

Inventory of the Goods &c. of Andrew
Bradford Late of Philad^a, died June the
7th Day of March 1742/3

In Plate 236²³ 5¹⁰ - - - - - @ 7/40¹⁰ £... 82. 13. 9
In Cash - - - - - £

- 19 Doz^{1/2} Books young Wain Composita @ 12/ - 11. 12. -
- 9 Doz. D^o - - - - - 26/ - 2. 14. -
- 33 Doz. D^o - - - - - in Sheets - - - - - 2/6 - 4. 3. 9
- 4 Doz. Pfalters - - - - - 6/ - 1. 4. -
- 4^{1/2} Doz. Every Leaf post. Books - - - 25/ - 5. 12. 6
- 17 Doz. Testaments - - - - - 16/ - 13. 12. -
- 25 Doz. Primers - - - - - 2/ - 2. 10. -
- 12 Vol. Newels History &c - - - - - 10/ - 6. - -
- 11 Sermon Books of In Reid, - - - - - 6^o - 5. 6
- 6 Comers Commercium - - - - - 1/6 - - 9. -
- 3 Doz (allow altaris) - - - - - 8/ - 1. 4. -
- 1 Doz. Hoops Garland - - - - - 3/ - - 3. -
- 1 Doz. Acetifolia in Grid - - - - - 4/ - - 4. -
- 8^{1/2} Doz. Bro^d Bibles - - - - - 24/ - 10. 4. -
- 2 Doz. D^o Books - - - - - 36/ - 3. 12. -
- 11 Large D^o - - - - - 6/4 - 3. 6. -
- 15 D^o gilt - - - - - 7/ - 5. 5. -
- 4 D^o Large folio - - - - - 35/ - 7. - -
- 3 Doz. Eukims Goffe Sounds - - - 8/ - 1. 4. -
- 17 Pilgrims Progress - - - - - 6^o - - 8. 6. -
- 11 D^o in 3 parts - - - - - 2/ - 1. 2. -

Detail of Andrew Bradford's Estate Inventory, 1742

Bradford, Andrew (1686?-1742) printer and journalist , **“Inventory of the Goods &c of Andrew Bradford Late of Philad^a, decd Taken the 7th Day of March 1742/3”**

folio, 10 pages, on unwatermarked 18th century paper, likely of American manufacture, formerly folded in quarters, docketed twice on final leaf. There are significant condition issues, paper browned and brittle, separated along folds with considerable loss at intersection of center fold, tears repaired with archival tissue. Despite the issues of condition, a unique document listing the estate inventory of a unique figure, a pioneer printer, publisher, and journalist in colonial Philadelphia.

Manuscript estate inventory of Andrew Bradford, pioneer printer and journalist of Philadelphia, who died November 24, 1742. Bradford printed the first newspaper in the middle colonies and the first magazine in America. Andrew Bradford, like his father William was also a pioneer supporter of the idea of a free press and is credited with setting “forth those principles that later enabled Andrew Hamilton, in New York City, to free John Peter Zenger in the most famous case for press freedom in colonial days.”

The inventory lists Bradford's personal and household effects as well as the inventory of his business. Bradford not only was a printer he also, like most other printers, had attached to his office a large store. Bradford operated at “The Sign of the Bible” an early eighteenth-century general store which carried a wide range of goods and in which he did a considerable business. Bradford's store, like his paper the *American Mercury*, was a popular and profitable undertaking. The wealth of the colony had increased by 1742, the year of Bradford's death, and Bradford's stock includes more luxurious and expensive items, as shown in the present inventory.

The inventory lists a large stock of books, including dozens of Bibles and Testaments, Prayer Books, schoolbooks and primers, including “31 Dozen Horn Books”, dictionaries, literary works, bibles, of all sizes and “quality”, religious books, including 17 copies of Pilgrim's Progress, medical books, including “1 doz Aristotle's Midwife,” German and Welsh language books, likely the products of Bradford's press (Bradford printed the first Welsh book in America, in 1721), elegantly bound blank books, large amounts of paper, vellum and parchment, printed forms, and legal stationery, scientific instruments, dozens of pairs of spectacles, parcels of almanacs and pamphlets, many likely the product of Bradford's press, unbound books, bibles and pamphlets, likely to be bound in Bradford's own bindery, the inventory includes “41 calf and sheep skins”, as well as many other items of the stationer's trade, slates, pencils, quills, etc. Bradford's furnishings are also listed, dishes, silver, gold, and silver watches, “a Chaise and Harness”, textiles, and finally three slaves: “One Negro Man Named Harry”, “One Negro man Named Tonsy” and an unnamed “Negro Woman”. The goods were appraised at over £ 942, by Jon Danby and Richard Sewell.

Andrew Bradford, printer, and journalist, as well as a bookseller, bookbinder, and slave owner - given the evidence from his estate inventory offered here. “Bradford was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, circa 1686, the son of William Bradford, a printer and journalist, and Elizabeth Sowle, whose father, Andrew Sowle, was a printer in London. After being arrested and released for printing a pamphlet by Quaker apostate George Keith, William Bradford moved his family to New York and opened a print shop. Here, Andrew Bradford was trained as a printer. Little is known about his childhood or formal education, but Bradford was probably not the “illiterate” printer Benjamin Franklin was to call him in the disparaging remarks in his *Autobiography* on the state of printing in Philadelphia upon his arrival in the city.

Bradford was listed as a freeman and printer of New York in 1709, the same year he declined Rhode Island's offer to become the colony's printer. In 1710-1711 father and son were in partnership and published three books together; they maintained close business ties throughout their careers. In 1713 Andrew Bradford returned to Philadelphia and was hired to publish "The Acts and Laws of the Province of Pennsylvania, October 14th, 1712 to March 27th, 1713," the first printed collection of the colony's laws, and thus became the unofficial provincial printer. He was the only printer in Philadelphia until 1723 and published the acts of the assembly, Indian treaties, and Governor William Keith's letters and proclamations. Almanacs by Jacob Taylor, Titan Leed, and John Jerman bore Bradford's imprint, as did various books and pamphlets on social, political, and religious matters." Bradford, in addition to being the official printer for the Province, was also the printer for the Society of Friends'.

Bradford's the *American Weekly Mercury*, the first newspaper in Philadelphia, commenced publication on 22 December 1719 and remained in publication for twenty-six years. The venture was initially a partnership with John Copson, a local bookseller at the time. They were assisted by William Bradford, who remained in New York, but took in advertisements for the *Mercury* until he started his own paper, the *New York Gazette*, late in 1725. The *American Mercury* had a wide circulation, and Bradford enjoyed the advantages of being colonial postmaster from 1728 to 1737, which allowed him to accumulate news and to send his own mail at no cost – both of which greatly increased the *American Mercury's* circulation.

Until 1728 the *American Mercury* did not have any local competition, but upon hearing that Benjamin Franklin was planning to bring out a newspaper, another Philadelphia printer and one of Franklin's former employers, Samuel Keimer, began publishing the *Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences; and the Pennsylvania Gazette*. Franklin, joined later by Joseph Breintnall, sent thirty-two letters modeled on Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's London essay periodical, the *Spectator*, to Bradford for publication in his newspaper. These essays, together called *The Busy-Body*, included remarks designed to attack Keimer and drive him out of the newspaper business; they were a success. Franklin took possession of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729 and became Bradford's chief competition.

Early in his newspaper's existence, Bradford used it to criticize local government. After a pamphlet critical of the provincial government's financial condition was published, perhaps by Bradford, the *American Mercury* included a remark also critical of the province's "sinking credit." Brought before the council, Bradford denied printing the pamphlet and claimed that the newspaper remarks were inserted by a journeyman. Admonished against printing remarks on the colonial governments, Bradford was released, but in 1723 he published an account of James Franklin's censure and imprisonment in New England for publishing "scandalous libels" against the colonial government there. The account included remarks supportive of Franklin and generally of freedom of the press. In 1727 and 1728 Bradford again printed several pamphlets on political topics but was not censured. In 1729, however, Bradford was called before the council again. The government and council found *Busy-Body* essay number twenty-seven, in which Breintnall presents an argument for rotation of public office, to be offensive, appearing, as it did, just before an election. Bradford was jailed but returned to the press shortly, where he continued to publish the *Busy-Body* essays in the *American Mercury*. Bradford's quiet resistance of the council's wishes has been seen as an early principled conflict between the press and government in the colonies.

Bradford also published the first magazine in America. The *American Magazine*, edited by John Webbe, was modeled on Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*, initiated in London some years earlier. Webbe approached Franklin about the venture, but objecting to Franklin's terms, brought the plan to Bradford. In an advertisement in the *American Mercury* announcing the venture, the editor sets

out numerous objectives: to carry news of communities without a press, and to promote liberty and freedom of the press and speech, without engaging in licentious abuses. Franklin, in the meantime, decided to bring out his own *General Magazine*, and he and Webbe waged an editorial battle in the *Gazette* and *American Mercury*. When the magazines were issued, weeks later, Bradford and Webbe had beaten Franklin into print by three days. Both magazines failed, however, in just a few months.

Bradford was married to Dorcas Boels of Freehold, New Jersey, and after her death in 1739, to Cornelia Smith in 1740. His only child by Dorcas, died in infancy or childhood. Sometimes mentioned as a foster son, William Bradford III was Bradford's nephew and was apprenticed to him in the 1730s.

After Bradford's death in Philadelphia, Cornelia Bradford continued to publish the *American Mercury* until 1746. Bradford's reputation rests primarily upon his publication of the first newspaper in the middle colonies and the first magazine in America, as well as upon his consistent if undramatic resistance to the provincial government's desire to control the press."

\$ 12,500.00

American National Biography, volume 3 pp., 352-353

Dictionary of American Biography, vol. 1, part two, pp. 552-553

Ferree, Water L., "Andrew Bradford" A Pioneer Printer of Pennsylvania, *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (July, 1954) pp. 214-227, Penn State University Press, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27769516>

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