and handing the order to Sower, requested the types might be expedited, because his friend was in a hurry for them. "Ah!" replied Sower, "but I'se never in a hurry." His brother, Samuel Sower, established a type foundery in Baltimore in 1808. S. Sower is a very ingenious mechanist. He has constructed a beautiful miniature watch, which he has enclosed in the head of his walking stick. He has cast Italic characters for his Diamond type bible, an improvement never attempted by European type founders, and thought by them to be impracticable. His nephew, Brooke W. Sower, is a printer in Baltimore. He used to work with me. He is a correct performer, but nice almost to prudery.

You relate, in one place, that there are 400 Printing Offices in America, and in another of there being 350 Newspaper establishments. Is there not some clashing in this statement?

In July, 1803, I made out a list of all the Printing houses in Philadelphia. There were 45 offices keeping 89 presses. Of these printers, 15 were also booksellers. That statement is still very near the fact.

You mention L'Hemisphere as a paper published in this city.[3] It did not deserve a literary notice. It was a poor catchpenny production. It began in deception, and closed its ephemeral career in fraud. Its editor, J. J. Negrin, was a mere adventurer. From St. Domingo and Charleston, he removed to New York, and there printed L'Oracle. Failing there, he commenced L'Hemisphere in Phil. He married a Creole, and went to the islands on business last spring, where he died.

For similar reasons, no regard should be evinced for the "Spirit of the Press," by Folwell; or the Tickler, by Helmbold. They are vehicles of gross personal slander, and their editors are the disgrace of civilization.

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[3]This was a magazine, published in French, established by Negrin in October 1809, and continued for about two years.

John Young does not merit a place among the roll of booksellers. His speculation was an unsuccessful one, and continued but a month or two. It should rather have been James Young, the brother, who continued a bookseller, at another period, one whole year. John died in Baltimore, last winter, age 74. James now resides at Germantown. He is about 64, is all but a vagrant, and has neither character nor credit.

Joseph Crukshank, you should have said, not James. James was the son, and for some while a partner. The old man had given up the store to his son, but he turned out profligate, and from drunkenness and debauchery died. I know not of any compliment better bestowed than that intended for Joseph, who is eminently "honest in his dealings, punctual in his payments, and amiable in his manners."

D. Humphreys, the correct proof reader. Respected till death, he departed this life the 12th of last June.

I believe you make no mention of the Literary Reporter, for some time published in Phil. It commenced in 1803, and continued, under various periods of emission, to be published 4 or 5 years.[4] It was issued at the joint expense of the Phil. Company of Booksellers, and contained the Catalogues of Books on sale, and those in contemplation to be printed.

Should not some notice have been taken of the Literary Fair, suggested by that indefatigable and meritorious bookseller, Mathew Carey, in imitation of the Leipsic Book Fair?

Miller, whom you mention as living in Race Street, had one trait in in his disposition that might have been recorded. He was an unrivalled pedestrian. Being a Moravian, he would frequently walk out to their settlement at Bethlehem, 53 miles from this city and back again. He kept no horse, nor ever hired one. In this respect he was something similar to Thomas Dobson, a bookseller at present of this city, who has boasted that he kept neither horse, cow, cat, nor dog. But Dobson, although he has no animal to convey him, is not as fond of ambulation as Miller was; and although he is an active hale man,

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[4] "The Library, or Philadelphia Literary Reporter" was started Feb. 25, 1804, although the latest issue now to be found is that of June 22, 1805. The "Philadelphia Literary Reporter" was published as a monthly in 1809.

continually puffing about in business, yet he has never felt an inducement to walk out to view that great curiosity of art, the Schuylkill Permanent Bridge.

Steiner, the German printer you mention, became a drunken sot, and as such died.

Anthony Armbruster had imbibed a notion very generally entertained by people some years since, that Blackbeard, and other pirates, had buried money and other treasures in the earth near this city. Armbruster consumed many days in endeavouring to recover these riches, but all his labour and digging were fruitless.

I have heard an anecdote of James Adams, printer, Wilmington. He had hired a man to pull the press, while an apprentice was employed to beat the form. The man had engaged at a shilling a token. The boy was repeatedly, in the course of a day, called by the mistress for culinary and house purposes, wherby the man was much injured. Finding his bill, each week, to fall short of a maintenance, he fell upon a plan to augment his wages, and at the same time fulfil his engagement. When the boy was called away, he would still proceed and pull the sheets as usual, leaving sufficient time between each for the form to be inked. Adams, on inspecting the heap, and perceiving so many faint impressed copies, asked the meaning. "I suppose the boy has not beat them," replied the man; "and I am sure I leave him time enough, and have also performed my duty in pulling." Adams was diverted with the humour of the man, and ordered the boy to be no more called from the press.

Of all the Bradfords, the greatest genius was a brother of Thomas the elder, and great grandson of the first printer. He was a very able lawyer, and a great orator. He was at one time attorney general, and afterwards one of the judges of this state. A newly erected county in Penn. has been called Bradford, in honour of his worth.

The first press in Pittsburg was established by H. H. Brackenridge, now a judge of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, about the year 1781. A narrative, worth reading, of his success, may be seen in his "Gazette Publications."

Hugh Gaine: A journeyman once applied to this industri-

ous, money making printer for a berth as foreman of his office, telling him he understood he had been inquiring for such a person. "A foreman!" exclaimed Gaine: "what is a foreman? he who first stalks out of the office to dinner?" The man was abashed at this unexpected, though applicable reproof, and walked off.

You are much mistaken in your history of Robert Aitken. His imprisonment did not arise from his attachment to the American cause, although the time of the durance might favour the presumption. He took no active part. " I am na a fechting mon," was, in his own dialect, a common expression with him. Duncan, a printer and bookseller of Glasgow, had sent over a power of attorney to compel Aitken to liquidate the debt he owed Duncan for books and stationery Aitken brought over to America on commission. The revolution broke out just after the power arrived, and prevented a legal process in British form. When the English obtained possession of Phil. and the royal government was restored, the suit was prosecuted and Aitken cast into prison for the debt. That only was the cause of the confinement which you represent him to be suffering for attachment to his adopted county. He was not at all times the most cunning man for his own interests, nor did he at all times evince the most amiable manners. He published an edition of the Bible, for which he was favoured with the approbation of congress. Bibles were at that period much in demand, and he could have disposed of the whole edition, at an excellent profit, in a short time. But he kept them up, for a great while, at 17/6, or half a guinea, and at length was glad to sell them for 4/6 each, and the major part of the impression was sold for that low price. Books began to be plenty, and a communication with Europe was opened. Wm. Poyntell (since an opulent citizen, now dead) offered him, at one time, 10/ a piece, and promised to take the whole stock; but Aitken, through a blind fatality, refused the proffer. Aitken lost vast sums of money by the continental currency, hoarding it up to the last, having embraced the notion that it would be redeemed at its nominal value. His son, whom you also mention, is an idle tippler, and little better than a vagrant. His father cut him off with a six pence. Nor yet did Aitken,

on his death, leave a handsome property behind him as you narrate. He died in debt. He sold his house in Market Street to expunge a part of that debt. His daughter Jane was suffered to take the stock, on compromising to satisfy her father's creditors. She has since paid off those debts, has accumulated some property of her own, and acquired many friends who assist her. She is praiseworthy and attentive. I lately saw "Aitken's American General Register, for 1773, printed by Joseph Crukshank, opposite the London Coffee house." It was a useful design, had a list of the officers of each colony, beginning with Pennsylvania, and extending eastward; thence returning to Delaware, and stretching southward. It was published but one year; prevented, I suppose, by the revolution.

Robert Bell was extremely droll. He served his time at Berwick, upon Tweed, and was, during his apprenticeship, so very religious, and had the men and boys of the office so often convened for prayers, that his devotional exercise were downright intrusions. His printing office, in this city, was the next house north to St. Paul's Church in Third Street. He afterwards hired the house next south of the church as a dwelling for his family. But, although he lived some years on both sides the meeting house, he never went in, verifying the saying, "the nearer the church, the farther from heaven." He used to say he had religion enough in his youth to last him all his life time.

In the Chaplet of Comus, p. 96, published by Munroe & Francis, Boston, 1811, you will find an anecdote relative to Mr. Holt, printer, New York.

Goddard, whom you also mention, was truly facetious. He was the soul of conviviality, at a dinner of friends, and had a fund of laughable entertainment. I have heard of some of his jokes, but they would scarcely be thought modest in print. He was a poet.

I recollect, when a boy, of seeing a Caution, displayed in large letter, suspended in some printing offices. It was ascribed, and with some plausibility of fact, to Dr. Franklin. It deserves a place in the History of Printing:

"All you that come this curious Art to see,
To handle anything must cautious be,
Lest, by a slight touch, ere you are aware,
That mischief may be done you can't repair:
Lo! this advice we give to ev'ry stranger,
Look, on and welcome; but to touch there's danger."

With Mr. Bailey I am well acquainted. But am sorry to say I have not it in my power to fill up some chasms in Pennsylvania Printing History, as was expected, by information received from him. I called several times on him, but never met with him. He is a very aged man, has often the vertigo, and is not always to be seen. He was bred a carpenter, in Lancaster county. He obtained some knowledge of printing in a country town, and came to this city (I think) in 1778. He printed the United States Magazine, edited by H. H. Brackenridge. During the latter part of the war, and some years after its close, he published a paper called the Freeman's Journal. He is a very ingenious mechanist, and was a successful caster of types. All the Bourgeois letter in the standing edition of his Testament were cast by himself. He cut and engraved many ornaments, and the cuts for a great variety of children's books. He bought the house in which he resided many years (Yorick's head, 116 Market Street) for 4000 dollars, continental money, of Schenckle, a skin dresser, a short time before that currency sunk. Schenckle imagined the money would be redeemed, and thought he had made a good bargain. Mr. Bailey was not fortunate in his two eldest sons, Robert and James. Both became ordinary. Robert died in 1807. His widow, Lydia R. Bailey, has since that carried on the printing business with success and reputation. Mr. Bailey removed to his patrimony farm in 1802, and returned to this city in 1809, where he intended to establish his son Andrew in the type foundry. Some founts have been cast, but the promise is not great. Jacob, a brother to Francis, died, about 1800, in Lancaster, where he carried on printing many years. Mr. Bailey frequently indulges his old bones with the luxury of a warm bath, in the same large copper tub that Dr. Franklin passed many of his latter hours, sometimes reading, sometimes sleeping.

MR. THOMAS,

If any of these hints afford you information, I shall be satisfied. You are welcome to use them. All my object is to contribute my mite in gathering facts for a complete History of Printing. Indeed I had been something in that way. It had long been a favourite project of mine to publish an American Printer's Grammar, and had collected materials in part, but know not whether the plan will ever be pursued.

Several of the facts related may appear too personal. It is painful to record the progress of vice, or depicture the visage of debauchery yet, although it is the part of an historian to narrate circumstances as they really exist, he may, by knowing the reality of the case, deviate at least so far as to describe things moderately; and not, if they should be cast in the shade, tinge them with light; if a man is a sinner, call him not a saint. All the use such representations will be to you, after informing yourself, for private satisfaction, is to expunge or recolour what they may throw light upon.

Printers! alas! how much better should they be disposed. They have additional means of information, strong incentives to decorum. But how many are enamoured with the inebriating draft!

I have heard of a large printing establishment in London, which employed 50 hands, who had but one coat among them all. They had not much occasion to go abroad, as a devil, purposely engaged, was busily employed in running their errands, bringing them ale, bread, etc. They slept on the stands. The proprietor found it his interest to have this man to wait on them. When any had occasion to go abroad, he put on the coat, and when he returned he hung it up again at the door.

A pressman (in Hall and Sellers office, Phil.) was once laying a form on press, and putting too much strength to the shove, threw it over the coffin. As he knew he would be obliged to replace damages, and pay the composition, he became fretful, took his hat and coat and sauntered off to the tavern, to drown his misfortune in a grog. The compositors, after his departure, proceeded to the examination of the accident and found the form safely lodged, unhurt, in a bag of

papers which the pressman had been accustomed to preserve for sale.

I am, Sir, with sentiments of esteem and good will, your friend

WM. MCCULLOCH.

ADDITIONAL MEMORANDA FOR THE HISTORY OF PRINTING

BY

ISAIAH THOMAS

COMMUNICATED BY WM. MCCULLOCH

Philadelphia.

MR. THOMAS,

SIR,

Your letter of the 8th of December 1812, acknowledging the receipt of my communication of the 1st of September preceding, was duly received. I then thought it not improbable but that I would peruse your work again, with the intent of sending you the result of any remarks that might occur, as well as such additional facts as should come within my observation.

All the following information was collected by piecemeal. Hence, you may well suppose, situated as I am amidst a business, which, of all other avocations, requires the undeviating bend of the mind and memory, that I cannot be very methodical in my arrangements. This will be a useful communication for you, but you will have some trouble to gather and digest, under their respective heads, the statements furnished.

Indeed, were it not that the perusal of your History, along with other books, was necessary in the compilation of some works for which I am preparing the materials, I suppose you would not have heard from me; and from this fact may be inferred the reason, in part, why you have not succeeded in obtaining expected information which you requested of others. But independent of the editorial advantage I derive from such like historical works, I receive a personal and intrinsic pleasure from their perusal. That study, that reading, is my element.