One way in which Accessible Archives helps to stimulate interest and research in our primary source databases is by maintaining an extremely active blog presence. During June we will distribute a comprehensive blogathon with a second scheduled for this Fall. In this newsletter we have pulled together a selection of six postings – a “Best of the Blogs”, if you will – from the twelve provided in the initial blogathon and asked our guest writer Jill O’Neil to wrap a narrative around them. We’re sure you will find her coverage both inciteful and informative.

Contemporary Coverage of Historical Events and Thinking

By Jill O’Neill

One of the extraordinary experiences one has in working with collections of primary source documents is tracing from one document to another the unfolding of events as noted in newspapers and other periodicals. Dipping into a variety of the Accessible Archives collections, the reader can follow in half a dozen articles a full century of American history. As these article datelines show, such contemporary news accounts present the frictions of a social order struggling to come to maturity.

Dateline: December 8, 1730, The Pennsylvania Gazette

Our selected century opens with an account of Native Americans meeting King George in September 1730. Accorded a certain degree of dignity, the chiefs were conducted to the Plantation Office in Whitehill in order to be presented to King George II and to formalize a treaty. The ceremony included recognition by Frederick, Prince of Wales. The event was intended to mark the end of hostilities between those tribes and the English colonists.

Yesterday the Indian Chiefs were carried from their Lodgings in King street, Covent Garden, to the Plantation Office at Whitehill, guarded by two Files of Musketeers. When they were brought up to the Lords Commissioners, they sang 4 or 5 Songs in their Country Language; after which the Interpreter was ordered to let them know that they were sent for there to join in Peace with King George and his People; and were desired to say, if they had any Thing further to offer relating to the Contract they had before entered into.

Upon which the King stood up, and gave a large Feather he had in his hand to the Prince, who thereupon spoke to the Lords Commissioners to this Effect.

That they were sensible of the good Usage they received since they came here, and that they would use our People always well; that they came here like Worms out of the Earth, naked, and that we had put fine Cloaths on their Backs, (pointing to the Cloaths) and that they never should forget such king Dealings, but should declare the same to their Countrymen.

And thereupon the Prince laid the Feather with a Bit of Skin upon the Table, saying, It should be as good as the Bible to bind the Contract with King George; and said also, that a Feather should not better love his Son, than they would do us: So made a Peace.

The Commissioners then told them they should have a Copy of the Contract, with the King’s seal to it; and the Governor should entertain them; upon which the King got up and kiss’d the Commissioners, as the Prince had done before; the other Chiefs also did the same; whereupon they sang some more Songs, and then returned home.

This account appeared in The Pennsylvania Gazette, a prominent newspaper published from Philadelphia by owner and frequent contributor, Benjamin Franklin. The Pennsylvania Gazette provided its readership with awareness of activities in the Canadian Maritime Provinces through the West Indies and North and South America. Throughout the course of its publication run the newspaper played an important role in directing colonists’ thinking about politics, including the famous political cartoon by Franklin (Join or Die), as well as novel research, including Franklin’s account of his experimental use of a kite to study electricity.
Dateline: January 21, 1773, The Virginia Gazette

An opinion piece in The Virginia Gazette indicates a growing disenchantedment with the British Crown’s handling of colonial interests. By this point, George III had been on the throne for more than fifteen years. The economic policies of his ministers would in a matter of months allow the passage of the Tea Act in May 1773 with the result of a protest by local merchants in the form of the Boston Tea Party. Still the language of this piece makes clear the discontent in Colonial America even as the respect due a sovereign suffuses the expressed reproach.

How poor is that Prince, amidst all his wealth, whose subjects are only kept by a slavish fear, the gazer of the soul. An iron arm, fastened with a screw, may be stronger, but never so useful, because not so natural as an arm of flesh, joined with muscles and sinews: So loving subjects are more serviceable, as being more kindly united to their Sovereign than those which are only forced on with fear and threatening.

Further on, the anonymous author writes:

Let that Prince, who would beware of conspiracies, be rather jealous of such whom his extraordinary favours have advanced than of those whom his displeasure hath discontented: These want means to execute their pleasures, but those have means at pleasure to execute their desires. A Sovereign being the father of his people, he is bound to treat them as his children, and fear makes them only masters of the body, whereas love makes them rulers over the heart. The crown and scepter are things most weighty: If a Prince be good he is laden with labour; if evil, with infamy. Kings should observe the example of celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and the rest, which have great glory and veneration, but no rest or intermission, being in a perpetual office of motion for cherishing of inferior bodies, expressing likewise the true manner of the motions of government, which, though they ought to be swift and rapid in respect of occasion and dispatch, yet are they to be constant and regular, without wavering or confusion...They likewise are to imitate the Heavens, who do not enrich themselves by the earth and seas, nor keep no dead stock, or untouched treasure, of that they draw to themselves from below, but whatsoever moisture they do levy and take from the inferior elements in vapours they return in showers; only storing them for a time to issue and distribute in season. To search into the actions of Princes dilates more curiosity than honesty; for that which is expedient in a Prince, in a lower fortune, is utterly unmeet.

The piece closes with this final piece of counsel:

Kings rule by their laws as God does by the law of nature, and ought as rarely to put in use their supreme prerogative as God doth his power in working miracles.

Of equal status to The Pennsylvania Gazette, The Virginia Gazette covered the region south of the Potomac River, informing the populace of events affecting the English colonies. The Virginia Gazette was at this time still published from offices in Williamsburg, Virginia although it would later be relocated to the city of Richmond, when that city became the new state capital.

Dateline: August 12, 1778, The Gazette of the State of South Carolina

That the economic model of the colonies was itself exploitative is revealed by looking at the classified ads that ran in this newspaper. Five notices published in that August issue note the label of property applied to human labor in that state. The initial ad offers for sale (though not due to fault of the individual) a male slave used to working in the field. The second offers a reward for the return of Sam, “a dark Mulatto” shoemaker. In the third item, we learn of a runaway wife but the reward goes for the apprehension of one Peter Bourdaju, a deserter who is blamed for the theft of 800 pounds. Both the runaway wife (Angelica Elizabeth Baour) and Mr. Bourdaju are described in great physical detail:

He is about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, thin faced, has a long nose, black curled hair, brown complexion, is slim made, and speaks both French and English; my wife is a short thick made woman, brown complexion, red faced, marked with the small-pox, and has black hair she speaks good English, and a great deal of French when she pleases, and is very bold.

The bilingual couple had lived in Hillsborough Township in South Carolina.

Also listed in the classified ads as runaways are a woman of yellow complexion, Clarinda, formerly belonging to a Mrs Gordon, and a skilled cabinet maker, Henry, who has escaped the ownership of Mrs. Sophia Desering.

The full text is rather harsher:

**RUN AWAY the 4th of August, a negro wench names Clarinda, of a yellow complexion, had on when she went away a cross-bar check coat, a coarse white linen shirt, and a blue handkerchief on her head, and formerly belonged to Mrs. Gordon. Whoever will deliver the said wench to the warden of the work-house in Charlestown, or to the subscribers in King-street, shall receive a reward of fifty pounds currency and all reasonable charges; and whoever harboors or entertains her, may depend upon being prosecuted to the utmost rigor of the law.**

**RUN away from the subscriber, a negro man named Harry, who was sent to me by his Mistress, Mrs. Sophia Desering, to go to Combohee, but he has taken the advantage of his Mistress's letter, and gone to work at the cabinet maker's business in Charlestown, upwards of six weeks since. I do offer a reward of one hundred pounds to any person that will give information of his being employed or harbored by a white person, and twenty if by a negro; or the reward of ten dollars to any one that will deliver him to the Warden of the Workhouse, or to me at Combohee.**

The Accessible Archives collection of South Carolina Newspapers contains four newspapers covering that region -- The South Carolina Gazette, The South Carolina and American General Gazette, The South Carolina Gazette & Country Journal, and The Gazette of the State of South Carolina -- collectively encompassing the years 1732 - 1780.
Dateline: September 1778, *American County Histories*

Others were fleeing the authorities for other reasons. A history of Monmouth and Ocean Counties in New Jersey tells the story of a young Stephen Edwards who was hiding from cavalry officer Captain Jonathan Forman. Forman tracked Edwards to his father’s farm, entering the bedroom of Mrs. Edwards at midnight with a party of men. Forman challenged the woman:

“Who have you here?” said Forman.

A laboring woman,” replied Mrs. Edwards.

The captain detected the disguise, and on looking under the bed, saw Edwards’ clothing, which he examined, and in which he found the papers given him by Colonel Taylor.

He then said, “Edwards, I am sorry to find you! You see these papers? You have brought yourself into a very disagreeable situation—you know the fate of spies!”

Edwards denied the allegation, remarking that he was not such and could not so be considered.

The author of the county history goes on to note:

The guilt of Edwards was conclusively proven; deep sympathy was felt for his parents and wife, but the perils of the patriots at this time were so great that prompt and decisive action was necessary for their own preservation.

The foolishness of Edwards in keeping treasonable papers about him was remarkable. Some features of this affair will remind the reader of the unfortunate Major Andre. It is probable that Edwards was executed about September, 1778.


Dateline: August 18, 1832, *The Liberator*

By the time of this final item in our “century of history”, Charles Carroll, the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence, would be dying. Andrew Jackson was closing out his first term as President of the United States and John Marshall was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. There was a cholera pandemic weighing down on the Eastern seaboard, but at the same time the larger problem of the “Slavery Question” was beginning to be publicly articulated.

In the pages of *The Liberator*, an important advocate for the abolition of slavery, the following report appeared of prophetic remarks made by Mr. Gaston to the youth of the University of North Carolina.

‘On you will devolve the duty which has been too long neglected, but which cannot with impunity be neglected much longer, of providing for the mitigation, and (is it too much to hope for in North Carolina?) for the ultimate extirpation of the worst evil that afflicts the Southern part of our Confederacy.

Full well do you know to what I refer; for on this subject there is, with all of us, a morbid sensitiveness which gives warning even of an approach to it. Disguise the truth as we may, and throw the blame where we will, it is Slavery which more than any other cause, keeps us back in the career of improvement.

It stifles industry and represses enterprise – it is fatal to economy and providence – it discourages skill – impairs our strength as a community...

*The Liberator* would continue to publish through the end of 1865. The full run of issues is available from Accessible Archives.

Connect to our Blog Archive at [http://www.accessible-archives.com/blog/](http://www.accessible-archives.com/blog/)

**Imaging for American County Histories Completed**

We have finalized the imaging portion of our massive *American County Histories* collection. The project culminated with the inclusion of the last volumes from the expanded portions of the New England and Mid-Atlantic Regions. Imaging previously was completed for the original coverage of these areas as well as for the Southeast, Southwest, West, Central and Midwest regions. As with all our collections we are providing customized MARC records, and these free records are now fully available for all completed images. As a reminder access to this database – and to all our collections – is supported through all discovery services.
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