

Immigrant Printers and the Creation of Information Networks in Revolutionary America

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This paper is a first attempt to describe the collective experience of those printers who immigrated to North America during the Revolutionary era, defined here as the period between 1756 and 1796. It suggests these printers integrated themselves into the colonial part of an imperial communications structure and then into a new national communications structure in order to achieve business success. Historians have amply demonstrated that the eighteenth century Atlantic economy relied heavily on the social and cultural capital that people amassed through their connections and networks.¹ 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. In order to be successful, one had to cultivate 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, some immigrant printers had an enormous advantage in the credit and networks they had developed in Europe, and which they parlayed into commercial and political success once they landed in North America. Examining the experience of immigrant

¹ Jack P. Greene, "Social and Cultural Capital in Colonial British America: A Case Study," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 3 (1999): 491-509; **Error! Main Document Only.** 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: Vintage Books, 1993); **Error! Main Document Only.** 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 *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St. George (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); **Error! Main Document Only.** Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: IEAHC, University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 11-69.

printers as a case study throws into sharp relief how printers developed their networks and the strategies they pursued to become successful in revolutionary America.

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 how political parties developed out of printers' networks; 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.² The transatlantic nature of printing and publishing has also become a matter of some interest to scholars. The first volume of the *History of the Book in America* series, of course, 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.³ This paper brings these studies together

² 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: OIEAHC, University of North Carolina Press, 1999); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: OIEAHC, University of North Carolina Press, 1997). For the colonial and revolutionary period, see **Error! Main Document Only.** 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; idem, **Error! Main Document Only.** "Printers and the American Revolution," in *The Press and the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 11-57; **Error! Main Document Only.** Charles Wetherell, "Brokers of the Word: An Essay in the Social History 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, DE: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1992).

³ Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1 of *A History of the Book in America* (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 *Books between Europe and the Americas: Connections and Communities, 1620-1860*, ed. Leslie Howsam and James Raven (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 187-211; **Error! Main Document Only.** William Slaughter, "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); **Error! Main**

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

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As part of my research into the printing trade during the Revolutionary era, I have constructed a database of 700 printers, editors, and publishers active in the North American colonies and the United States between 1756 and 1796.⁴ Of those, 452 have known birthplaces, and so we can identify the “native-born” American printers and those who immigrated from Europe. During the period, 113 printers are known to have immigrated, or about 26% of the 452 printers with known birthplaces. Over time, the number of immigrant printers increased, from 16 active in 1756-1760 to 73 active in 1791-1795 (see Figure 1).⁵ The pace of immigration also increased during the period, though with a small sample, it does not appear to have increased a

Document Only. Edwin Wolf, *The Book Culture of a Colonial American City: Philadelphia Books, Bookmen, and Booksellers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

⁴ 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 has helped me enormously in locating the files of additional printers held separately from the main catalog. To supplement those files, I consulted several 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 2d ed. (New York: Weathervane Books, 1970); Leona M. Hudak, *Early American Women Printers and Publishers, 1639-1820* (Metuchen, NJ: 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 & Co., 1980); Frank Cundall, *A History of Printing in Jamaica from 1717 to 1834* (Kingston: Institute of Jamaica, 1935); **Error! Main Document Only.** 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.

⁵ However, this number includes all printers who were active at a given time based on their immigration status. That is, it counts equally for the 1780s Hugh Gainé, who had been printing in New York since 1752, and Thomas Dobson, who only arrived in Philadelphia in 1784.

great deal. We know, however, that some new printers came to North America nearly every year between the 1750s and 1790s.⁶

The makeup of the immigrant population also shifted over time as the sites from which immigrants came shifted (see Figure 2). The makeup of the immigrant printer population largely mirrored that of the broader immigration population. The largest number came from the England, Scotland, and Ireland. A large group hailed from Germany, and smaller numbers came from France, Holland, Switzerland, and even Russia.⁷ In the late 1750s, a third of foreign-born printers were German, and published largely in Philadelphia and its hinterlands, where the preponderance of the German population lived. In the 1750s and 1760s, Pennsylvania boasted several German-language newspapers, including the *Philadelphische Zeitung*, published by 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.⁸ The German printers active in the 1780s, therefore, were primarily the veterans of that generation of migration. Several Armbruster and Sower apprentices also entered the trade, but by the early 1790s Germans made up only an eighth of the immigrant printers in the United States.

⁶ It should be noted that in nearly half of cases (fifty-five), the actual date of immigration is not known, but rather the date of first activity in the printing trade. This makes it difficult at this point to make an accurate estimate of the pace of immigration.

⁷ James Horn and Philip D. Morgan, "Settlers and Slaves: European and African Migrations to Early Modern British America," in *The Creation of the British Atlantic World*, ed. Elizabeth Mancke and Carole Shammas (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 Beginning of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). See also **Error! Main Document Only.** 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).

⁸ 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.

By contrast, the proportion of immigrants from the British Isles (including Ireland) rose steadily through the second half of the eighteenth century. Where 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% of immigrant printers. This growth came in particular from English and Irish immigrants, who came in increasingly greater numbers after the Revolution, while the number of Scottish printers largely held steady.⁹ Not surprisingly, there was an influx of printers just after the end of the Revolutionary War; fourteen printers arrived between 1783 and 1785, including such important printers and publishers in the early United States as Mathew Carey, Samuel Campbell, Thomas Allen, and Thomas Dobson, all of whom came from Ireland or Scotland.

Although immigrant printers looked much like the rest of the immigrant population, their population relative to the printing trade declined over time, as can be seen in Figure 1 (from 34% in the late 1750s to 24% in the early 1790s). While 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 after the Revolution for two reasons. First, the population began its inexorable march westward into and across the Appalachian Mountains. As new towns sprung up, they rapidly sought to acquire printing operations to publish necessary forms, almanacs, newspapers, and to bring books, newspapers, magazines, and other publications from larger towns.¹⁰ Second, the economic barriers to entry into the trade decreased rapidly after the war, in particular with the growth of American manufacturing. Until

⁹ Horn and Morgan, "Settlers and Slaves," 21-22.

¹⁰ 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 *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley (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 only had two options for acquiring type: buy up used sets from another printer, or order them from England. Because a printing press was made largely out of wood, most of it could be built in the colonies. However, no American manufacturer produced the necessary iron screws until at least 1775.¹¹ 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 for many—not least those whose printing careers should be numbered in months rather than years—was often minimal.

Those printers who immigrated to North America were part of a large group of artisans and tradesmen making the transatlantic 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.¹² However, because of limited information about the circumstances of immigration for most printers, 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, has found that more than half were artisans or tradesmen in precisely the social stratum and occupational fields

¹¹ John Bidwell, “Printers’ Supplies and Capitalization,” in Amory and Hall, eds., *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 168-71; Lawrence C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Charlottesville, VA: Dominion Books, 1964), 82-85, 98-102.

¹² Horn and Morgan, “Settlers and Slaves,” 27.

that printers occupied.¹³ They were, Bailyn noted, a group that saw emigration “not so much a desperate escape as an opportunity to be reached for.”¹⁴

On their arrival in North America, the vast majority of immigrants 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, where sixty-eight had their first opportunity to run an office. Philadelphia was by far the most popular single destination, with forty printers; New York City had thirteen. They were therefore far less likely to print 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 west in large part on the basis of connections they made once they arrived. For example, Anthony Haswell, born in Portsmouth, England, served as an apprentice and journeyman in the office of Isaiah Thomas during the 1770s, including taking over the publication of the *Massachusetts Spy* from 1777 to 1780 during a period of unprofitability. After the war, he moved to Springfield, Massachusetts, and then to Bennington, Vermont, where he established a printing office that endured through the War of 1812.

Such are the general contours of the group. After a brief overview of the status of the printing trade during the Revolutionary era, the remainder of the paper organizes immigrants into groups by their age at the time of immigration because that one fact was a crucial factor in how printers experienced their arrival in North America. Of the 113 identified as immigrants, forty-six are known to have emigrated from Europe as adults, thirty-three as apprentices or young adults, and six as children.¹⁵ Although these printers do not represent the proportionality of their

¹³ Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 147-60.

¹⁴ Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 160.

¹⁵ 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 25 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

home populations in Europe, they do mirror in their distribution the ages of the emigrant population as a whole.¹⁶

Printing in the Revolutionary Atlantic

Printers occupied an odd and somewhat luminal space in the socioeconomic spectrum. They were artisans and tradesmen and in many ways of firmly middling status. Mostly men they were manual laborers, setting type and pulling the press for hours every day. They frequently owned their own businesses, which placed them above the poorest laborers but was not enough to grant them the status of merchants or other elites. At the same time, printers had to be broadly literate to succeed. That is, they both had to be 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. Printers thus employed a range of strategies in order to maintain the businesses.

All printers were of necessity highly 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.¹⁷ As a result, printers were among the most mobile occupational groups in the colonies, perhaps second only to sailors and mariners in sojourning in numerous regions of North America and the Caribbean. Frequent travel also meant that printers could develop a broad range of contacts before they ever opened offices. In this

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.

¹⁶ Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 127-29.

¹⁷ David D. Hall, "The Atlantic Economy in the Eighteenth Century," in Amory and Hall, eds., *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 155-59.

regard, immigrant printers greatly resembled their native-born counterparts. 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 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 a journeyman, and otherwise integrating into North American communities.

At its heart, printing—like most artisanal pursuits—remained a family business throughout the colonial period.¹⁸ 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 provided one of the surest paths into the printing trade. Many printers served their apprenticeships in their fathers' or uncles' printing offices; inter-generational kin ties helped to 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. Apprentices unrelated by kinship could nonetheless become their masters' protégés and thus also have access to some of these benefits. The multi-generational impact of a family network such as the Greens of New England—which dated its roots with Samuel Green in

¹⁸ **Error! Main Document Only.** 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 *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, ed. John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 15-35; Toby L. Ditz, "Formative Ventures: Eighteenth-Century Commercial Letters and the Articulation of Experience," in *Epistolary Selves: Letters and Letter-Writers, 1600-1945*, ed. Rebecca Earle (London: Ashgate, 1999), 59-78; John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: IEAHC, 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 *A Shared Experience: Men, Women, and the History of Gender*, ed. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 98-117.

the mid-seventeenth century—was obviously unavailable to immigrants.¹⁹ Nonetheless, many sought to take advantage of or establish these connections through apprenticeships, contracts to work as journeymen, or in other ways where possible.

As in other trades, printers used marriage as a tool to solidify commercial connections or even simply to enter the business in the first place. In fact, the apple of a young printer's eye frequently lived close to his master's office; a number of printers met their future wives while still working as apprentices. That apprentices often sought spouses from within the printing trade had two likely explanations. First, apprentices and their potential spouses were usually social equals and would have had ample opportunity for close contact since apprentices frequently boarded in their masters' houses. Marrying into a printing family could also greatly increase the business prospects of a printer in a competitive marketplace. Marrying the master's daughter could ensure a future partnership or the inheritance of a printing office, its machinery, and its clients. For the master printer, in turn, taking a 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.²⁰

Government printing jobs provided a steady stream of income and useful political connections. These printers supported themselves on government work, printing laws, legislative minutes, paper currency, and various proclamations and other occasional work. In smaller colonies, towns might have only one printer and often the non-governmental work was insufficient to sustain even this lone printing office. Each colony appointed at least one printer

¹⁹ On the Green family, see Sidney E. Berger, "Innovation and Diversity Among the Green Family of Printers" *Printing History* 12, no. 1 (1990): 2-20.

²⁰ 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, PA: 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); Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce*, 13-16.

to print its laws, the legislature's journals, and sundry other items. Governments in larger colonies often divided the work, providing employment to several printers.²¹ In Pennsylvania, for example, the assembly contracted in 1769 with both Hall and Sellers and William Goddard for printing portions of their laws, paying Hall & Sellers £56, 15s., and Goddard £140, 4s., 6d. Because the colony had a significant and growing German population, the assembly also contracted in the same year for work with German printer Henry Miller, paying him £33, 15s.²² By splitting the work, both printers and government entities sought security and cushion in case of problems. In addition, a division of labor allowed different government factions to patronize various constituencies, as the Pennsylvania assembly was able to do with the German-language press.

Those who sought to enter the printing trade therefore faced a number of disadvantages compared to native-born printers—depending on their ages. Children and apprentice-age immigrants had time to learn the differences between the American and European printing trades in terms of both scale and resources, and to seek the connections that could increase the likelihood of success.²³ For adults, though, newly immigrated printers had to build from scratch the local networks on which much of the trade was predicated.

²¹ For examples, see Rollo G. Silver, "Aprons Instead of Uniforms: The Practice of Printing, 1776-1787," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 87, no. 1 (1977): 131-52.

²² "Estimate of the Debts due from the Province of Pennsylvania, 1769," *Penn. Arch.*, ser. 1, IV: 345.

²³ On the British press during this period, **Error! Main Document Only.**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, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1987); Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: OIEAHC, University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Troy Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen Through the British Press* (DeKalb, IL: 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).

Building Networks in Adulthood

About half of the printers who immigrated (fifty-nine) did so as adults, that is, 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 utilized 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 (usually for a rather short time) as part of a sequence of careers that often included migration within North America after their transatlantic voyage.

At the same time, they could sometimes draw on networks of kin and common nationality in their new homes. Scottish printers were particularly close-knit. For those on whom data is available, more than half of their connections with other printers were with other immigrants, and nearly all of 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 Society of St. Andrew, a group that celebrated Scottish heritage and provided support for Scots living in Pennsylvania.²⁴ Mathew Carey became heavily involved in Irish organizations, and claimed to be among the founders of

²⁴ [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 Choppin 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.

the Hibernian Society, charged with helping immigrants who came to Philadelphia.²⁵ Germans made connections to one another through religious sects such as the Moravians and Dunkers.²⁶

Even coming over as adults, 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 his half-sister, Rosanna Hunter. After Hunter died in 1761, Royle took over the office, running it in part for the benefit of his infant son, William, Jr.²⁷ 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 after her own retirement from active work.²⁸ 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. When Jonas died in 1767, Anne took over the office. She kept the government contracts held by Green and continued the *Maryland Gazette* until her own death in 1775.²⁹

Just like printers more generally, immigrants often sought to integrate themselves into the economic and political social fabric of their communities in order to secure business. The best way to do so was to seek a portion of the government printing. Anthony Henry, an Alsatian-German who worked for James Parker in New Jersey, took over the Halifax printing office of

²⁵ Carey, *Autobiography* (undated letter), 29.

²⁶ On the Moravians in Pennsylvania, see Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

²⁷ Thomas, *History of Printing in America*, 555. Rosanna Royle later married John Dixon, who became partners with Alexander Purdie, the printer who ran Royle's office for Mrs. Royle and William Hunter, Jr.

²⁸ Thomas, *History of Printing in America*, 506. Coincidentally, Elizabeth Holt Oswald ended up running the Oswald shop in Philadelphia when Eleazer died in 1795.

²⁹ 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. **Error! Main Document Only.** National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution; Gallery purchase with funding from the Smithsonian Collections Acquisitions Program and gift from the Governor's Mansion Foundation of Maryland. NPG.91.152.

John Bushell when the latter died in 1761. He sustained his office in Nova Scotia largely on government work. His contract, which granted him £50 annually in the 1760s, increased to £60 in 1773, £80 in the late 1770s, and up to £100 in 1790, required him to print “the basic work, the printing of the sessions laws, the Assembly *Journal*, Proclamations, and certain [*Halifax Gazette* insertions.”³⁰ 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.³¹ Several immigrants gained access to Continental Congress printing. For Fleury Mesplet, though, it led him out of the country. He came to Philadelphia from France in 1774 (possibly after an encounter in London with Franklin), and printed several letters for Congress addressed to the residents of French Canada.³² When the Continental Army was on the verge of capturing Montreal, the Continental Congress offered Mesplet \$200 and reimbursement of expenses to move his operation there so that the city would have a French-language printer, a job he was uniquely suited for. Unfortunately, he arrived just as the Americans abandoned the town. He chose to stay, agreeing not to criticize British officials, and spent decades trying to get repaid the expense of moving.³³

³⁰ Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 662.

³¹ On the post office during the Revolutionary era, see Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, 1995); Wayne E. Fuller, *The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life* (Chicago, 1972); Richard B. Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information, 1700-1860s* (New York, 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, Public and Private’: The Post Office, the Business of Printing, and the American Revolution,” *Enterprise & Society* 11, no. 4 (2010): 709-52.

³² “Lettre adressée aux habitants de la province de Quebec” (Philadelphia: Fleury Mesplet, 1774), Early American Imprints, ser. 1, no. 13740; “Lettre adressée aux habitants opprimés de la province de Quebec” ([Philadelphia]: [Fleury Mesplet], 1775), Early American Imprints, ser. 1, no. 14575; “Aux habitants de la province du Canada” ([Philadelphia]: [Chez Fleury Mesplet & Charles Berger], 1776), Early American Imprints, ser. 1, no. 15123.

³³ On Mesplet, see Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume IV, <http://www.biographi.ca>; Worthington C. Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 34 v. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904-37), IV: 173 (February 26, 1776).

Having pre-established connections and/or experience in either North America or Europe could be a boon for a printer's career. Several printers could draw on experience in bookselling, including Robert Aitken, James Rivington, Thomas Dobson, Samuel Campbell, and others. 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.³⁴ Dobson, as Richard Sher has explained, arrived in America with a large passel of books worth £2,000 and orders from his employer, the Edinburgh publisher Charles Elliott, to sell the books as if he owned them, and to send back a large proportion of the profits (predictably, Dobson neglected to reimburse Elliott, only paying off the debt some two decades later).³⁵

For those who published newspapers, European connections could 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 transatlantic 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.³⁶ Hall and

³⁴ Sher, *Enlightenment & the Book*, 531-41.

³⁵ Sher, *Enlightenment & the Book*, 545-46.

³⁶ 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 at no. 10,

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.³⁷ Hall edited the newsworthy parts for inclusion in the *Gazette*, 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 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 (though he has long been recognized as an assiduous billpayer).³⁸ 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.

Leighdene Close, 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. Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁷ Dozens of letters between the two men are extant in collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP) and the American Philosophical Society (APS), mostly from the period 1760 to 1773. The Historical Society of Pennsylvania 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; 13 (1889): 484-85. The published letters, however, did not account for annotations that Hall made on several of the letters. The American Philosophical Society owns the letter books of David Hall, which contain numerous letters to Strahan (David Hall Papers, B H142.1). Thirty-seven of the forty-four date from the period between July 1765 and June 1773, an eight-year period with an average of four to five letters per year.

³⁸ Robert D. Harlan, “David Hall’s Bookshop and Its British Sources of Supply,” in *Books in America’s Past: Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gjelness*, ed. David Kaser (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1966), 2-23.

The case of James Rivington is somewhat more complicated because his reputation preceded him to America. Born into a prominent London bookselling family, Rivington made a name for himself in the 1750s by pirating major works with great success.³⁹ 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. They (and his gambling debts) drove him from London in 1760, nearly £30,000 in arrears. David Hall—who made a career out of worrying about the pitfalls of his trade, not least potential competition—was concerned that Rivington would overtake his own quite successful bookselling operation, but Strahan assured him that Rivington would never make a profit by selling books at the same price he paid for them.⁴⁰ Rivington meanwhile 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 made few other friends among America’s printers.⁴¹

Like Rivington, Mathew Carey’s reputation took shape in America before his appearance there, though to better ends than Rivington. In the early 1780s, he established himself in Dublin as an important printer and editor of the *Volunteer’s Journal*, a major publication in the

³⁹ 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); idem; “James Rivington, Tory Printer,” in *Books in America’s Past: Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gjelsness*, ed. David Kaser (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1966), 165-94; Charles R. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers and Printing in Colonial New York* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1895), 105-132. On the bookselling scheme, see Adrian Johns, *Piracy: The Intellectual Property Wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 182-83.

⁴⁰ William Strahan to David Hall, January 7, 1760, David Hall Letterbook (B H142.1), American Philosophical Society.

⁴¹ 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 *CBAW*, 331-33.

Volunteer movement agitating for reform of the British laws governing Ireland.⁴² Having already spent time in Paris in exile for publications defending Irish Catholics (where he worked at Franklin's Passy press), a brief imprisonment at Newgate on charges of libel in 1784 convinced him that it was time to leave the British Isles. He settled on 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."⁴³ Lacking formal connections, Carey relied on the transatlantic 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 meet with the Marquis de la Fayette on a visit to Mount Vernon. Already aware of Carey's work on behalf of the Irish freedom movement, la Fayette met with Carey when he came to Philadelphia, and hearing of his plans for a newspaper, agreed to recommend him to political leaders Robert Morris and Thomas Fitzsimmons. Lafayette also (famously) gave Carey a \$400 check to start his business.

Even with this support, establishing a printing office was not without challenges. He acquired a press at the estate sale of bookseller Robert Bell, but was bid up by rival printer Eleazer Oswald (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 my lot was cast."⁴⁴ Nonetheless, he soon established a newspaper, the

⁴² James N. Green, *Mathew Carey: Publisher and Patriot* (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 1985), 3-4.

⁴³ Mathew Carey, *Mathew Carey Autobiography* (Brooklyn, NY: Eugene L. Schwab, 1942), 9.

⁴⁴ Carey, *Autobiography*, 11.

Pennsylvania Evening Herald, and shortly thereafter received (with la Fayette's influence) a subscription and implicit endorsement to surpass all others: George Washington's.⁴⁵

Most immigrants did not establish themselves with the financial support of la Fayette 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 more 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 Young: Apprentices and Children

For about one-fifth of the immigrant printers in the study, the experience of immigration occurred early in life, before they had achieved a legal majority. That is, they came from Europe to North America as teenagers or young adults who learned printing after their immigration, or as 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.

⁴⁵ George Washington to Mathew Carey, March 15, 1785, Mathew Carey Papers, American Antiquarian Society.

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 prior to the Revolution, and their national makeup reflects the larger population of immigrants during that period: four Scots, four Germans, with 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.

Training in America helped them to establish themselves, but these printers nonetheless had a range of experiences in the printing trade similar to those who came over as adults. The timing of one's arrival in America and emergence into the printing trade as a master played a significant role for these men in determining the trajectory of their careers. William Brown's experience is illustrative. Born in Scotland in the late 1730s, Brown came to America with his family.⁴⁶ 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

⁴⁶ 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. (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 1973), 1:1-4; Ægidius Fauteux, *The Introduction of Printing into Canada* (Montreal: Rolland Paper Co., 1930), 71-77.

hospitable climate.”⁴⁷ Brown chose Quebec, which had just come under British rule with the end of the Seven Years’ War, and which lacked a printer (and certainly an English-language one). 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.⁴⁸ 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, 1764.⁴⁹ As the only printer in the 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 built as an apprentice and journeyman.

Emerging from war to seek opportunities also proved useful at the end of the Revolution for several immigrant apprentices. 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, was one of the leaseholders on Thomas’s newspaper, the *Massachusetts Spy*.⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹ Even though his relationship with Thomas soured after his tenure with the *Spy*, Haswell could still rely on decent training, and positioned himself to take advantage of demographic and geographic shifts in the population in the 1780s. Similarly, James Hayes, who

⁴⁷ “[I]l décidait d’aller vivre sous un climat plus hospitalier.” Audet, “William Brown,” 97.

⁴⁸ 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 Caston, one of the leading type founders in England, and other materials from Kendrick Peck.

⁴⁹ The *Gazette* continued publication until 1874. Audet, “William Brown,” 111.

⁵⁰ 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 dishabille during the two years for which it had been leased.” Thomas, *History of Printing in America*, 277.

⁵¹ On Haswell’s life, see John Spargo, *Anthony Haswell: Printer, Patriot, Balladeer* (Rutland, VT: The Tuttle Co., 1925).

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 could provide advantages when an apprentice was ready to set out on his own.

Serving an apprenticeship in America was not a guarantee of success, however. 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 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 altogether in favor of farming in New Jersey. And at times, of course, careers were cut short by the exigencies of life and death in the eighteenth century. Nicholas Hasselbach, another German printer, apprenticed with Christopher Sower, had a brief partnership with Anthony Armbruster, and kept a paper and grist mill. But in 1770 he went to sea and was never heard from again.

Only seven of the printers in this study are known to have immigrated to North America as young children, that is, under the age of ten, well before an apprenticeship typically would have begun. 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).⁵² Anne Catharine (Hoof) Green came from Holland as a child to Philadelphia. Then there is the curious case of Archibald Loudon, the only one of the 700 printers in this study born at sea, while his parents were en route from Scotland to Baltimore.⁵³

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. Peter Timothy took over the family printing office (one of Franklin's first partnerships) from his mother, Elizabeth. She operated the office under her name from 1739, when her husband Lewis died, to 1746, when Peter attained legal majority. Both Robert Aitken, Jr. and Christopher Sower, Jr. partnered with their namesake fathers before embarking in business on their own, as did John Neilson with his uncle. In Aitken's case, that led to a long and distinguished career as a publisher and bookseller in

⁵² 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.

⁵³ The only information on Loudon comes from the AAS 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, likely 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 his career before opening a printing office in Carlisle in 1795, so analysis with regard to his career must be limited.

Philadelphia.⁵⁴ For Sower, a lengthy career in Germantown was interrupted by the Revolution just as he had taken on his own son, Christopher Sower 3d, as a partner. The father (Sower, Jr.) remained neutral as a Dunker, which led to the seizure of his property in 1778. Sower, 3d 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.⁵⁵ John Neilson took over William Brown's successful Quebec printing office—the first in the colony—and established himself as an important figure in Canada, including a stint in the assembly of Lower Canada from 1818 to 1834 and again from 1841 to 1844.⁵⁶ In each case, therefore, the young relative faced little of the uncertainty that most older immigrants had to overcome.

Immigration was never an easy process, but doing so early in life provided a few opportunities. Most importantly, 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 they 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.

Immigration and Loyalism

⁵⁴ See Robert Aitken Waste Book, Library Company of Philadelphia; Willman 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.

⁵⁵ On the experience of Loyalists in New Brunswick, see Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*, 177-209; see also Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, viewed at the David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA: AO 12/38/291, 109/270; AO 13/70B/250, 72/106-123, 102/643-689.

⁵⁶ See Francis-J. Audet, *John Neilson* (Ottawa: s.n., 1928); Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 663. On Brown, see F.-J. Audet, "William Brown (1737-1789), premier imprimeur, journaliste et libraire de Québec; sa vie et ses œuvres," *RSC Trans.*, 3rd ser., XXVI (1932), sect.i, 97-112.

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 discern how they felt without some other corroborating information. More important, printers—like everyone else—often fell somewhere towards 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 ascribed 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.⁵⁷ Several immigrants were among the important Patriot printers. Peter Timothy served as secretary for the Charleston Committee of Correspondence; John Dunlap published the Declaration of Independence; Robert Bell published the first edition of *Common Sense*. About forty of the 700 printers served in the American Revolution, and at least five were printers (before, during, or after the war).

As a group, however, immigrants were somewhat more likely to be Loyalist than North American-born printers. Of the 700 men and women in the study, 106 were active in the trade during the Revolutionary War (thirty-one were immigrants and sixty-four North American-born). Out of the 106, approximately thirty-nine identified as Loyalists (two—Hugh Gaine and Benjamin Towne—are classified as “both” because they at various times identified publicly with both sides), and about one-third of them were immigrants.⁵⁸ After the conclusion of the war,

⁵⁷ I and others have argued elsewhere that these claims were largely specious and/or superficial, but it can still make clear identifications difficult.

⁵⁸ 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:

nineteen printers filed claims with the Loyalist Claims Commission seeking payment for losses incurred during the war, eight of whom had immigrated to the North American colonies.⁵⁹

Among immigrants, about 40% each identified as Patriot and Loyalist, as compared to a 2:1 ratio for native-born. Nearly all of the Loyalist printers hailed from Scotland (eleven of thirteen), and nine of the thirteen came to North America after 1763.⁶⁰ As a group, therefore, it is possible to generalize that they had not put down deep roots or made strong connections among North American printers or within local communities.

The costs of Loyalism varied. For some, it forced their permanent departure from their homes. Several evacuated with British forces from their homes and left for England, the Bahamas or Nova Scotia.⁶¹ 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*.⁶² 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.⁶³ The outbreak of war had an immediate impact: 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

American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 229-72; James E. Mooney, “Loyalist Imprints Printed in America, 1774-1785,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 84, no. 1 (1974): 105-218; **Error! Main Document Only.** 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.

⁵⁹ 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 Correspondence* (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2000), passim. On the Loyalist Claims Commission, see Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 113-45.

⁶⁰ 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).

⁶¹ Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*.

⁶² Cornelius Bradford to Thomas Bradford, April 1, 1769, Bradford Family Papers (Collection 1676), HSP.

⁶³ On the Johnson connection, see Tremaine, *Bibliography of Canadian Imprints*, 666.

Norwich and resided at Albany, where they imagine they could be of more immediate Service to Governm^t.”⁶⁴ As recent immigrants, their attachment to Britain outweighed and overcame the anti-imperial rhetoric they encountered in America.⁶⁵ Because of his Loyalist leanings, James Robertson was forced to evacuate Albany, 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.”⁶⁶ The pair claimed to have lost over £600, including £311 for their printing office and nearly £78 in wages they owed to two journeymen.⁶⁷

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 Wells moved their operation to East Florida—becoming the first printers in that colony—and

⁶⁴ “Memorial of Alexander and James Robertson, Printers,” March 25, 1784, Papers of the Loyalist Claims Commission, AO 12/19/279, viewed at the 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.

⁶⁵ 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.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 282.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 284-85.

then to Nassau, the capital of the Bahamas.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, one of Robert Wells' apprentices, Alexander Aikman, left for Jamaica at the outbreak of war in 1775, and established an office in Kingston.⁶⁹ In 1782 Aikman formalized his relationship with Wells by marrying his daughter, Louisa Susanna, 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 did not fully sever 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 most hated man in America because of his popular loyalist newspaper, *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, had 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.⁷⁰ 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 Gaine, 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

⁶⁸ Silver, "Aprons Instead of Uniforms," 156-59.

⁶⁹ Louisa Susanna (Wells) Aikman, *The Journal of a Voyage from Charleston, 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.

⁷⁰ On Rivington's life and career, 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); idem, "James Rivington, Tory Printer," in *Books in America's Past: Essays Honoring Rudolph H. Gjelness*, ed. David Kaser (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1966), 165-94. On the rumors of espionage, see Catherine Snell Crary, "The Tory and the Spy: The Double Life of James Rivington," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 16, no. 1 (1959): 61-72.

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."⁷¹

Rivington stayed in New York until his death in 1802, but left the trade for the mercantile and auction business.

For printer James Johnston, returning to Savannah after the war served the mutual interests of his business and the State of Georgia. Never the ideal location for printing, the state assembly had banished Johnston during the war 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 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.⁷² Interests could overlap and conflict, and especially in locations where printing was not as obviously lucrative to newcomers, commercial interests could elide political interests if necessary.

* * * *

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

⁷¹ *Independent New-York Gazette*, December 27, 1783.

⁷² Silver, "Aprons Instead of Uniforms," 149-52.

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 (even if only by a generation). Many had to amass capital from scratch, including financial resources and cultural credit to establish themselves; a fortunate few arrived with networks already available. Across the spectrum, the experiences of immigrant printers illuminate how networks of Atlantic communication developed during the Revolutionary era.

Figure 1. Active Printers by Location of Birth, 1756-1795

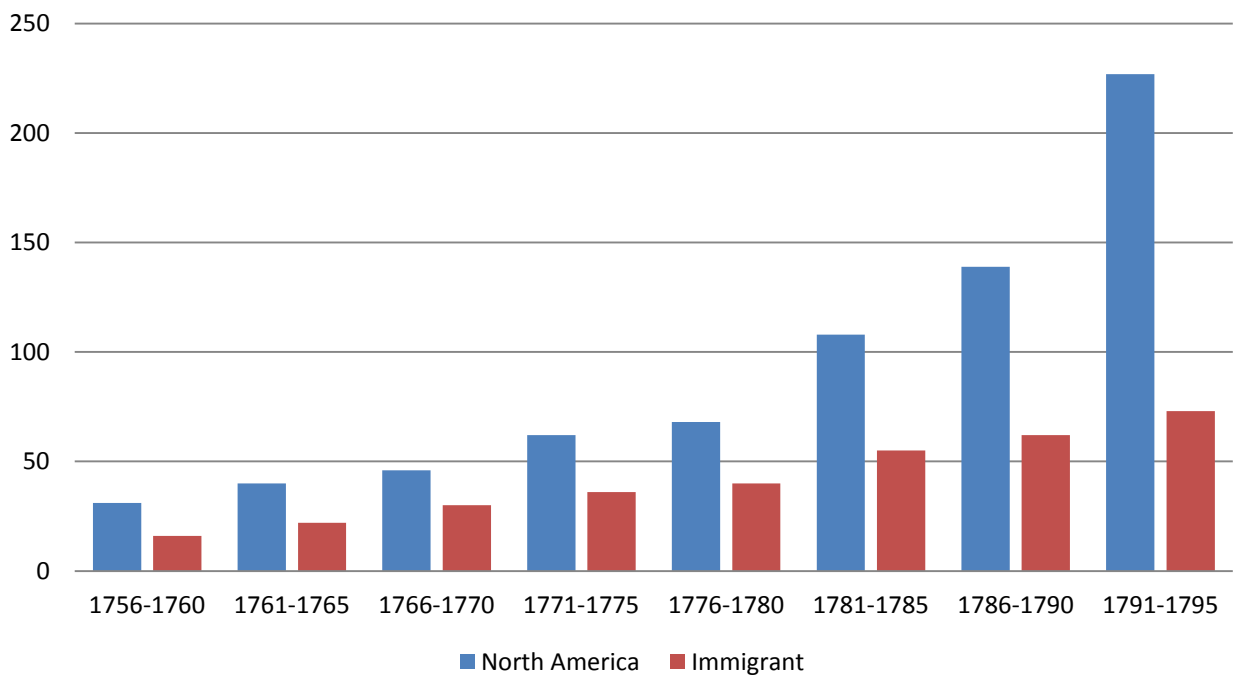
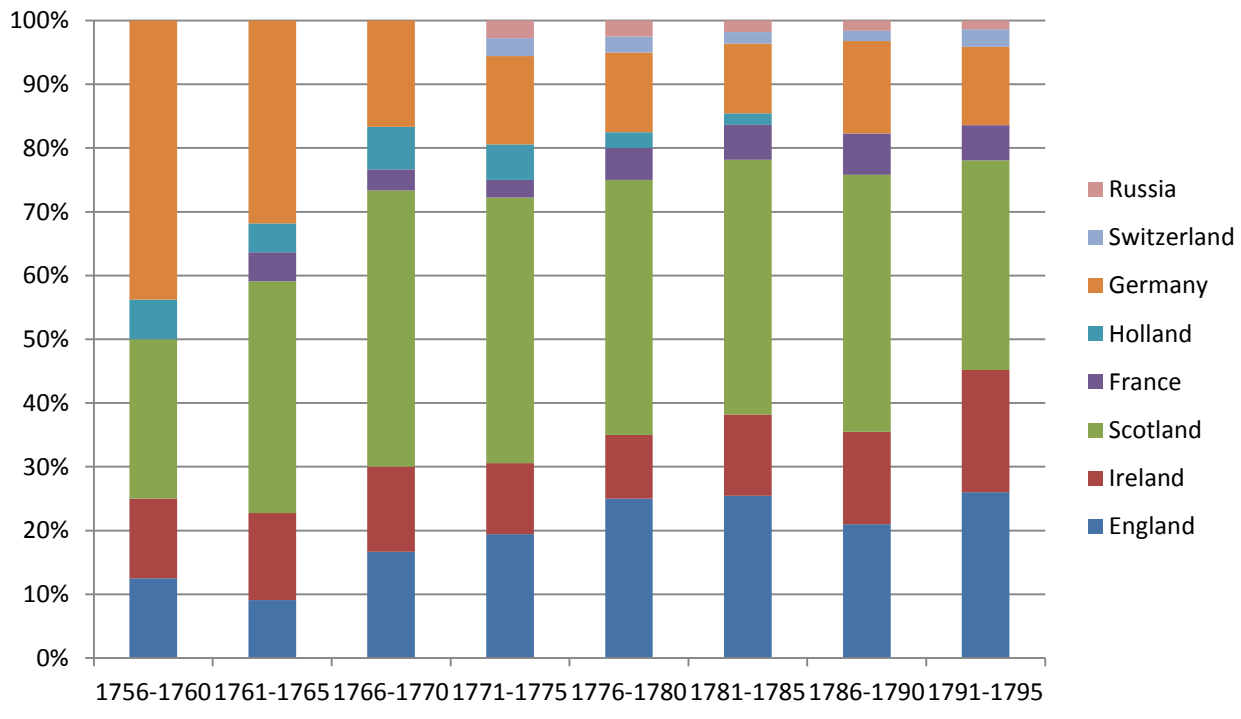


Figure 2. Proportion of Foreign-Born Printers by Country of Birth



Appendix
Immigrant Printers by Country of Birth
(With Years Active in Trade)

England

Solomon Balentine (1782-1784)
Jonathan Brunt (1794-1801)
Caleb Buglass (1774-1797)
Benjamin Carr (1793-1831)
Joseph Carr (1793-1819)
William Cobbett (1792-1800)
Thomas Fleet (1712-1758)
Joseph Gales (1796-1833)
Anthony Haswell (1777-1815)
James Hayes (1775-1804)
John Hayes (1780-1801)
William Lewis (1779-1786)
John Mycall (1775-1799)
John Norman (1783-1817)
Eleazer Oswald (1779-1795)
Thomas Powell (1769-1774)
William Poyntell (1782-1806)
James Rivington (1760-1802)
Ternon Rook (1784-1809)
Joseph Royle (1761-1766)
William Sellers (1766-1804)
Benjamin Towne (1769-1793)
Levi Wayland (1794-1795)
Francis Wrigley (1794-1806)

Ireland

James Adams (1761-1792)
John Barber (1788-1808)
Robert Barber (1788-1791)
Andrew Brown (1785, 1788-1797)
John Daly Burk (1796-1808)
James Carey (1792-1801)
Mathew Carey (1784-1821)
Joseph Charless (1796-1820)
Thomas Dobbin (1795-1807)
John Dunlap (1768-1795)
William Dunlap (1754-1766)
Hugh Gaine (1752-1804)
George Keatinge (1794-c. 1811)
Henry Semple Keatinge (1795-1834)
Samuel Loudon (1773-1796)
John Douglass M'Dougall (1775-1781)
Barnard Brian Macanulty (1794-1809)
James O'Connor (1794-1819)
Andrew Steuart (1758-1769)
James Hood Stewart (1790-1806)
Christopher Talbot (1784-1787)

Scotland

Alexander Aikman (1784-1838)
 William Aikman (1774-1784)
 John Aitken (1784-1824)
 Robert Aitken (1769, 1771-1802)
 Robert Aitken, Jr. (1787-1823)
 Thomas Allen (1785-1799)
 John Anderson (1771-1798)
 Robert Bell (1767-1784)
 William Brown (1760-1789)
 David Bruce (1790-1822)
 George Bruce (1795-1822)
 George Bruce (1759-1775)
 Alexander Cameron (1776, 1778-1782)
 Samuel Campbell (1785-1835)
 Thomas Dobson (1786-1823)
 David Douglass (1779-1789)
 John Fleeming (1764-1773)
 David Hall (1748-1772)
 Robert Hodge (1772-1795)
 James Johnston (1763-1776; 1779-1808)
 James Key (1788-1797)
 James Kirkaldie (1794-1796)
 Archibald Loudon (1795-1840)
 John M'Culloch (1785-1824)
 Archibald M'Lean (1788-1798)
 John M'Lean (1783-1789)
 Donald Macdonald (1776-1781)
 William McAlpine (1753-1776)
 John Mein (1766-1770)
 John Neilson (1794-1848)
 Samuel Neilson (1789-1793)
 Nathaniel Patten (1776-1834)
 Alexander Purdie (1765-1779)
 Alexander Robertson (1768-1784)
 James Robertson (1768-1789)
 Robert Simpson (1795-1796)
 James Stewart (1763-1797)
 Peter Stewart (1785-1811)
 Henry Taylor (1788-1791)
 James Tod (1786-1787)
 Robert Wells (1753-1775)
 William Young (1785-1796)

Germany

Anthony Armbruster (1748-1796)
 Michael Billmeyer (1784-1833)
 Theophilus Cossart (1779-1791)
 Charles Fierer (1789-1793)
 Justus Fox (1784-1805)
 Nicholas Hasselbach (1762-1770)
 Anthony Henry (1758-1800)
 George Kline (1781-1820)
 Jacob Lahn (1787-1801)
 John Henry Miller (1751-1779)
 Peter Miller (1759-1762)
 Frederick Shober (1772-1775)
 John Erdman Smith (1783-1803)
 Christopher Sower (1738-1758)
 Christopher Sower, Jr. (1754-1778)
 Lewis Weiss (1759-1762)

France

Denis Braud (1764-1770)
 Jean Baptiste Le Seur Fontaine (1796-1814)
 François Xavier Martin (1785-1809)
 Fleury Mesplet (1774-1794)
 Joseph Nancrede (1789, 1795-1796)

Holland

Anne Catharine (Hoof) Green (1767-1775)
 Peter Timothy (1739-1782)

Switzerland

Melchior Steiner (1775-1797)
 Leonard Yundt (1793-1806)

Russia

Charles Cist (1775-1805)