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Welfare & Happiness of a People, than a proper Edu-
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14
Thursday
JUN 2012

The Calve's Head and Early Printing in Jamaica

POSTED BY MITCH FRAAS IN POSTS

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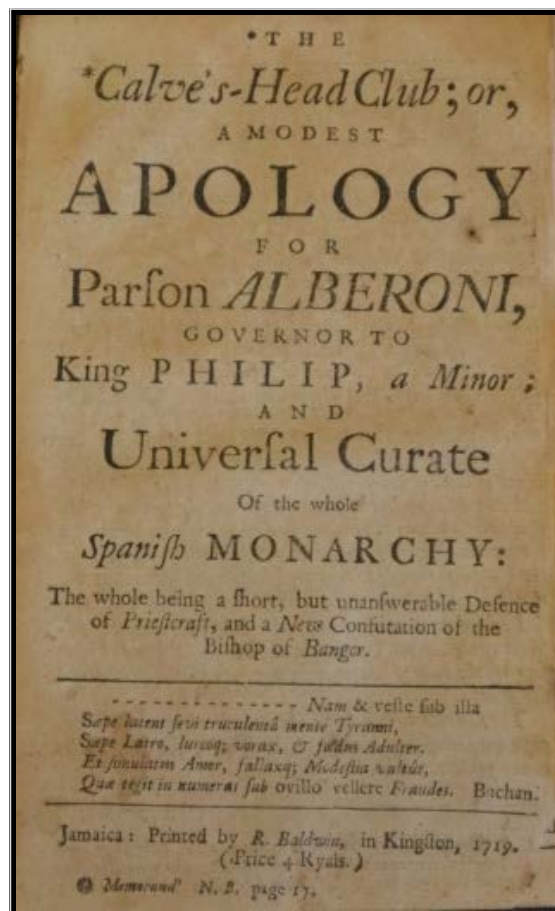
Penn has one of the world's best collections of printed material relating to Jonathan Swift and his work [\[1\]](#). Within this collection is an unassuming pamphlet bound into a volume with other tracts relating to political controversies of Swift's day:

[Edit]

Tags

HD9111.5 L4 1733
[295231]

[The *Calves'-
Head Club; or, a
modest apology
for Parson
Alberoni,
governor to King
Philip, a minor:
and universal
curate of the
whole Spanish
monarchy: the
whole being a
short, but
unanswerable
Defence of
Priestcraft, and a
new confutation
of the Bishop of
Bangor. Jamaica:
printed by R.
Baldwin in
Kingston, 1719.
\[ESTC N67272\]](#)



This particular pamphlet stood out to me because of its unusual place of publication

WELCOME

Welcome to Unique at Penn, part of the family of University of Pennsylvania Libraries blogs. Every week this space will feature descriptions and contextualization of items from the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. The site focuses on those materials held by Penn which are in some sense "unique" - drawn from both our special and circulating collections, whether a one-of-a-kind medieval manuscript or a twentieth-century popular novel with generations of student notes penciled inside.

RECENT POSTS

- The Calve's Head and Early Printing in Jamaica
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- Ann Perrin's album is far from commonplace
- Mussolini's Downfall
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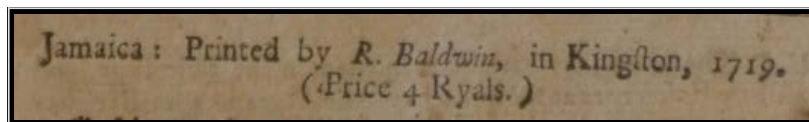
LINKS

- Penn Libraries Catalog

– Jamaica in 1719.

While from the title this tract might seem obtuse and unremarkable, it represents the earliest known book printed in Jamaica to survive in the western hemisphere, making it also one of the earliest known examples of Caribbean printing.

The first printing press and printer (Robert Baldwin) arrived in Jamaica in 1718 and soon began printing a newspaper, the *Weekly Jamaica Courant*, as well as reports from the local legislative assembly [2]. While this press was undoubtedly quite busy printing legal forms, receipts, small pamphlets, and other items integral to daily life in colonial Kingston, almost none of these have survived to this day. To give an example of how little survives from these early years of printing, scholars have only located 10 issues of the the *Weekly Jamaica Courant* printed before 1730. Of these, two issues have been found which date to 1718 (discovered in the binding of a volume in the British Library) and two from 1719 (now in the National Library of Jamaica) [3]. Likewise, scholars have only been able to trace five other short documents printed in Jamaica between 1718 and 1719. The 31 page pamphlet held here at Penn, printed in 1719, is by far the longest and most substantial example of Jamaican printing before 1721 anywhere in the world (the second longest is only 8 pages). [4]



– Jamaica: Printed by R. Baldwin, in Kingston, 1719 (Price 4 Ryals.)

The pamphlet itself is a modified reprint of a satirical tract published in London that year taking a Whig political stance on the subject of royal authority and the established church [5]. The tract was a wild success in the capital, going through at least 11 editions in 1719 in London alone. Clearly Baldwin in Jamaica sought to capitalize on this interest and decided to publish the 31-page work for local distribution. Penn's copy was likely picked up in Jamaica and taken to Pennsylvania as part of the burgeoning trade between the two colonies. In fact, this work is part of a [set of seven pamphlets](#) that once likely belonged to [Isaac Norris \(1701-1766\)](#), a prominent Philadelphia merchant and early trustee of Penn. His father and grandfather had spent time in Jamaica and Norris kept up his trade connections with the island. He gave much of his library to Dickinson College during his lifetime but some books remained with the family and were later given to Penn by Dr. Charles Norris in the 1950s. This particular Jamaica pamphlet was bound into a volume sometime later and bears the bookplate of his grandson Isaac Norris (1802-1890) [6]:

(New Franklin)

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— Bookplate of Isaac Norris (1802-90) in the collected volume.

The other pamphlets in the assembled volume also relate to Whig political themes as well as political matters of interest to those involved in Caribbean trade [7]. Remarkably, one of these neighboring texts relating to Caribbean matters: *A letter to a noble peer, relating to the bill in favour of the sugar planters [London?]. 1733* survives only at Penn and at the John Carter Brown Library in Providence. The presence of both of these pamphlets together at Penn demonstrates the close ties between cities within the 18th c. Atlantic world as well as the ephemerality of a lot of the early print production of these imperial centers.

[1]

The Teerink collection. See Daniel Traister, "The History of the Herman Teerink Collection of the Works of Jonathan Swift at the University of Pennsylvania Library," *Swift Studies*, 10 (1995), 80-88.

[2]

For Dickinson's collection of Norris books see <http://deila.dickinson.edu/norris/> and for a list of books formerly owned by Isaac Norris in the Penn Libraries catalog see [here](#)

[3]

As an example of how little newspaper printing survives from Jamaica, I know of only the following extant *Weekly Jamaica Courant* issues published before 1725:

1718: July 30 (BL), Aug.5 (BL)

1719: Feb.11 (NLJ) Apr.14 (NLJ)

1720: June 17 (NLJ), Sept.12 (NLJ)

1721: June 28 (NLJ)

1722: Sept. 12 (BL)

[4]

For the best work on printing in Jamaica see Roderick Cave, "Printing in Eighteenth c. Jamaica," *Library* 33.3 (Sept. 1978), pp. 187-206. For another version of this piece available online see <http://www.dloc.com/UF00090030/00027/13j>

[5]

For more on the controversy which inspired this tract see [Andrew Starkie, *The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716-1721*. \(Boydell, 2007\).](#)

[6]

Isaac Norris (1701-66) had a similar bookplate which is present elsewhere in the Penn collection. For an example see the Penn Provenance Project [here](#)

[7]

The other six texts in the volume are as follows:

A speech without doors. (London : printed for A. Baldwin near the Oxford-Arms in Warwick-Lane, M.DCCX. [1710]) [\[ESTC T66280\]](#)

The conduct of the allies, and of the late ministry, in beginning and carrying on the present war. The second edition, corrected. London : printed for John Morphew, near Stationers-Hall, 1711. 96p. ; 8^o. Anonymous. By Jonathan Swift. [\[ESTC T31147\]](#)

Remarks on a false, scandalous, and seditious libel, intituled, The conduct of the allies, and of the late ministry, &c. London : printed for A. Baldwin, near the Oxford Arms in Warwick-Lane, [1711][8], 21, 24-40p. 8^o. [\[ESTC T46744\]](#)

The necessity of impeaching the late ministry. In a letter to the Earl of Hallifax. By Thomas Burnett, Esq; [The third edition.] (London : printed by W. Wilkins, and sold by J. Roberts in Warwick-Lane, [1715]) [\[ESTC T39732\]](#)

The craftsmen: a sermon or paraphrase upon several verses of the 19th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Composed by the late Daniel Burgess, The second edition. London : printed for A. Moore, 1720. 38p. 8^o. [\[ESTC N4878\]](#)

A letter to a noble peer, relating to the bill in favour of the sugar planters. [London?], 1733. 22p. octavo. [\[ESTC N33606\]](#)

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About Mitch Fraas

Mitch Fraas is the Bollinger Fellow for Library Innovation at the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. 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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