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July 4, 1788. Come for the beer, stay for the bibliography.

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July 4, 1788. Come for the beer, stay for the bibliography.

Abstract

Contextual essay about a printed account of Independence Day celebrations in Philadelphia July 4, 1788.

Keywords

Independence Day, Book History, Francis Hopkinson, Beer

Disciplines

History

Comments

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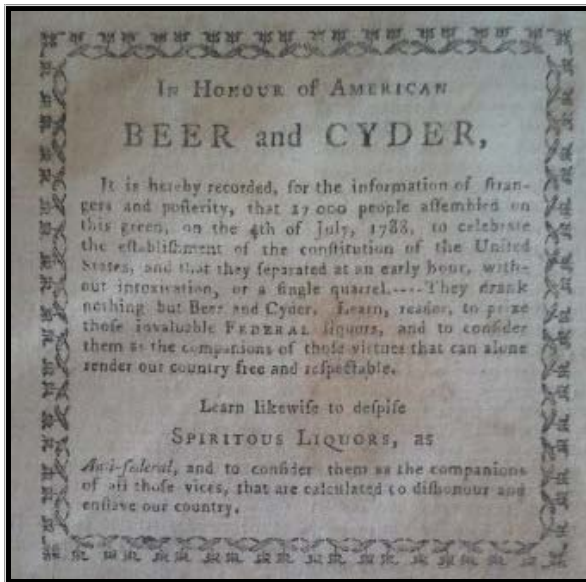
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to the Cultivation & Improvement of a Country, the
Wisdom, Riches, & Strength, Virtue and Piety, the
Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Edu-
cation of Youth, by forming their Manners, imbuing

03 July 4, 1788. Come for the beer,
Wednesday stay for the bibliography.
Jul 2013

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

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"In Honour of American BEER and CYDER. It is hereby recorded, for the information of strangers and posterity, that 17000 people assembled on this Green, on the 4th of July, 1788, to celebrate the establishment of the Constitution of the United States, and that they separated at an early hour, without intoxication or a single quarrel. They drank nothing but Beer and Cyder. Learn, reader, to prize those invaluable FEDERAL liquors, and to consider them as the companions of those virtues which can alone render our country free and respectable.

Learn likewise to despise Spiritous Liquors, as antifederal; and to consider them as the companions of all those vices which are calculated to dishonour and enslave our country."

In celebration of Independence Day I thought I would share this amusing tidbit brought to my attention by Elsa Varela, one of our wonderful catalogers. It comes from the final page of an [account of the July 4th festivities](#) in Philadelphia in 1788 compiled by Penn alum (and signer of the Declaration of Independence) [Francis Hopkinson](#).

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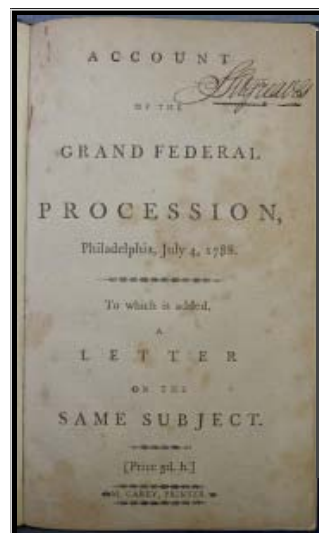
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The author of the account of the celebration decides to close with the above words in praise of the sober festivities, telling the reader that he would like them inscribed on a monument to the day. His stirring final ode to American virtue is lessened however by his subsequent insertion below the highlighted text: "Since writing the above, I have been informed, that there were two or three persons intoxicated, and several quarrels on the green..."

— *Account of the grand federal procession, Philadelphia, July 4, 1788* [ESTC W36742]
Penn Call# AC7 H7777 788a

Though perhaps unfamiliar to us, the jubilant anti-liquor sentiment expressed by the writer was not particularly surprising at the time. The featured speaker at the 1788 event, whose speech is printed in the pamphlet extolled the virtues of "Frugality and temperance." Likewise, temperance tracts and essays made the rounds of American cities and newspapers reprinted sermons on the subject. Many would have known the famous doctor and signer of the declaration Benjamin Rush's *writings on the subject* - just that year in fact he had spoken to the American Methodist Conference about the dangers of alcohol and by 1790 he had developed his well-known "*moral and spiritual thermometer*" of types of beverages.

Now for the bibliography! After pondering what kinds of antifederal activities are likely to happen in Philadelphia tomorrow, I found myself curious about the running title across this, the last page in the pamphlet, it read: "An enquiry into the justice and policy of punishing murder by death." An odd title to have especially because nothing on the page or in the entire pamphlet related to capital punishment.

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— Account of the grand federal procession, Philadelphia, July 4, 1788, p. 22.

Benjamin Rush proved to be the clue as to where the title came from and what exactly had gone on during the printing of the pamphlet. In addition to being an advocate of temperance Rush also opposed the death penalty, writing an essay by the title above in the July 1788 edition of the Philadelphia magazine *The American Museum*. Somewhat to my surprise, in looking at the list of articles in that issue through the digitized [American Periodicals Series](#), I saw the pamphlet account of the procession, appearing directly prior to Rush's capital punishment piece. Rush's article begins on page 78, the same on which the account is listed as ending. Indeed, the two pieces directly adjoin each other, creating a seamless flow in the periodical:



— *The American Museum* (July 1788), pp. 78-79. Penn Call# PSPA AP2.A2 A82

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It turns out that the separate printed pamphlet I began with, like many others of the time was reprinted from type already at hand for the printing of the *American Museum* by Mathew Carey, the publisher of both the magazine and eventual pamphlet. He added a new title page and page numbers but the job was done quickly enough that the orphan running title was left in on the final page – clearly there was a lot of demand to know just how sober and respectable things had been on Independence Day.

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About Mitch Fraas

[Mitch Fraas](#) is the Scholar in Residence at the Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. He is also the interim director of the Penn digital humanities forum. At Penn, Mitch works on a variety of projects cutting across general and special collections, with a special focus on digital humanities. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in history from Duke University and earned his bachelor's degree at Boston College. His doctoral dissertation examined the legal culture of British India in the 17th and 18th centuries, arguing for the existence of a unified early modern British imperial legal culture whether in Philadelphia, Bombay, or London.

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