

NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

THE NEW AMERICAN MAGAZINE

New Jersey's first magazine was *The New American Magazine*, published from January, 1758, through March, 1760, by James Parker in Woodbridge. It was edited by Judge Samuel Nevill, prominent Perth Amboy resident, who had been editor of the London *Morning Post*. The first monthly periodical published outside of the three largest American colonial cities, *The New American Magazine* is described as "a storehouse of eighteenth century thought."¹

As the eleventh magazine published in the Colonies,² its twenty-seven issues covered a comparatively long period when short-lived periodicals were the rule. This first New Jersey magazine is especially valuable as a mirror of the activities and sentiments of the British Colonies during the French and Indian War, since it was published during the middle years of that conflict. Some essays, tales and poetry were included in the magazine, but it was mainly devoted to history and current events, making it a good chronicle of the times.

Nevill, who edited the magazine under the pseudonym "Sylvanus Americanus," was an Englishman with a liberal education, and, as editor of the *Morning Post*, he had become familiar with the London literary scene. In 1735, the death of his sister, widow of a landed East Jersey proprietor, made Nevill the sole inheritor of large holdings in this Colony. This inheritance brought him to America in 1736. He became a member of the Assembly, and soon rose to speaker.³

In 1758, the same year he became editor of *The New American Magazine*, Samuel Nevill was made a judge of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. Six years earlier, he had compiled and had published by William Bradford in Philadelphia the first volume of *The Acts of . . . New Jersey*, and in 1761 he added a second volume to his work. He died in November, 1765, at the age of sixty-seven in Perth Amboy, the city which he had served as mayor.⁴ "Nevill was a compiler, politician, statesman, and judge, and the magazine he edited reflects both his capacities and limitations."⁵

James Parker, printer and publisher of *The New American Magazine*, is regarded as an outstanding colonial journalist. A close friend and partner of Benjamin Franklin, and New Jersey's first native printer, Parker established the first permanent print shop in the State in Woodbridge late in 1751.⁶

Interest in successful British rule in America and the advancement of Colonial well-being were apparently two primary reasons for Nevill's undertaking *The New American Mag-*

¹ L. N. Richardson, *A History of Early American Magazines, 1741-1789* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1931), p. 126.

² F. L. Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), I, 787.

³ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁴ Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America* (Albany, N. Y.: Joel Munsell, Printer, for American Antiquarian Society, 1874). 2nd ed., II, 129.

⁵ Richardson, *loc. cit.*

⁶ William Nelson, *Some New Jersey Printers and Printing in the Eighteenth Century* (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1911). pp. 6-7.

THE NEW
American MAGAZINE:



N^o. I. OF JANUARY, 1758.

CONTAINING.

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|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| I. The History of NORTH-AMERICA. | IV. PRACTICAL ESSAYS. |
| II. THE CONSTITUTION. Part I. | V. The Chronological Diary. |
| III. The Monthly Miscellany. | VI. The Historical Chronicle. |
| | VII. Naval Engagements. |

MAGNA EST VERITAS, ET PREVALEBIT.

To be continued Monthly. Price, One Shilling, Proce

[REDACTED]

By SYLVANUS AMERICANUS.

[REDACTED]

WOODBRIDGE, in NEW-JERSEY:

Printed and Sold by James Parker. Sold also by Parker and Weyman, in New-York, and by William Dunlap, Post-master for Philadelphia.

It was designed a biographical Cut for our Front; but having been supported by the Engraver, we are obliged to send forth as first the above.

azine. Much of the content of the periodical was selected by the editor to plead Great Britain's cause, and part of the prospectus announced that ". . . whatsoever *New Pieces* any Gentlemen may be so kind to furnish us with, shall always have the Preference in our *Magazine*, out of a peculiar *Emulation* to satisfy the Publick that even this *New World* is not destitute of *Learning* and *Learned Men*."⁷

The contents of each issue of the magazine generally fell into seven divisions: "The History of North-America," compiled by the editor; "The Traveller," by Thomas Gage; "The Monthly Miscellany"; "Poetical Essays"; "The Chronological Diary"; "The Historical Chronicle," and "Naval Engagements."

Nevill compiled "The History of North-America" from selected works and published a part of this history in each of the twenty-seven issues of the magazine. Gage's "The Traveller" was also published serially from January, 1758, through May, 1759, and was an adventure and travel narrative taking the reader through Mexico, Central and South America, but it was especially full of propaganda against Spanish rule in the Americas. Both Nevill's "History" and Gage's "Traveller" were separately paged for binding.

Only two of the other departments of the magazine were literary—"The Monthly Miscellany" and "Poetical Essays." The Miscellany varied from twelve to twenty-nine pages each issue and included articles, essays, and tales. Although at the end of the first year, Nevill announced that he had received complaints that "too many grave Essays"⁸ had been

printed, and not enough wit and humor had been included, he apparently tried to vary the content of the magazine.

Some of the articles, besides the usual accounts of the war, discussed subjects such as the economic condition of New Jersey, stressing the unfortunate effect of Philadelphia taking Burlington's trade, and New York, that of Perth Amboy; the evils of slavery; possibility of women in Freemasonry; and articles on medical cures and progress.

Four pages were usually devoted to poetry, with numerous original poems as well as selected reprints of established poets.

The New American Magazine was small, a single number consisting of forty-eight pages, only five by seven and three-quarters inches in size, but as New Jersey's first periodical, it is an invaluable addition to the history of the State. Its interest and importance to the historian today lie in its antiquity, and in the fact that there was no other New Jersey publication covering this period. At the time, however, this magazine, like so many others, was a failure, and generally considered uninteresting. Ten years after it ceased publication, the printer sold a large number of the copies for waste paper.⁹

It was not until 1777, seventeen years after *The New American Magazine* was discontinued, that the first permanent New Jersey newspaper was established, and there was a lapse of twenty-six years before the State's second magazine, *The New Jersey Magazine, and Monthly Advertiser*,

⁷ Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁹ Thomas, *loc. cit.*

was started in New Brunswick in December, 1786, to run only three months.

Stewart A. Schoder of Woodbridge has the first twelve issues of *The New American Magazine*. This volume for 1758 is leather bound and well preserved.

The Library possesses parts of the magazine for May, 1758, April, June, September, and October, 1759, and February, 1760. Complete files of *The New American Magazine* may be found at the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford; William L. Clements Library of American History, Ann Arbor, Mich.; New York Public Library; Princeton University; Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Library Company of Philadelphia, and State Historical Society, Madison, Wis.¹⁰

Perhaps the best estimate of the value and importance of *The New American Magazine* is Richardson's summary: "... though edited without brilliance, (it) was distinctive for its articles on history and the war, for the reprints selected by one familiar with editorial life in London, and for poetry definitely valuable to the student of a changing age."¹¹

KENNETH Q. JENNINGS

THE JERSEY GAZETTE

A new publication has recently made its appearance under the sponsorship of the Library, the *Jersey Gazette: A News-Letter for New Jersey Historians*. Although less than a year old and restricted in its field of interest, the *Gazette* already has a circulation of over two hundred.

The news-letter had its origin at a Conference of New Jersey Historians held on the Rutgers campus on November 20, 1948, under the auspices of the Department of History and Political Science. On that occasion some sixty men and women who were actively concerned with New Jersey history came together to discuss ways and means of focusing more attention on their specialty and to consider common problems. The Conference was successful in terms of its objectives, and there was a general feeling that the group should continue to meet in the future and that a bulletin should be issued to serve as a clearing house for ideas and projects.

The *Jersey Gazette* was thus born. It contains notes on recent publications, on significant library acquisitions, and on works in progress, as well as items about historical activities in the state. Three numbers have been published to date in unpretentious mimeographed format. Now that it has become apparent that it fills a real need, plans are under way to enlarge the *Gazette* and enhance its appearance.

The *Gazette* is issued without charge as a service to the State, and it will be sent on request to any Friends of the Library. Incidentally, in large part because of the favorable response to the *Gazette*, a second Conference of New Jersey Historians was held at Rutgers on December 3.

RICHARD P. MCCORMICK

¹⁰ The *Union List of Serials*, p. 1954, lists these and holders of incomplete files.

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 135.