CATALOGUE OF AN EXHIBITION FOR THE BICENTENARY OF ISAIAH THOMAS


** Isaiah Thomas, at the age of six, was apprenticed to Zechariah Fowle, a Boston printer, in 1756. Samuel Draper was a journeyman printer and later a partner of Fowle and contributed much to the training of Thomas.

PRINGLE, JOHN. The Life of General James Wolfe, the Conqueror of Canada . . . Boston, 1760.

** Thomas must have done much of the type setting on the books by Adams and Pringle. He began setting type for Z. Fowle and S. Draper, immediately after becoming an apprentice, on a reprint of the ballad "The Lawyer's Pedigree."


** The first number of this very important American newspaper appeared August 7, 1770. It had a checkered career during the Revolution but survived and continued until May 27, 1904. The issue for May 5, 1775, contains Thomas' account of his participation in the battle of Lexington. For a full description of the various names and publishers of the paper see C. S. Brigham: History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690–1820, volume 1, pages 319–320, 415–418.


** This is the first of the long and famous series of almanacs published by Thomas. It is valued especially for the print of the Paul Revere picture of the Boston Massacre.


** Thomas broke his apprentice's bond in 1765 and was absent from Boston much of the time until 1770. He went to Halifax, N. S., Portsmouth, N. H., and Charleston, S. C. Soon after his return, Fowle took him as a partner, but within a few months Thomas bought him out.


** In October, 1779, Thomas bought out Fowle and conducted the shop on Union street near the Market in his own name. The pamphlets by Weld and Adams are numbers 29 and 30 in the Charles Lemuel Nichols Bibliography of the Books Printed by Isaiah Thomas.

THE MASSACHUSETTS CALENDAR; or an Almanack. For the Year of our Lord Christ, 1774 . . . By Ezra Gleason. Boston, 1773.

** Although he had issued the first of his series of almanacs in 1771, Thomas printed this one for Ezra Gleason in 1773.


** As his business expanded Thomas took partners. From 1773 to 1817, there were twenty different combinations of partnerships. Some of them continued for only a few months while others lasted many years. The first of these partners was Henry W. Tinges who was in charge of the printing shop and bookstore in Newburyport 1773–74.

THE ROYAL AMERICAN MAGAZINE, or Universal Repository of Instruction and Amusement. Boston, 1774–75.

** This "was an important step in the development of American publishing."–Shipton. The magazine included illustrations, songs with music, and both serious and light reading. "Six numbers were published by Thomas, each of 49 pages, from January to June inclusive, and the magazine was then transferred to Joseph Greenleaf" (Nichols) who continued it through eight more numbers.


** Religious books always formed a significant part of the annual output of the Thomas press in Worcester. Of the nine items published in 1779 four were of this character.


** The first of the series titled Thomas's New England Almanack, of which this is a continuation, was published in 1774 for the year 1775. The name was changed to the above on the issue for 1779. The almanac for 1781 sold 3000 copies.


** Sermons were popular in print. Although they were not mass production items, many were published by Thomas.


** Several editions of this English grammar were issued in England before it was brought to this country and reprinted by Thomas. From the preface: "It is generally acknowledged, that, not only for ladies, but for young Gentlemen designed merely for Trade, an intimate Acquaintance with the Properties, and Beauties of the English Tongue, would be a very desirable and necessary Attainment." The imprint is "Printed by I. Thomas; for E. Battelle, and W. Green, in Boston."


** This, a second edition of an election sermon, is longer than most such compositions. It runs to 174 pages.


** The year 1786 was a busy one for Thomas, but only two of the publications were sermons. Juveniles were occupying the time of the printers.
FISHER, GEORGE. The Instructor: or, American Young Man's Best Companion... Worcester, 1786.

This is the second Worcester edition. The first edition printed by Thomas was issued a year earlier and was reprinted from the thirtieth English edition. The English and American editions seem to be alike except that the word American has been inserted by Thomas.


In 1786, Thomas published two editions of the Psalms as arranged by Isaac Watts. Each contained a collection of hymns, re-arranged and enlarged in the second edition. This book appears to be a printing, with separate title-page, of the hymns of the second edition and is paginated 123-224. At the end is a page advertising "Books... for sale by Isaiah Thomas in Worcester, among them are the following in Divinity..."

WORCESTER MAGAZINE. Worcester, April 1786-March 1788.

Because of the state tax on advertising in newspapers, Thomas discontinued the publication of The Spy for two years and issued this weekly in its place. "It continued the same kind of news as had been printed in the newspaper, current intelligence, death and marriage notices, and advertisements, which being in a magazine were not subject to tax."—Bingham.

THE HISTORY OF LITTLE GOODY TWO-SHOES... Worcester, 1787.

THE HOLY BIBLE ABRIDGED... for the Use of Children... Worcester, 1796.

THE HOLY BIBLE ABRIDGED... for the Use of Children... Boston, 1791.

The paucity of books for children early concerned Isaiah Thomas. In 1786, he began publishing a series of juvenile books, which finally, according to his own list, included sixty-six titles in 119 editions.

Massachusetts. Constitution. The Constitution or Frame of Government, for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts... Ratified... the 25th Day of October, 1780... Worcester, 1787.

Thomas was never the official publisher for the state of Massachusetts, and he printed officially only one book for the Provincial Congress. However, he reprinted this important document which was in popular demand.


Although as early as 1772, in Boston, Thomas had published an edition of Watts' version of the Psalms and had issued at least two other editions of the Watts Psalter, this is his first edition of the Psalms as arranged by Brady and Tate.


When opportunity offered, Thomas was pleased to print popular works of literature. He issued the first Worcester edition of this play in 1785.

Minot, George Richards (1738-1802). The History of the Insurrection in Massachusetts, in the Year MDCCCLXXVI... Worcester, 1788.

In 1788, Thomas was using the types purchased from Fry, from Calson, from Wilson, for which he spent over $6000 in two years. In 1789, he issued a specimen book which advertised as fine an assortment of type as could be found in America. Minot's History is a contemporary account of Shay's Rebellion.

Brown, William Hill (1766-1793). The Power of Sympathy... Boston, 1789.

The Power of Sympathy is considered the first American novel. It is said that the families of Morton and Apthorp, whose tragedy seems to be depicted, endeavored, with Thomas' cooperation, to suppress the edition by buying up the copies. It is a scarce book.


Self Knowledge is another of the very popular English books which Thomas reprinted.

The Massachusetts Magazine: or, Monthly Museum... Boston, 1789-1796. 8 volumes [of which Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews published five through 1793].

A magazine is the nursery of literary expression" was its motto. Its departments included "Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosopny, Mathematics, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, News, Marriages, Deaths, Meteorological Observations, &c."—Shipton.


Of the ten works printed in 1790 in Worcester, aside from the Almanac and the Spy, three were sermons, one was on medicine, one a school book, and one was Blackstone's Commentaries (to be found in the Law Library of this University).


This treatise on agriculture, the first of its kind written in this country, indicates the variety of interests for which Thomas used his press. Its author was a minister as well as a practical farmer.

Morse, Jedidiah (1761-1826). Geography Made Easy... Boston, 1790.

Thomas and Andrews acquired the copyright for this geography from the author in 1790. The contract specified that the printers were to have five percent of all profits. Nineteen editions were printed. The eight plates were engraved by Amos Doolittle.


The book as composed is a series of letters from Watson's various stops in Holland. While on this tour Watson became much interested in canals, and after his return to America he endeavored to promote them here. He envisaged a canal around Niagara Falls and one across the state of New York.


Only volume two of this important book carries the Thomas and Andrews imprint. The author wished his son Joseph to print the volume, but his press did not arrive from England in time. "It was therefore agreed that Joseph was to be employed by Thomas and Andrews to print the volume on their press, Belknap furnishing the paper and paying $75 6d for each run of 800 impressions of a 46-page sheet."—Shipton.

Belknap, Jeremy (1744-1798). The Foresters, an American Tale... Boston, 1792.

The partnership of longest duration and greatest success was that of Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, 1788-1880. Andrews was in charge of the printing plant and book-store in Boston. He became wealthy and kept his fortune to himself whereas Thomas used his for his various philanthropies. This book, a humorous allegory, is a literary landmark.
A COMPLETE Guide for the Management of Bees, through the Year . . . Worcester, 1792.

* The first of the partners taken by Isaiah Thomas to assist * with the Worcester store and shop was Leonard Worcester who may have been an apprentice with Thomas at one period and who, for a time, printed the Spy while it was under the management of Isaiah Thomas, Jr. FOSTER, EDMUND (1752-1826). The Ministry of Reconciliation Illustrated . . . Worcester, 1792.

* The partnership of Thomas and Worcester continued from * 1798 to 1799. This book was printed early in this period.


* Prior to 1794, the little music issued in this country was * printed from engraved plates. In that year Isaiah Thomas imported music type and began printing with it. He has been * called the "father of the music industry in America." The first * music book printed typographically in America is his Laus Deo * of 1796.


* Thomas and Andrews secured an exclusive contract from * Noah Webster to print his books for fourteen years. They paid * 2000 for the copyright of the speller and 50 each for the * grammar and selections. They issued thirty editions of the * speller (a total of 300,000 copies), fourteen editions of the * selections, and six of the grammar.


* Some of the best sellers in the Isaiah Thomas list of text * books were the Morse geographies. Although the publisher * and the author engaged in mutual recriminations, many copies * of the several editions were sold to the financial advantage * of both parties. Part I of the Universal Geography is a new edition * of Morse's American Geography, first published in 1789 in * Elizabethtown, New Jersey.


* One hundred and fifty years ago, as now, the publishing * of school books was a profitable industry. Isaiah Thomas, * utilizing his equipment for mass production and his skill in * merchandising, amassed a fortune from this branch of his busi- * ness. The firm of Thomas and Andrews which, after 1798, * printed most of the text books, was for some time the largest * printing establishment in America.


* "Mr. Thomas has also carried on the bookbinding business * very extensively; and is now engaged in building, in Wor- * cester, as large a Paper Mill as is in this state. His Bookstore * in Worcester is kept well filled with a large assortment of Books * in all branches of Literature."—Whitney.


* Alexander's Grammatical Institute is one of the earliest * Latin grammars prepared by an American. Apparently it * was not popular since only one edition is listed. The author's * English grammar, however, went through at least ten editions.


* A number of the most important books published by * Thomas were issued in Boston. The firm "Isaiah Thomas * and E. T. Andrews" printed several works by Belknap.


* Most of the printing of music was done in Boston by the * partners, Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews. William * Billings was a Boston singing-master, composer of hymns, and * choir director, who introduced the pitch-pipe in choir work. Paine, Thomas (1737-1809). The Age of Reason . . . Worcester, 1794.

* This was the printer's own copy with his name inscribed * on the title-page. It is in a typical Thomas binding, tree * calf with gilt back. Isaiah Thomas associated his son, Isaiah, Jr., * with him in two or three partnerships but the son did not have * his father's ability. He preceded his father in death.


* Another of Thomas' popular literary publications was the * abridged edition of Pamela, most copies of which were * worn out completely. This one is sadly battered.

GRAM, HANS. The Massachusetts Compiler of * Theoretical and Practical Elements of Sacred Vocal * Music . . . Boston, 1795.

* Included in this book is the first article on harmony written * in this country which, however, was compiled mostly from * foreign authors.


* "Pike's arithmetic, particularly in abridged form, was the * first widely popular treatise by a native American."—Kar- * piniski. This, the second edition, was printed at Worcester * by Isaiah Thomas. The first edition was printed for him at New­ * buryport by J. Mycall.


* Thomas is said to have taken unusual care with the publi- * cation of these poems. The book was printed on his original * press on wove paper made especially for it at his paper mill, * and contains illustrations engraved in Worcester. The poems * were first published in England in 1784.


* This book although not one of his mass production publi- * cations was sufficiently popular to warrant a second edition. * It lists in the imprint, as was common at the time, the stores * at which it could be purchased, "Printed at Boston, by J. * Thomas and E. T. Andrews [Proprietors of the Work.] Sold * by them, J. White, D. West, and E. Larkin, in Boston; by * Thomas, Son & Thomas, in Worcester; by Thomas, Andrews & * Butler, in Baltimore; and by Thomas, Andrews & Penniman, in * Albany.—Nov. 1796.


* This edition of the almanack sold 29,000 copies. The first * issue to carry this heading was for the year 1792.


* For the years 1796-97, Isaiah Thomas, Jr. and a distant * relative, Alexander Thomas, were associated with Thomas,
Sr. in conducting the business in Worcester, but the two young men soon branched out for themselves elsewhere. The imprint used was "Thomas, Son & Thomas."


* The second edition of the New England Farmer, with the * imprint "at the press of Isaiah Thomas, by Leonard Worcester for Isaiah Thomas," was printed with a different font of type and on different paper stock, probably from Thomas' own paper mill, from the edition of 1796. Thomas rarely used the same types for different printings within a year. * Thomas reached the peak of his business between 1793 and 1796. Competition increased then, and other factors caused the decline of his printing. In 1802 he withdrew from active participation in that one of his many interests.


* Although Thomas was not enthusiastic about the Pike * arithmetic he recognized that they were the best available. * They were staples with Thomas and kept his presses running for many years. This edition was "Printed . . . at the press of Isaiah Thomas by Leonard Worcester for said Thomas."


* Isaiah Thomas was a modern in many aspects of his busi * ness methods. He appreciated the value of chain stores and the savings possible when a publisher could sell his products in stores which he controlled. At various times, he had bookstores in at least eleven different cities. * Connected with some of them were printing offices. This edition of the popular textbook by Noah Webster has this imprint which lists some of his stores: "Printed at Boston, by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, at Faust's statue, no. 45 Newbury Street. Sold wholesale and retail, at their bookstore by said Thomas, in Worcester; by Thomas, Andrews & Penniman, in Albany; and by Thomas, Andrews & Butler, in Baltimore, 1797."


* This abridgment was published for those who could not * afford the larger work and as a pocket volume for travelers. * It contains, in an appendix, a table of Post Offices in the United States.


* Holden was a carpenter who kept a music store and taught * music. He was also a minister. He wrote at least twenty-one * hymns, and composed the music for many of them. The best * known of his tunes is "Coronation," still used in hymn books. * He directed the music at the memorial service for George Washing ton in Charlestown on the last day of 1799.


* This was the authoritative study of printing in America * for more than a hundred years. It is the work of a careful * student who spent half a lifetime collecting the material for it. * It carries the imprint of Isaiah Thomas, Jr.


* A second copy of the History is shown because it is in the * original vellum binding and is a presentation copy from Philadelphia printer John Dunlap to Rev. Dr. Andrews, President of the University of Pennsylvania, December 20, 1810. The book went to press January 4, 1810 but was not completed until August 14.


* Thomas maintained a branch store and printing office in * Walpole, N. H., from 1793 until 1818 as "Isaiah Thomas & Co." A newspaper was published there from 1793 until 1810. owned and sponsored by him. The "Company" in 1813 was Anson Whipple and possibly Cheever Fitch or Felch.


* Isaiah Thomas presented a collection of 500 books to * Allegheny College, when the library was being founded. * The list of these books appears in the library catalogue of 1823.


* The second edition was published as volumes 5 and 6 of * the Transactions and Collections of the American Antiquarian Society. It is introduced by a lengthy "Memoir of Isaiah Thomas by his grandson, Benjamin Franklin Thomas." For many years this was the best biography of the famous printer.


* This letter, in the handwriting of Isaiah Thomas and * signed by him, requests the firm of Thomas and Thomas of Walpole to give him detailed information as to the date of publication, the number of copies issued, the size of the book and the retail price per copy of each title printed by that company, in the list submitted. The firm was composed of * Isaiah Thomas and Alexander Thomas, a distant relative. The partners operated a bookstore and printing shop from 1798 to * 1808, when the business was taken over by another partnership, * L. Thomas, E. T. Andrews, and Cheever Fitch. The highest * priced book seems to have been Hunter's Sacred Biography, * vol. 4, which sold for $7.00. At the other extreme was * Collection of Contra Dances selling for $0.125.

Catalogue prepared by Francis L. D. Goodrich.