

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

NEW JERSEY'S FIRST MAGAZINE

One of the least-known and most short-lived publications in late eighteenth-century America was the *New Jersey Magazine*, the first periodical to be published in this state.¹ It appeared in New Brunswick and sold for one shilling. Only three issues were printed—Dec., 1786, through Feb., 1787,² and the Rutgers University Library is the only repository known to possess a complete run.³ While the reason for the short duration of the magazine is not definitely known, it may perhaps be conjectured. Professor Richardson states that the failure was due to imitation of earlier periodicals, which by 1787 had grown outmoded. According to his theory, the *New Jersey Magazine* was patterned after dilettante Benjamin Mecom's *The New-England Magazine* (1758) and pedantic Jeremy Gridley's *The Boston Magazine* (1783), offering "only withered flowers of a decadent poetry and weak, general essays on morals and manners."⁴ A Rutgers Library note indicates that both the magazine and the printing establishment from which it came lasted only a few months.⁵

The title page reads:

Semper The *Radiantes*
New Jersey
MAGAZINE
and
Monthly Advertiser

Containing a Choice of curious and entertaining Pieces in Prose & Verses, with a Collection of the most recent Occurrences received from Europe, the West-Indies & North-America, & several Advertisements

New Brunswick:

Printed by Frederick Quequelle, and James Prange, near the Market;⁶

¹ L. N. Richardson, *A History of Early American Magazines, 1741-1781* (New York: T. Nelson Sons, 1931), p. 273.

² F. L. Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (New York: D. Appleton Co., 1930), 1, 788.

³ W. Gregory, editor, *Union List of Serials* (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1943), p. 1969.

⁴ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 271. See pp. 273-276 for a more complete description of the contents.

⁵ F. C. Quequelle and J. Prange, the printers and editors, are obscure figures. But it is known that the former worked on two newspapers in Trenton—the *Trenton Mercury* and the *Federal Post*—and that the latter, after collaborating with Quequelle on the first issue of the *Mercury*, traveled on to the *Evening Chronicle* (Philadelphia, 1787), and thence to Harrisburg, Pa., where bad luck again befell him, for his *Harrisburg Monitor* ran only one issue. I am grateful to Mr. Donald Sinclair for directing me to Brigham's *History of American Newspapers, 1690-1820*, wherein this information may be found—II, pp. 1469-1470 and I, p. 519. See also *Trenton's Newspapers, 1778-1932* (Trenton, N.J.: Trenton Times Newspapers, 1932), p. 12.

⁶ It is difficult to establish either the place of printing or the market at that time. Like every colonial town New Brunswick had its open market. From all that is known it seems likely that the market was

The Introduction is printed on the back of the title page and in part reads:

To be employed in the conduct of any scheme which is of real use to Mankind, or which may contribute to their innocent amusement, is a pleasure of the Kind which only they can feel, whose hearts rejoice in promoting the good & happiness of their fellow-creatures.

We propose to carry on this Work, with a view to inform & please our Readers; and as we have made it our business to transplant from several Parts into this our garden, such flowers as for their beauty or sweetness may delight, and such herbs & fruits only as for their useful and salutary virtues may benefit Mankind; so we have established it as a maxim, from which our Readers may be assured we will never depart, that no noxious poison, no useless bramble to perplex, shall ever knowingly be admitted.

In short, we will endeavor to perform our undertaking as Ovid has beautifully explained, where he paints the Garden of Flora, that What Time & Industry shall collect, may be disposed with Grace & Elegance.

The magazine was directed to "Persons of taste and knowledge," and the reader was assured that "any scheme for public good, any essay or poem for amusement, any discourse or dissertation for the improvement of Mankind" would be received gratefully and "faithfully communicated" to the

public. Advertisements were to be published free for subscribers. At the end of the December issue appears the sole announcement for the month—"Indentures to be had, & clean rags wanted at this Printing-Office." At the end of the January issue this same advertisement appeared, to which was added: "Also to be sold, the new American latin Grammar, good writing paper, and few [*sic*] volumes of the church history of New-England." These notices were repeated at the end of the February issue and a third added: "A Boy, about 12 or 14 years old, desiring to learn the Printing business, may apply to this Printing-Office." The paucity of these advertisements, the only ones appearing, may account in part for the failure of the magazine.

Our purpose in quoting so much of the Introduction is to show the typically Latinate, eighteenth-century style which pervades the periodical. This publication reminds us of the *Spectator* and the *Tatler*, of *Poor Richard's Almanac*, not only in style but also in the great range of subjects treated

on or near the present site of Burnet Street, near the Raritan River. See J. P. Wall, *The Chronicles of New Brunswick, N.J., 1667-1931* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Thatcher-Anderson Co., 1931), p. 296. Wall shows an illustration of the old Hiram Street Market, built in 1811 and razed in 1856. Presumably this was a later market, but perhaps near the vicinity of the earlier one. The earliest known map of New Brunswick (1790) does not show the market (Wall, p. 293).

⁷ There were many church histories of New England. It is difficult to tell which one is referred to here.

and information conveyed. The first article, a high-flown "eulogy" praising country life, might have come out of any eighteenth-century anthology of English literature. The second article is a verse "eulogy" on the same subject, purportedly written by a lady, who mixes blank verse with heroic couplets. The verse ends with an Alexandrine:

Could the ambitious man but truly
know
What sweet delights in solitude do
grow,
He'd straight retire, and with one
loving-she
Despise the pompous courts and
smooth-tongu'd flattery.

Such imitative lines as these did not contribute to the sturdy intellectual independence of American literature. But the exciting narrative about the death of Captain James Cook from Ellis⁸ (in the manner of the exploratory writings of Captain John Smith) and the vivid account of the Indians inhabiting the country "West of Hudson's Bay," quoted extensively in the magazine, give it a more original flavor. A twenty-page summary of Fielding's popular and sentimental success, *Amelia*, is included for the benefit of any person who had not yet been edified by this work. In the half page of criticism following this summary the editors list one anachronism and impugn the credibility of the miraculous healing of *Amelia's* nose. Quotations from Addison, Dryden, Marvell, Hobbes, Ovid, and Horace tend further to emphasize the classical tone of the magazine. What little verse there is, is written in patterns

predominantly neo-classical. Cures for distemper in cattle and horses, a defense of the immortality of the soul, cures for the gout, political news from Europe, accounts of small-pox inoculations, the etymology of the word *lady*, the care of foundlings, world population statistics, the death of George Whitefield (the great Methodist evangelist), shipping news, Indian fights, a house burned near Albany and a family that perished in the fire, short histories of England and Kentucky, ordinances governing the night watch and fire engines in New Brunswick, women buried alive beneath an avalanche in the French Alps, the discovery of a wild man in the Pyrenees Mountains—all these are only a few of the vast and various subjects treated by writers who lived in a time of interest in universal knowledge. But the kind of article most frequently included in this review of life and letters is the moral allegory or the story inculcating virtue. By their number and sameness these stories cloy the taste of the average present-day reader. The informal essays entitled "On Luxury" and "The Praise of Gaiety" and "The Praise of Laughter" somewhat lighten the heavy didacticism of the magazine, but the *Spectator* and *Poor Richard* provide the reader with *mirth*, as Addison would call it.

Many of the articles are extracted from the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *European Magazine*, the *London*

⁸ William Ellis, *An Authentic Narrative of a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* (Paris, 1749, and Philadelphia, 1783).

Magazine, or similar organs. Most of the articles are unsigned; only a few are initialed.

From the standpoint of original American literature this magazine possesses only slight importance. Its real value probably lies in the fact that it is a good historical record of the period, particularly of life in New Brunswick, and that it shows how strongly minor American writers of this time imitated the English neo-classic authors.

RICHARD E. AMACHER

“*REQUEST DENIED*”

ON SEPT. 18, 1779, Major-General Lord Stirling (William Alexander), of the Continental Army, whose daughter lived comfortably in British-occupied New York, applied to General Washington for a pass, in order that she might visit her family in New Jersey. Washington refused; whereupon Stirling addressed a similar request to Governor William Livingston (his brother-in-law), who likewise refused. A final petition to Washington, Sept. 28, was denied, and the issue closed. Livingston's reply to Stirling, the original in the Rutgers Library, casts an interesting light upon the characters of two famous Jerseymen:

Trenton 25 Sep^t 1779

My Lord

In answer to your Lordship's Letter of the 20th instant (which I this moment received) I am confident that you can want no assurances of

my readiness, both on account of personal Friendship & Family Connections, (was I to consult only my own feelings) to indulge Lady Mary with the desired Passport to come into this state. But your Lordship knows the impossibility of separating personal attachments from official duty & public station without administering great & indeed reasonable Umbrage. So many applicants in circumstances similar to that of wanting to see near Relations, have been refused both to go into & to come out of the Enemy's lines, & that meerly to prevent the Intercourse, without any objections to the Characters applying, that the present Indulgence to a Relation, would inevitably draw on me the Charge of Partiality, & fix a stain on my political Character not easy to be expunged. Nor will your Lordship yourself on reflecting that I have a number of Enemies watching with the utmost avidity to improve such an advantage against me, hesitate a moment, even from your professed Friendship for me, to dissuade me, from putting such a weapon into their hands, as in these times of Jealousy & Liberty, must necessarily give a fatal stab to my Reputation. But General Washington not being in the same Predicament, cannot, should he think proper to grant the Pass, incur the like Imputation. With the greatest Esteem I have the Honour to be, My Lord

Your Lordship's most humble sv^t

Wil: Livingston

The right Honourable
Major General Lord Stirling

DONALD A. SINCLAIR