

Commentary on the Bibliography

THIS descriptive bibliography undertakes to include all known publications, signed and unsigned, issuing from the Philadelphia printing office of Benjamin Franklin from the spring of 1728, when he first became master of his own shop, through January, 1747/48, when he made David Hall his partner, to January 20, 1766, when the Franklin and Hall partnership was formally dissolved. Not all the items Franklin or Franklin and Hall printed bear their names in the imprint; those unsigned items thought to have come from their press have been included in this study, with the reasons for making the ascription given in the notes.

The bibliography includes also any recorded items carrying the name of Franklin in the imprint even though the actual printing was not done by Franklin's press. This group is a relatively small one; it consists of joint ventures with James Parker, Franklin's New York partner; occasional German-language imprints where Franklin's name appears on the title-page along with that of Johann Böhm or Anton Armbrüster; those out-of-province imprints where Franklin is named as the Philadelphia bookseller, and the Zinzendorf-Bechtel 1742 *Kurzer Catechismus*, which retained Franklin's name on the title-page though reprinted in fraktur in Germany.

Finally, the bibliography includes two small groups of items which carry the name of David Hall alone. In the one group are those pieces which Hall printed on the Franklin and Hall presses for use in the conduct of the bookstore, an enterprise run by Hall separately from the partnership; in the other, two books (Nos. 805, 853), printed by James Parker and naming Hall as the Philadelphia bookseller, but published during the years when Hall and Franklin were still partners.

The entries in this bibliography are arranged chronologically from 1728 to 1766. Within the individual year, the ordering of the entries is alphabetical. The full text, which endeavors to establish the canon for the Franklin press in Philadelphia, consists of three parts:

Part One—the largest portion of the study—is made up of detailed descriptions of the 856 known printed pieces—books, periodicals, newspapers, almanacs, proclamations, advertisements, articles of agreement of newly organized libraries and fire companies, proprietaries' notices, illustrative legal and business forms, lottery tickets, emissions of paper currency—assigned to the Franklin printing house or naming Franklin or Franklin and Hall in the imprint from 1728 to 1766.

Part Two consists of a concise listing of the 545 pieces of job printing which Franklin or Franklin and Hall are known to have completed because of entries in surviving shop journals, ledgers, and workbooks charging specific individuals for particular work done. Many of these items have long since disappeared; others, especially examples of printed legal forms, may yet be found scattered throughout the collections of personal papers held by libraries or private collectors. Interpreting precisely what is and is not job printing or ephemera is not always easy; certain items, like official printing for the government or proprietaries, articles of organization of libraries and fire companies, etc., therefore, have consistently been judged to be more properly handled in Part One than in this second part. What is important for the reader to understand is that the 545 pieces of job printing listed here represent only a portion of such work printed by Franklin or Hall. Printing jobs done for cash were rarely recorded; catchpenny items or supplies of standard legal and business forms sold in the Franklin stationery shop were run off for quick sale and normally not kept account of in the period when Franklin was master of his own shop; there are at present only very desultory and scattered records covering the years 1748–1757, the first decade of the Franklin and Hall partnership, and hence no detailed continuous accounting of job printing done in that period even for customers allowed credit by the firm.

Part Three contains 86 items attributed inaccurately to the Franklin and Franklin and Hall printing house by other bibliographers. Each of these so-called Franklin imprints, herewith removed from the canon, is briefly described, with the reason for its exclusion explained in the notes.

References to the items in all three parts are included in the index and located in the text by entry number: those for Part One numbered 1–856; those for Part Two numbered A1–A545; those for Part Three numbered B1–B86.