

Accounts before 1730

Introduction: Suitably, Franklin's first extant account is with the Boston bookseller John Phillips, for we know that the book-loving Franklin bought and read incessantly when he was a boy and young man and that the only good bookstores in the colonies at the time were in Boston. It nevertheless seems surprising that he spent the large sum of three pounds and three shillings when he was relatively impecunious. The next accounts are with Thomas Denham (d. 1728), the Quaker merchant and substitute father with whom Franklin returned from England in 1726.

The surviving 1729 accounts are mainly from the back of Ledger A&B, entered under the names of the debtors and creditors. They were probably copied from a previous daybook which does not survive. I have entered them chronologically under the date recorded with the account. Unfortunately, many of these accounts were simply dated "1729" and so are entered at the year-end. Most bills are for the forms that Franklin and Meredith printed or for advertisements, especially in the Pennsylvania Gazette (PG), which the partners bought on 25 September 1729.

Franklin's Junto friend Nicholas Scull, now a deputy sheriff, seems to have been his best customer in 1729. Isaac Decow, of Burlington, New Jersey, who predicted Franklin's future success, also turns up. Simon Edgell, the pewterer and merchant from whom Franklin rented the house at 139 Market Street (1728-1738), was an early customer. The merchant William Rawle (d. 1741), who later became a member of the Library Company and the Union Fire Company, advertised several times in the PG. The wealthy merchant and later mayor of Philadelphia, Edward Shippen, also did business on credit with the partners.

Franklin and Meredith set up a small stationery shop by 1729. Besides paper, they no doubt carried ink, and the materials to make ink (oil and lampblack), and a few of the most common books, like hornbooks, spellers, and bibles. Joseph Growden bought six almanacs (15

Dec); William Mogridge bought a pint of oil (15 Dec); and William Jones bought 19 reams of paper (1729). A few entries reveal the goods and services the partners took in barter. William Jones exchanged work for a series of items, extending at least to 20 Dec 1730. Jones, therefore, seems to be the first person to work for Franklin and Meredith.

Imprints. In 1728, two job printings are mentioned: a brief "account of Pennsylvania" which Edward Farmer paid for, and a large number of depositions printed for the lawyer and innkeeper ("the Indian King in Market Street") Owen Owen.

There are no records in Franklin's accounts concerning the partners's first recorded printing, William Sewall's History of the Quakers (1728; Miller 1), nor of their first paper currency printing, the Delaware £12,000 printing of 1729 (Miller 3). Franklin printed his own Modest Inquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency (Miller 4) early in April, 1729, and sold it for 6 pence (see *Life* 1:398, fig.28). As a political pamphlet on a currently controversial topic, it was probably popular, but no indication of a second edition exists. The partners probably kept the print standing for a few weeks and printed more from the same type. Franklin had sufficient copies left two years later to send a dozen to his brother James (30 Oct 1731).

Almanacs were a staple of every printer's business from November through January. Franklin evidently proposed to Thomas Godfrey, his Junto friend who was sub-leasing part of 139 Market Street, that the mathematician compile an almanac, which the partners would print. It went on sale in October (Miller 5). The partners and Godfrey thought that Isaac Watts's Psalms (Miller 2) would sell well, but it did not. The pedlar Adams took a copy on 21 Nov 1730. The following year, 28 October 1731, Franklin's former Boston schoolteacher George Brownell bought two dozen. Two days later, 30 October 1731, Franklin sent 100 copies to his brother

James. And on the same date he sent 36 copies unbound (Miller 2 mistakenly says 40 copies) and another dozen (bound?) to his South Carolina partner Thomas Whitemarsh. Probably John Meredith paid the partners to print his Short Discourse Proving the Jewish Sabbath is repealed (Miller 7), though Franklin also sold the pamphlet. The almanac maker John Jerman purchased one on 11 August 1730, and Franklin sent 24 copies to his brother James on 30 October 1731.

1724 Chronology [Calendar 11]:

No information on the rate of exchange in McCusker, though in 1725, £139.34 Pa currency was worth £100 sterling; McCusker 184.

5 May, Tuesday. BF's note of payment to the bookseller John Phillips. Dated "Boston May 5th 1724," for 3.3.0. PHS; printed, P 1:53. Though the Papers editors were uncertain of the date "5" in "5 May," I have examined the original at PHS and 5 May is correct. Both the old nineteenth-century catalogue card at PHS and the facsimile of the document published in 1899 confirm 5 May. PMHB 23 (1899): 396. *Life* 1:248, fig. 20.

1726 Chronology [Calendar 7]:

No information on the rate of exchange in McCusker, though in 1725, £139.34 Pa currency was worth £100 sterling; McCusker 184.

20 Oct, Thursday. Denham debited Franklin £1.0.0 for cash. Thomas Denham account book, PHS, p. 18. See also 21 and 27 Oct; 7 and 21 Dec, 1726; 1 April 1727; credits 24 Dec 1726 and 1 Sept 1728.

21 Oct, Friday. Denham charged Franklin £4.4.0 for "Sundry's." Thomas Denham account book, PHS.

27 Oct, Thursday. Denham debited Franklin £0.2.5 for "1 Cap." Thomas Denham account book, PHS.

7 Dec, Wednesday. Denham debited Franklin 12s for "Cash lent." Thomas Denham account book, PHS.

19 Dec, Monday. Denham recorded that he paid John Pain £10, for "Cash For Benjamin Franklin's Passage." Denham Account Book, PHS, p. 36. Roach, "BF" 136 mistakenly read "Pain" as "Crain" and "19 Dec" as "29 Dec." Cf. 1 Sept 1729.

21 Dec, Wednesday. Denham debited Franklin 5s for "Cash lent." Thomas Denham account book, PHS, p. 18.

24 Dec, Saturday. Denham credited BF with £6.0.0 "By Profit and Loss For 10 Weeks Service." Thomas Denham account book, PHS.

1727 Chronology [Calendar 1]:

In 1727, £149.58 Pa currency = £100 sterling; McCusker 184.

1 April, Saturday. Denham debited Franklin £10.0.0 "To Cash for thy Passage in the Ship Berkshire." Cf. 19 Dec 1726. The total debited to BF is £16.3.5. Cf. 20 Oct 1726 and 1 Sept 1728. Thomas Denham account book, PHS.

1728 Chronology [Calendar 9]:

In 1728, £150.62 Pa currency = £100 sterling; McCusker 184.

4 July, Thursday. Thomas Denham died, forgiving Franklin's £10.3.5 debt for his return passage to America and for several charges in an oral addition to his will, recorded on 1 Sept 1729. A 41. See 1 Sept.

1 Sept, Sunday. "By the Evidence of Richard Armit & Uxor and Eliz[abeth] Hill, it appears that this debt [£10.3.5] was forgiven by Thomas Denham." Denham Account Book, PHS, p. 18. [That amount plus the £6 already paid to Franklin on 24 Dec 1726, was the amount that Franklin owed Denham.]

9 Nov, Saturday. BF, Dr. to N. Reddish & A. Paxton, to a Bottle Bitters, 1.2; ditto [no date, before 27 Feb 1729], 1.2.

Accounts dated 1728:

Edward Farmer Esq. Dr. For printing 100 Accts. of Pennsylvania, 1.14.6 [Miller A1]. Contra, For Cash, 1.0.0. For Wm. Dewees junior's Assumption, 14.6, Total 1.14.6. Ledger A&B 174-75.

Owen Owen Esq. Dr. For Deputations, 2.10.0. Dr. For an Advt. In Gaz. No. 49 [13 Nov 1729], 5.0. For an Advt in Gaz No. 124 [1 April 1731]. Contra, Cr. [By "he says he paid for Deputations," 2.10, BF has written "no no"]. Ledger A&B 174-75. Cf. accounts dated 1728.

1729 Chronology [Calendar 4]:

In 1729, £148.61 Pa currency = £ 100 sterling; McCusker 184.

27 Feb, Thursday. BF, Dr. to N. Reddish & A. Paxton for nailes, 2.6. V66:54a.

12 March, Wednesday. Nicholas Scull, For 200 bail bonds. 16s.8d [Miller A5]. 400 bail bonds with Charles Read's name. 1.13.4 [Miller A6]. 100 summonses. 8s.4d [Miller A7]. Contra By an Acct. of Expenses, Cr. [no amount given]. Ledger A&B 172-73.

7 May, Wednesday. Wm. Hutchins, Dr. For Sundries, 1.10.1/2. Contra For dry'd Venison etc., 1.0.1/2. Ledger A&B 172-73.

8 June, Sunday. William Rawle, Dr. For 1 Doz Bonds, 3.0. Ledger A&B 194.

11 June, Wednesday. Richard Smith, Senior, of Burlington, Dr. Blanks of several Sorts, 12.6. Contra, Cr. by Cash, 12.6. Ledger A&B 176-77.

22 June, Sunday. Nicholas Scull, For 100 summonses. 8s.4d [Miller A8]. 1 Doz. counter bail bonds. 1s.8d [Miller A9]. Ledger A&B 172.

June. Isaac Decow of Burlington, Dr. For Blanks of several Sorts, 12.6. Contra, Cr. For some Blanks returned. Ledger A&B 176-77.

June. Evan Morgan, Shopkeeper, Dr. For 1000 8d Bills, 2.10.0 [Miller A3]. Cr. For Cash in sd. Bills, 1.0.0. Ledger A&B 174-75.

14 July, Monday. Evan Morgan, Shopkeeper, Dr. For 1 pair Indentures, 0.6. Ledger A&B 174.

1 Sept, Monday. Nicholas Scull, For 20 bail bonds [Miller A10]. 1.8. Ledger A&B 172.

22 Sept, Monday. Nicholas Scull, For 200 bail bonds [Miller A11]. 1.6.8. Ledger A&B 172.

1 Oct, Wednesday. Edward Shippen Dr. For an Advertisement about Soap, 3.0. Dr. For Advertisement in Gazette No. [sic]. Ledger A&B 192.

2 Oct, Thursday. Rees Pritchard of Whiteland, Chester County, Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette, 3.0. Ledger A&B 192.

- . William Dewees Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette, 5.0. Contra, Cr. By Cash, 5.0. Ledger A&B 192-93.
- Ante 5 Oct, Sunday. At several Times before 5 October, Sunday. Cha. Read, Esq. Dr. For 300 Summons, 1.5.0 [Miller A4]; and Advertisement, 3.0; <Deputations, 16.8> [crossed out]; charg'd to N. Scull, 3.0; 100 Summons, 8.4. Ledger A&B 178.
- 5 Oct, Sunday. Nicholas Scull, 100 notes of hand. 8s.4d [Miller A12]. For An Account Book, 10.4-1/2. Ledger A&B 172.
- 1 Dec, Monday. David Davis of Goshen, Dr. For an Advertisement in N48 [10 Nov 1729], 3.0. <Advertisement, Single, for 5.0> [crossed out with notation, "The last Article's a Mistake."] Contra Cr. For a Mistake, 5.0. Contra Cr. By Cash, 3.0. Ledger A&B 192-93.
- 4 Dec, Thursday. Edward Horne, Dr. For an Advertisement in Gazette N55 [4 Dec 1729], 5.0. Ledger A&B 194.
- . William Rawle, Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N55 [4 Dec], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N57 [16 Dec], Ship Boneta, 5.0. For an Advt. in Gazette N73 [9 April 1730], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N74 [16 April, 1730], a Grist Mill, 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N121 [11 March 1730\1], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N127 [22 April 1731], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N145 [26 Aug 1731], 2 advts. 6.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N177 [20 April 1732], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N181 [18 May 1732], 5.0. Dr. For an Advt. in Gazette N237 [14 June 1733], 5.0. Dr. For 1 Doz Bonds, 3.0. Dr. For Almanacks, [no amount]. Dr. Left unpaid of a quire of Post [paper], 0.6. Dr. For an Almanack 5d. Ledger A&B 194.
- 9 Dec, Tuesday. Isaac Decow of Burlington, Dr. For 1 Doz Bonds, 3.0. Ledger A&B 176.
- 15 Dec, Monday. Joseph Growdon, Esq. Dr. For 6 Almanacks, 2.6. Ledger A&B 180.
- . Wm. Mogridge Dr. For 1 Pint of Oyl, 1.0. Ledger A&B 182.
- 16 Dec, Tuesday. Nicholas Scull, Dr. For an Advertisement of the Servt. in Gaz. 57 [16 Dec], 3.0. Ledger A&B 172. Cf. 15 June 1730.
- 20 Dec, Saturday. Thomas Dunning Dr. For a Pair Indentures, 0.6. Ledger A&B 180.

1729 [undated entries]:

- Stephen Barton, Dr. For an Advertisement, 7.6. Contra, Cr. By a Topsail, Ledger A&B 176-77.
- William Bradford, N.York, Dr. For an Advt. against Leeds & Harry, 5.0. Ledger A&B 192.
- Mr. Simon Edgell Dr. For 1/2 an Advt. after Servant run away with Sheed's Man, 2.6. Contra For A Kettle 1/2 between me and Mr. Bradford. Ledger A&B 170-71.
- Joseph Growdon, Esq. Dr. For 6 Bonds, 1.6. Ledger A&B 180.
- Andrew Hannah, Dr. For Sundries, 3.0. Contra, Cr. By a Topsail, 3.0. Ledger A&B 174-75.
- Wm. Jones, Dr. For 19 [parcels?] Paper, 1.3. Contra, By Work in full, 2.14.0. [The credit entry is undated, but for the total amount owed by Jones see 20 Dec 1729.] Ledger A&B 178-79.
- Wm. Mogridge. Dr. Contra, Cr. For a Piece of Linen by Whitmarsh, 3.9.0. Ledger A&B 183.
- Daniel Pegg, For 1 pair of Indentures & an Almanack, 10. For an Advt in Gazette No. 62 [29 Jan 1729/30], 3.0. For Laws. [Probably for the Laws to session of 12 Jan 1729/30, advertised at 2.6 in PG #73, 9 April 1730; Miller 24.] 2.6. For an Advt in Gaz No. 121 [11 March 1730/31]. Contra [blank]. Ledger A&B 182.
- Benjamin Smith of Trenton, Dr. For Sundries, 1.2.10 1/2. Contra, Cr. Returned some Blanks. Ledger A&B 176-7.
- White & Taylor, Dr. For a Bond & Judgment, 0.6. Dr. For 1 Quire Bills of Lading, 6.0. Contra,

Cr. For 1 Ream small Post Paper, 1.6.0. Carried to great Ledger, Fol. 1. Ledger A&B
180-81.