



A DICTIONARY OF
**Colonial
American
Printers'
Ornaments &
Illustrations**

By *ELIZABETH CARROLL REILLY*





AMERICAN
ANTIQUARIAN
SOCIETY

A Dictionary of Colonial American Printers' Ornaments and Illustrations, by Elizabeth Carroll Reilly, reproduces in actual size the more than 2000 relief-cut ornaments and illustrations used by American printers from 1640 to 1776. Each ornament and illustration is accompanied by a listing of the names and locations of the printers who used it. Bibliographical references drawn primarily from Charles Evans's *American Bibliography* and Roger P. Bristol's *Supplement to Charles Evans' American Bibliography* note the imprint containing the first appearance of each ornament or illustration in each year of its use. The American Antiquarian Society-Readex Microprint Early American Imprint Series has reproduced most of the imprints in those bibliographies.

This graphic dictionary contains valuable material for the study of colonial America from both bibliographical and historical perspectives. The designs and the accompanying annotation can aid librarians, dealers, and collectors in identifying colonial books, pamphlets, and broadsides which lack imprints or colophons. The dictionary's Index of Printers is, in effect, an inventory of much of the ornament and illustration stock of each colonial printing house. The Index of Dates, which follows the Printers' Index, is a chronological listing of the ornaments and illustrations, which enables one to trace the importation practices of colonial printers.

In the historical sense, the collection of ornaments is an aid in the study of the relationship between colonial printers and the Old World. The widespread use of imported cast-metal ornaments or "printer's flowers" by colonial printers and the preponderance of English and German designs in the larger engraved ornaments demonstrate the cultural and economic dependence of the colonies on England, Germany, and Holland. The listings may therefore be useful in the study of trading practices and channels of importation.

The dictionary, furthermore, provides the means of studying relationships among printers. The colonial printer's lot was one of difficult working conditions, poor inks, worn types, and paper shortages. These primitive conditions made business relationships among printers in the early years of American printing both necessary and frequent. Ornament and illustration blocks were frequently traded, sold, or shared. Thus, by examining the listings accompanying the cuts, one can trace the use of a block by a number of printers and can learn something of the business and family relationships that prompted the appearance of the same block in the stock of a number of printing shops.

The illustrations gathered here are important to the historian of art because they are among the earliest examples of American graphic art. For better or worse, they demonstrate the taste and skill of colonial American craftsmen. Many were cut by the printer himself or by one of his employees. Others were the work of artists hired by the printer to illustrate the text. John Foster, Justus Fox, Isaiah Thomas, and Paul Revere are a few of the craftsmen whose works appear in this dictionary. Although most of the illustrations that appeared in American books, pamphlets, and broadsides before the Revolution were crudely designed and executed, their vitality and artistic innocence make them extremely appealing.

Finally, the entries provide valuable material for studies of the economic, religious, political, and cultural environment of their times. Through design and subject matter they reveal regional variations in customs and thought. They not only document events and individuals of the colonial period but reflect the thought and impulses on which the printing of that period was based.

This book has been brought out as a tribute to the late printer and publisher Alden P. Johnson, who, with the late director of the American Antiquarian Society, Clifford K. Shipton, conceived the project twenty years ago. Klaus Gemming designed the volume and the Meriden Gravure Company executed the photography and printing.

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