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William Dunlap, Colonial Printer, Journalist, and Minister

THE printers set up in business by Benjamin Franklin have individually been of only minor interest, either because they did not live long enough to establish a reputation, or because their modest talents were overshadowed by their brilliant partner. William Dunlap, who for three years and two months was one of Franklin's partners, has left a more substantial record of his life than perhaps any of the others. His career emerges as a colonial printer, postmaster, entrepreneur, journalist, and finally as a minister of the Anglican Church, a person described by the Reverend Dr. William Smith as a "simple, inoffensive man."[1]

Dunlap's early life remains obscure. He appears to have been the son of Gabriel Dunlap, a saddlemaker in Strabane, North Ireland.[2] Perhaps it was because as a younger son his prospects were not

[1] Dr. William Smith to Bishop Terrick, Dec. 18, 1766, Fulham Papers, Microfilm, VIII, 33. I am indebted to E. G. W. Bill, Librarian, Lambeth Palace Library, and Ian Pearson, Archivist, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London, for their assistance in locating church records of William Dunlap.

[2] Mrs. Ann Maginnis, proprietor of Gray's Printing Shop, Strabane, County Tyrone, N. Ireland, kindly provided information on the Dunlap family of Strabane.

bright, William emigrated to Philadelphia, where, according to Isaiah Thomas, he learned to be a printer in William Bradford's shop.[3] In the printers' circle he met and married Deborah Croker, a niece of Deborah Read Franklin, and by this relationship he became part of the close-knit Franklin-Read family circle.[4] Deborah, daughter of Frances Read Croker, was born in October 1731, a year before Deborah and Benjamin Franklin's son, Francis Folger. Little Debby and Franky must have been often together until his death of small pox, which also killed the Croker's older daughter.[5] Frances Croker had another child, Benjamin, who died young, and Frances herself died in 1740, leaving little Deborah to grow up in Deborah Franklin's household. There seems to have been an affectionate bond between aunt and niece which lasted all their lives. The Reads and the Crokers were members of Christ Church, but the marriage of Deborah Croker and William Dunlap is missing from its records. It would appear they were married about 1754.

In February of that year Benjamin Franklin sent Dunlap to Lancaster to take charge of his printing office there. "New Printing Office" was the company trade name Franklin gave his shop in Philadelphia and other shops in which he was a partner or investor.[6] He had set up the New Printing Office in Lancaster in 1751 under the management of James Chattin, who soon returned to Philadelphia and opened a shop in Church Alley. After Chattin's departure, Franklin installed Samuel Holland and Heinrich Müller (Henry Miller) in the Lancaster office. Franklin had tried several times to publish a German newspaper in Philadelphia. One attempt he discontinued in January 1752 with an announcement that a like paper would be printed in Lancaster.[7] *Die Lancastersche Zeitung—The Lancaster Gazette* was published until 1753 when Miller departed. Shortly thereafter Franklin appointed Holland postmaster

[3] Isaiah Thomas, *History of Printing in America* (New York, 1970 reprint), 386.

[4] Benjamin Franklin's Account Books, American Philosophical Society, Microfilm, Reels 1, 3, Items 8, 33. I am indebted to Erika Linke, Librarian, University of Minnesota Library, for her assistance in arranging interlibrary loans.

[5] Christ Church records, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[6] Imprints of Benjamin Mecom of Boston, James Parker of Woodbridge, Parker & Weyman of New York, and James Chattin of Lancaster were from New Printing Offices.

[7] *Pennsylvania Gazette* Jan. 14, 1752.

for Lancaster and left him in charge of the press, but Holland did not last long and on February 14, 1754, Franklin wrote Edward Shippen, a merchant in Lancaster, introducing William Dunlap, "a sober young Man, a Printer, who desires to make a little Tryal of Lancaster."[8] Five days later a notice appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*: "All Sorts of Printing Work, Dutch and English, done by WILLIAM DUNLAP, Printer at Lancaster."[9]

On settling in Lancaster, Dunlap intended to resume publication of the weekly newspaper.[10] This was never accomplished; however, at this period he printed the best-known publication of his press, one that was included in Franklin's famous *Autobiography*. This was a broadside advertising for wagons from the farmers of Pennsylvania to carry provisions for the Braddock expedition.[11] Only two copies of this broadside of April 26, 1755, are known to exist, both are in English, but it was also printed in German. Franklin noted in a letter to a friend "the Dutch advertisement is composing and will be printed in an hour or two as Mr. Dunlap tells me."[12] It is probable that Dunlap also printed the contracts for wagons and provisions. One of the items in Franklin's record of expenses for the wagon venture listed "Paid D[eborah] Dunlap £4.1.0; Printer, W. Dunlap £15.4.0."[13] Possibly because of Indian attacks in western Pennsylvania, which followed Braddock's defeat, Deborah Dunlap returned to the Franklin home in Philadelphia, where the Dunlap's first child, Franky, was born in February 1756.[14]

Despite Indian hostilities, the New Printing Office in Lancaster continued to operate. Dunlap turned out religious tracts, catechisms, sermons, a primer for school use, and *A Narrative of*

8 Leonard W. Labaree, ed., *Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (New Haven, 1959), V, 198.

9 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Feb. 19, 1754.

10 Undated letter by Dunlap, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

11 For an account of this famous broadside, see Whitfield J. Bell, Jr. and Leonard W. Labaree, "Franklin and the 'Wagon Affair'," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 101, No. 6 (1957), 551–557.

12 Benjamin Franklin to Susanna Wright, quoted by George L. Heiges, "Franklin in Lancaster County," *Lancaster County Historical Society Journal*, LXI (1957), 10.

13 *Franklin Papers*, VI, 18.

14 Baptismal Records, Christ Church.

Sufferings in Indian Captivity[15] before giving up the press early in 1757, when he returned to Philadelphia. Franklin billed Dunlap for the hire of the press at Lancaster at £20 per annum and charged £60 13*s.* 4*d.* for three years and two months, February 1, 1754, to April 1, 1757. He also billed him for board for himself, wife, and child for nine months, April 1, 1757, to January 1, 1758.[16]

Upon Dunlap's return, Franklin was preparing to sail for England. He had been appointed agent from Pennsylvania to the British government, and his son William, who had been both postmaster of Philadelphia and comptroller of the American postal system, was to accompany him. To fill the vacancy Franklin appointed Dunlap in his son's place. The torn commission reads:[17]

Mr. Dunlap Philada April 4, 1757

I now appoint you Postmaster of Philadelphia, during our Absence, as it will be some present Employment for you till our Return; when I hope to put you in a better Way, if I find you diligent, careful and faithful.

I would not have the Office remov'd on any Account from my House during my Absence, without my Leave first obtained.

And as Mrs. Franklin has had a great deal of Experience in the Management of the Post Office, I depend on your paying considerable Attention to her Advice in that Matter.

As I leave but little Money with Mrs. Franklin for the Support of the Family, and have [*torn*] all [*torn*] of the Post Office for the [*torn*] Absence, I expect and [*torn*] account with her for, and pay her, every Monday Morning, the Postage of the preceding Week, taking her Receipt for the same, and retaining only your Commissions of Ten per Cent. You should have a little Book for such Receipts.

Wishing you Health and Happiness I am, Your affectionate Uncle
B Franklin

Reconstructing the commission with "[left] all [receipts] of the Post Office for the [benefit of the family during my] absence," or some such phrase, leaves no room for mention of the Crown's

[15] Charles R. Hildeburn, *A Century of Printing. The Issues of the Press In Pennsylvania, 1685–1784* (Philadelphia, 1885); also, Lottie M. Bausman, *Bibliography of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, 1745–1912* (Philadelphia, 1916), 4–7.

[16] American Philosophical Society.

[17] *Franklin Papers*, VII, 168–169.

postal system. This confusion was to prove damaging for Dunlap whose accounting for postal revenues was evidently faulty.

While lists of addressees and departures of post riders appeared in the *Gazette* under William Dunlap's name, it is evident that Deborah Franklin did have a great deal of experience in running the post office and did more than give advice. In an age in which the middle class treated superiors, especially nobility, with great deference and humility, Mrs. Franklin on January 20, 1758, wrote a spirited letter to Lord Loudoun, answering charges that Dunlap had collected illegal postage. It appeared that he had tried to collect postage on a letter from Lord Loudoun which should have had a "frank."[18]

The Dunlaps lived with Mrs. Franklin until the end of 1757. In addition to post office duties, William did odd jobs: he repaired and painted Mrs. Franklin's carriage;[19] he sold Franklin Crown soap, books and stationers' supplies; and he took subscriptions to the *New American Magazine*.

Early in 1756 the printer James Chattin had moved his shop in Church Alley to a location near the Franklin and Hall New Printing Office, on Market Street, calling his the Newest Printing Office. After two and a half years Chattin sold out to Dunlap, and in June 1758 the first advertisement appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for William Dunlap at the Newest Printing Office on Market Street, three doors south of 2nd Street opposite the Jersey Market. This was to be the location of the Dunlap press for the next thirty-seven years, a press which was to play a historic role in the founding of the United States.

Meanwhile, the letters exchanged between Franklin in London and his family in Philadelphia conveyed closeness and affection. There were references to "dear, precious Debby," "love to niece Debby," and "love to Mr. Dunlap" in Franklin's letters to his wife.[20] Little Franky Dunlap had been included in Franklin's will,[21] and Deborah wrote of his progress in learning to talk. Not unnaturally Franklin viewed Dunlap's venture into the printing busi-

18 Huntington Library, San Marino.
19 American Philosophical Society.
20 *Franklin Papers*, VII, 175, 360; VIII, 305.
21 *Ibid.*, VII, 203.

ness with a lack of enthusiasm: "Cousin Dunlap has wrote me an account of his purchasing Chattin's Printing House. I wish it may be advantageous to him without injuring Mr. Hall. I can however do nothing to encourage him as a Printer in Philadelphia inconsistent with my preengagement to so faithful a partner. . . ."[22] Dunlap lost no time in building up his business without Franklin's encouragement.

He immediately entered the almanac trade. These yearly volumes of information were guaranteed to sell and were profitable. Dunlap printed three almanacs for 1759: *The American Almanack*, by John Jerman; *The Pennsylvania Almanack*, by Thomas Thomas; and a new issue, *Father Abraham's Almanack*, by Abraham Weatherwise. As Franklin appropriated the name "Richard Saunders" and "Poor Richard" from a seventeenth-century English almanac,[23] so Dunlap appropriated the name "Father Abraham," a character Franklin created for his *Poor Richard Almanac* of 1758, and began a series which was to be published through the end of the century, after which the name was used by other printers. In the 1774 edition David Rittenhouse received credit for the "Astronomical calculations"[24] which made the almanac so valuable to the colonial citizen. By knowing the dominical day and observing the position and time of rising and setting of the sun and moon, the isolated farmer could keep track of the days of the week and time of day.

The major issues from the Dunlap press, as listed by Charles R. Hildeburn, were religious works, the poems and music of Francis Hopkinson, a poem called *A Court of Fancy* by Thomas Godfrey, Jr., works by Anthony Benezet, an edition of Pope's *Essay on Man*, and a forty-page copy of an Act of Parliament for Granting and Applying Certain Stamp Duties. He published a political pamphlet for Joseph Galloway in 1759, which William Franklin noted was sold in London,[25] and in August 1763 he advertised as just published "An Authentic Account of the Proceedings against John

22 *Ibid.*, VIII, 92.

23 William J. Campbell, *Franklin Imprints in the Curtis Publishing Company* (Philadelphia, 1918), 23.

24 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 6, 1773.

25 Lawrence C. Wroth, *An American Bookshelf* (Philadelphia, 1934), 147.

Wilkes, Esq. . . . with an Abstract of that Precious Jewel of an Englishman, the Habeas Corpus Act. Also *The North Briton*. No. 45. The Paper for which Wilkes was sent to the Tower."[26] Other political pamphlets came from the press in 1764.

The book store was a usual part of the colonial printer's establishment, and auctions were a popular way of disposing of private libraries and printers' overstock. It appears Dunlap got his start in the book business by taking over a consignment which James Read, a relative of Mrs. Franklin, had ordered from Thomas Osborne in London but had not paid for.[27] In the fall of 1760 Dunlap issued a catalogue and advertised that as he "intended for England in the spring" he proposed to sell at auction his stock of books "of interest to all public libraries that are already established or those intended to be erected."[28] Interest in libraries was at a peak in Philadelphia in the 1760s. There were four library companies, several professional and many private libraries, and in addition neighboring towns were establishing village libraries.[29] One institution which did not have a library was the College of Philadelphia. A Trustees' meeting on February 4, 1758, noted that students in the Philosophy School had been "retarded in their Studies for Want of a Library furnished with suitable Books. . . ." Their next mention of a library was recorded in the minutes of February 9, 1762: "Mr. William Dunlap having been so good as to make a present of some books to the College, the Catalogue was read over and the books examined therewith having been first placed in their proper order upon Shelves."[30] Receipts for accounts with James Biddle and John Dickinson indicate Dunlap had built up a substantial book business by 1763.[31]

Since Dunlap did not leave for England, as advertised in 1760, he continued book auctions every winter. In addition to books he

26 *Pennsylvania Journal*, Aug. 4, 1763.

27 Franklin's Account Books, Microfilm, Reel 3, Item 24, p. 34.

28 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 2, 1760; *Pennsylvania Journal*, Dec. 4, 1760.

29 Carl Bridenbaugh, "The Press and the Book in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXV (1941), 16 *passim*.

30 Lyman Riley, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, kindly verified this statement in the Minutes of the Trustees of the College of Philadelphia, 1762.

31 Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

also imported mirrors, paper hangings, pictures, and perspective views painted on glass.[32] He sold, and perhaps printed, tickets for the American Theatre Company during its second appearance in Philadelphia in 1759. He engaged in the lottery business.

The lottery had become a part of colonial life, partly as a result of the shortage of currency in the colonies, partly from the lure of benevolent gambling. They were used as a means of raising money for such public projects as chimes for Christ Church, paving streets, funding the Academy, paying a company of rangers, and building churches. Philadelphia printers turned out thousands of tickets and acted as brokers in selling them. Lotteries furnished important news for the papers. The wheels might be advertised as "exceedingly rich" or drawings postponed until all tickets were sold. Pennsylvanians eagerly followed the progress and drawings of their lotteries. In 1761, some eight of them were in progress simultaneously when William Dunlap added "Mr. Dunlap's lottery."[33] He advertised that as he still planned to leave for England and had just received a shipment of merchandise, he proposed to dispose of books, silver, jewelry, china, a telescope, an orrery, and some land by means of a lottery. How he fared in the venture is unknown, but it was held a black mark against him by the Reverend Dr. Smith.[34]

When Benjamin Franklin returned to America in December 1762, he became locked in a bitter struggle with both the Presbyterians and the Proprietors. By virtue of his association with Franklin, Dunlap was caught up in this whirlwind of conflict. Franklin battled the Presbyterians by writing a political pamphlet entitled *A Narrative of the Late Massacres, in Lancaster County, of a Number of Indians, Friends of this Province, by Persons Unknown.* This episode set off a pamphlet war which divided the city into hostile camps. Franklin's clash with the Penns led him to champion a Royal government for Pennsylvania; he presented his arguments in a pamphlet, *Cool Thoughts on the Present Situation of our Public Affairs*, first published in a supplement to Bradford's *Pennsylvania Journal* and reprinted by Dunlap. The Dunlap press also printed a

32 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 20, 1760.
33 *Ibid.*, Mar. 12, 1761.
34 Fulham Papers, Microfilm, VIII, 33.

speech by Joseph Galloway supporting a petition to the King for a Royal Charter. On the other side of the controversy three pamphlets appeared under the title *The Plain Dealer* which attacked Franklin's position. Dunlap is credited as printer of Pamphlet No. III.[35] The appointment of William Franklin as Royal Governor of New Jersey was fresh in the minds of Pennsylvanians. Proclamations from "His Excellency, William Franklin, Captain-General, Governor and Commander in Chief, Chancellor and Vice Admiral, in and over his Majesty's Province of New Jersey" were appearing regularly in the *Gazette*. The prospect of a Royal governor for Pennsylvania met with limited enthusiasm in Philadelphia. It is probable that Dunlap, as well as Hall and Bradford, supported the Penns.

When England acquired Canada by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, Philadelphia businessmen were impressed with the possibilities Canada offered. Dunlap had printed an article in his 1761 almanac with the impressive title "Plans of the three illustrious Gems which now sparkle with resplendent Beauty in the British Crown, viz., of Fort DuQuesne, Quebec and Montreal,"[36] and in 1763 he helped finance the first printing establishment in Canada with a loan of £150.[37] The French government had discouraged, if it had not prohibited, printing in New France; now, with the arrival of a few hundred Englishmen to take over the government of a French nation in North America, came William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, two young printers trained in Philadelphia.

Brown had come to Virginia from Scotland in 1753 and at the age of twenty had joined Dunlap's printing shop where Thomas Gilmore and perhaps William Walker were also apprentices.[38] Brown had gone to Barbados in 1760 but returned three years later to negotiate setting up the printing office in Canada. The company of Brown and Gilmore was created with Dunlap's help, and Gilmore

35 Hildeburn, II, 29.

36 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 9, 1760.

37 Account Book of William Brown, Neilson Papers (MG 24 Bl Vol. 47), MS Division, Public Archives of Canada. I am indebted to Yves Marcoux, Library of the Public Archives, for his assistance in locating the Brown & Gilmore Papers.

38 Francis-J. Audet, "William Brown, premier imprimeur, journaliste, et libraire de Québec," *Mémoires*, La Société Royale du Canada, Troisième Serie, XXV (1932), 98–103.

departed for London to purchase press and type while Brown journeyed to Quebec where he arrived in October 1763.[39] An imprint of William Dunlap's printing office which is not mentioned in American bibliographies is the prospectus, *To the Publick—Au Public*, which Brown carried to Quebec and distributed before Gilmore arrived from London.[40] They proposed to publish a weekly bilingual newspaper which would keep Canadians informed on world events and help meld the two nationalities linguistically. The printers did not realize that few French Canadians were literate, and they fell far short of achieving their goal of three hundred subscriptions for their paper. However, the following summer with a press from Kendrick Peck, type from William Caslon, and the help of a translator, Daniel Gallway, Brown and Gilmore began to publish a newspaper which was to continue until 1874.[41] As the only press in Canada until 1776, the company played a vital role in assisting the British government as publisher of proclamations and laws, as well as text books, religious works, almanacs, and *The Quebec Gazette—La Gazette de Québec*. William Brown (Gilmore died in 1772) ran an important and profitable establishment. Possibly to the chagrin of Dunlap, the Quebec newspaper remained a government controlled press during the Revolution, and radical printers, such as William Dunlap's nephew John Dunlap of Philadelphia, were not tolerated.

The American post office had an early reputation as a deficit operation. Franklin stands almost alone as a successful colonial postmaster, but he, too, had problems. The system which he took over was not a flourishing organization. The greatest volume of mail was carried by ship captains and travelers at no profit to the postal system. Postage was due on delivery, the addressee to pay the charge, but mail was delivered on credit. Bookkeeping was a time-consuming muddle, partly because of the currency confusion in the colonies and the lack of small specie to make change.

After Franklin returned to America, Anthony Todd, Secretary for the British Postal Department, wrote him that British authori-

39 Journal of William Brown, Neilson Papers.

40 E. Gérin, *La Press canadienne* (Québec, 1864), Microfiche 6–10.

41 Audet, 104–111.

ties were displeased by the manner in which American accounts were being handled, and Todd ended with the admonition, "you are to remit immediately to the Post Master General the Balance of your Account with this Office in good bills. . . ."[42] Franklin excused the poor accounting practices of the colonial postmaster by writing: "The advantage of the office to a postmaster in these countries has been in many places so inconsiderable, that the office is not sought after as in England."[43] Not only did it lack advantage, it often had a bankruptcy tag. Andrew Hay summed up the plight of postmasters in a newspaper advertisement: "This is to give notice that all persons in town and country that are endebted to Andrew Hay, postmaster at Perth Amboy, for postage of letters, to pay the same or they may expect trouble, some having been due near 4 years."[44] However, it was not the addressee who might expect trouble, it was the King's official, the postmaster. Many postmasters ended in financial difficulties, including Franklin, who at the end of his life reported some £800 postage still due him from his years as postmaster.

There seems to be no indication that Franklin was concerned about the Philadelphia post office until just before his departure for England in 1764. Dunlap had performed his duties setting up routes, paying riders, and providing Mrs. Franklin with an income, but his tenure was limited. An unfinished, undated letter in Franklin's letter book on a page marked September 28, began: "Mr. Dunlap, Sir The Term of your Commission being expired. . . ."[45] Whatever the rest of the letter might have been, Franklin and his associate postmaster, John Foxcroft, presented Dunlap with a bill for some £1,042 which he owed the British postal department.[46] Dunlap seemed to be completely unprepared for this sudden reckoning and claimed he owed only £200. His letter to the deputy postmasters conveyed an hysterical feeling of persecution; he wrote that his accounts had been "unfairly sifted and twisted."[47] His letter is

42 *Franklin Papers*, X, 222.
43 *Ibid.*, X, 281.
44 Harry M. Konwiser, *Colonial and Revolutionary Posts* (Richmond, 1931), 25.
45 *Franklin Papers*, XI, 366, n 2.
46 *Ibid.*, VII, 160–162.
47 *Ibid.*, XI, 420.

undated, but by the end of October he had sufficiently regained his composure to present Franklin with a bill for £16 9*s*.[48] One of the last entries in Franklin's Account Book before he left for England recorded: "November 1 Settled ac[coun]t with W Dunlap and paid him in full."[49] Although he had threatened to commence suit, Franklin never pressed charges against Dunlap, and his list of uncollected debts in his Ledger E does not include Dunlap's name. From Franklin's correspondence with James Parker, the American comptroller, we know that the ousted Dunlap delivered a bond for debt from a Mr. Hunter, his interest in Nova Scotia lands, and a mortgage in Chester County, evidently in settlement of his accounts.

Leaving the management of the Newest Printing Office to his wife, the former postmaster departed for Barbados late in 1764 to oversee his press in Bridgetown. No information seems to be available as to how Dunlap set up a press there. Franklin's early associates, David Harry and Samuel Keimer, had established Bridgetown's first press and had issued *The Barbados Gazette*. Under succeeding owners this was the only printing shop on the island until Dunlap and young William Brown set up a second press in 1760. Franklin's Receipt Book noted £100 from Dunlap which he paid to Kendrick Peck in December 1759, probably to purchase the press for the Bridgetown office. When Brown found the climate unhealthy and removed to Quebec, Dunlap gave the management of the press to George Esmand, a young man he had befriended, under an agreement by which Dunlap owned the press and sold half the type to Esmand.[50] In 1762 Brown had established the second newspaper on the island, *The Barbados Mercury*, and Esmand continued its publication. However, his business practices were not such as to make the venture profitable for an absentee partner. After some six months Dunlap straightened out the books and collected debts. His share in the profits came to £300, but to guard his investment he resolved he would have to live on the island to supervise the shop.[51]

48 Franklin's Account Books, Microfilm, Reel 1, Item 1, p. 89.

49 *Ibid.*, Reel 1, Item 2, p. 19.

50 E. M. Shilstone, "Some Notes on Early Printing Presses and Newspapers in Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society*, XXVI, 27–28.

51 Dunlap to William Brown, Dec. 8, 1766, Neilson Collection.

Meanwhile Dunlap had felt a calling to the Anglican Church, but Dr. William Smith had refused him recommendations.[52] The clergymen of Barbados were more generous and his application, preserved in the Fulham Papers in Lambeth Palace Library, sheds some light upon his activities in Barbados. In addition to acting as business manager, Dunlap was also contributing editor and journalist for *The Mercury*. One clergyman wrote that Dunlap had published "pieces on moral and religious subjects";[53] the Reverend William Duke noted that he was indebted to Dunlap "for the handsome things he was pleased to say in our newpaper of my honored father";[54] and George Esmand certified that the pieces on the first page of *The Barbados Mercury* of August 24, September 28, and October 5, 1765, signed "Batavia," were the compositions of Dunlap.[55] The Reverend John Carter found that Dunlap had "a mind adorned with native innocence and a simplicity of manner uncorrupted by the vogue of the world," but that he lacked the advantage of a classical education in the learned languages.[56] William Walker, who had joined the printer's firm, certified that he had been concerned in Dunlap's affairs for three years and believed that he was possessed of an estate to the amount of £5,000.[57]

With letters of recommendation from the clergymen of the island, Dunlap sailed, as he had so long "intended," for England. Guarding against the failure of his quest for Holy Orders, he wrote Franklin requesting his help in securing a post as customs official in Barbados in order to support his family—a letter which would not indicate an estate of £5,000.[58] However, he was received into the Church of England and was ordained by Richard Terrick, Lord Bishop of London, in February 1766. His ordination caused Franklin to write a noncommittal note to his wife in Philadelphia: "Mr. Whitefield called today and tells me a surprising piece of

52 William Smith to Bishop of London, Dec. 18, 1766, Fulham Papers, Microfilm, VIII, 33.
53 *Ibid.*, XXVII, 102.
54 *Ibid.*, XXVII, 100.
55 *Ibid.*, XXVII, 110.
56 *Ibid.*, XXVII, 108.
57 *Ibid.*, XXVII, 106.
58 *Franklin Papers*, XIII, 85.

news. Mr. Dunlap is come here from Barbados, was ordain'd Deacon on Saturday last, and Priest on Sunday."[59]

With a license for Barbados and a letter of recommendation to Governor Charles Pinfold, Dunlap set sail from the Downs. He wrote with pride to the Bishop's secretary that he had "exercised his duties in the sacred function" when his ship touched at Madeira, and carefully noted the text of his sermons. On his arrival in Barbados he reported a scene of distress; Bridgetown had burned on May 14 and 440 houses were destroyed. Dunlap was a "considerable sufferer in this disaster among hundreds of others." Finding that the Governor had returned to England, he requested a letter of recommendation to his successor, since "all livings in this island are the gift of the governor,"[60] but Dunlap was not appointed to a parish. As a consequence, by the end of the year he sold his share in the printing office to William Walker, to be paid for in yearly installments of £250 Pennsylvania currency, and returned to Philadelphia[61].

In December 1766 the Reverend Dunlap was invited to preach in the vacant pulpit of St. Paul's Church, to the great indignation of Dr. Smith. In addition to waging a battle against Benjamin Franklin, Smith at this time was at loggerheads with St. Paul's. He wrote protesting letters to the Bishop of London, accusing Dunlap of being a protégé of Franklin who had recommended him for Orders. Moreover, Dunlap had "no education and could scarce read English" and had been involved in a lottery. After making damaging innuendos, he conceded that Dunlap was a "simple, inoffensive man . . . tho he knew no harm of him," he might be useful somewhere but not in Philadelphia.[62] Dunlap must have learned of Smith's accusations, for later he wrote to the Bishop, from the security of his new parish in Virginia, that he had the hearts of his parishioners and "all the injury he could wish Dr. Smith for his cruelty to him was that he could say the same."[63]

59 *Ibid.*, XIII, 176.
60 Fulham Papers, Microfilm, XVI, 153.
61 Dunlap to William Brown, Dec. 8, 1766, *op. cit.*
62 William Smith to Bishop Terrick, Dec. 18, 1766, *op. cit.*
63 Dunlap to Bishop Terrick, June 2, 1769, Fulham Papers, Microfilm, XIV, 197–198.

But Dunlap suffered greater misfortunes than Smith's objections to him. Late in the summer of 1767 while preaching in Stephney Parish, Maryland, Dunlap contracted a malarial type of illness which nearly proved fatal.[64] At the same time, his wife met with an accident or an illness shortly before the birth of a child which left her blind for the rest of her life. Deborah and William Dunlap had two sons, Francis and Benjamin Franklin, and three daughters, Fanney, Deborah, and Sarah Franklin. Whatever the nature of Dunlap's illness he had recovered sufficiently by the following April to become rector of Stratton Major Parish in Virginia. Deborah Dunlap did not accompany her husband there. As late as November 1769 she was still in Philadelphia recovering from her disorder. Thus, Dunlap, having sold his shop to his nephew John, departed alone to take over a prominent but difficult parish.

Stratton Major, King and Queen County, in Tide Water Virginia, was a wealthy parish of prominent families and leading figures of the Virginia government, including Richard Corbin, Receiver General for the colony, Gawin Corbin and Benjamin Robinson, members of the House of Burgesses, John Robinson, Speaker of the House of Burgesses and Treasurer of the colony, and the Reverend William Robinson, Commissary of the Church of England in Virginia. One hundred years later Bishop William Meade was to describe the affluence of the parish in glowing terms:[65]

> While most vestries purchased miserable glebes for eighty or a hundred pounds . . . this vestry gave seven hundred pounds for a glebe of a comfortable kind, even a hen-house twenty feet long, and a dairy. . . . Mr. Richard Corbin . . . furnished the bread and wine for the sacrament gratuitously. He also presented a marble font . . . and the land on which the new church was built. It was built on a place not far from his residence, called Galiahs field.

The new church had just been completed in 1768. It was described as eighty by fifty feet, with side walls twenty-seven feet high and a doorway six feet wide and twelve feet high. It had box pews, white

[64] Dunlap to William Brown, fall, 1767, Nielson Papers.

[65] William Meade, *Old Churches, Ministers, and Families of Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1878), 376.

flagstone aisles, a wineglass pulpit, and back walnut reredos.[66] It was the biggest and most expensive church in Virginia, but its days were numbered. Dunlap was to be the first and the last rector the building would ever have.

When the new minister arrived in Stratton Major a crisis which had been building up for a decade had just burst over the county. At the time of Braddock's campaign, Virginia, like Pennsylvania, had helped pay for the expedition with money issued on future taxes of the colony. As the taxes were later collected the treasurer was to destroy the currency and retire the debt. In Virginia the fortunes of the colony were built on tobacco, a tempermental and demanding crop. By the 1760s depleted soil, droughts, and blights had caused bad harvests and planters were deeply in debt to British merchants. The Virginia gentleman was notorious for his casual attitude toward finances, both his own and those of his friends, but the most incredible case of help for friends in need was exhibited by John Robinson of Mount Pleasant, vestryman of Stratton Major and Treasurer of the colony. Faced with the problem that his friends were bankrupt, instead of burning the paper currency which had been collected in taxes he loaned it to his fellow planters.[67] While staving off their immediate bankruptcy, he created an artificial prosperity and inflation. Richard Corbin, also vestryman of Stratton Major, wrote in 1764, "That imaginary wealth derived to us by the circulation of paper money was as much a Bubble . . . as the famous South Sea Scheme was in England, every man fancied himself rich and lived accordingly, the consequence of which you may now guess."[68]

It was in this artificial prosperity that the parish of Stratton Major began construction of the new church, but before it was completed John Robinson died. His death revealed that his estate was liable to the colony for more than £100,000 in loans he had made from public funds. Borrowers were from the leading families, and the greatest number were from King and Queen County. It took

66 C. G. Chamberlayne, ed., *Vestry Book of Stratton Major Parish, King and Queen County 1729–1783* (Richmond, 1931), 131–133.

67 David J. Mays, *Edmund Pendleton* (Cambridge, 1952), for a study of the "Robinson Affair."

68 *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXX (1922), 82.

some time for the magnitude of the scandal to come to the surface, but by 1768 reverberations were felt throughout the colony. Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee made use of it for political gain, and Governor Fauquier wrote, "The blood of the people is soured by their private distresses . . . and party feuds will run high."[69]

The year of the financial disaster, the father-in-law of John Robinson, Colonel John Chiswell, had run a friend through with his sword and had been charged with murder. The ranks of aristocracy had closed around this prominent man, and, although he died before his trial took place, the tragedy lingered over Stratton Major church where his daughter held the most important pew.[70] At this unhappy time the Reverend Commissary William Robinson, cousin of the Speaker, Oxford graduate, grandnephew of a bishop, and life-long rector of Stratton Major died and the former printer from Philadelphia arrived to take his place.

By the faded copies of the Virginia newspapers we are able to follow Dunlap's difficult career in Virginia. One of the first "press releases" from his pen noted the installation of an organ in the newly completed church.[71] Organs were relatively rare in Virginia. Perhaps it was Dunlap who influenced the vestry to install the organ. Four years later it was offered for sale for unexplained reasons.

In 1769 a curious story of a squirrel struck by lightning while in the pocket of young Francis Dunlap appeared in *The Virginia Gazette*. In the next issue, Dunlap advertised for students to study with the tutor he had hired to instruct his sons. The vestry house at Stratton Major was used as a school, and Dunlap mentioned his library of "several thousand books in the arts and sciences" as available for their use.[72]

Another example of Dunlap's journalistic efforts appeared on January 17, 1771, when *The Virginia Gazette* printed the following:

On Sunday the 25th of Nov. last William Nelson, junior, Esquire and his newly married Lady, made their appearance in Stratton Major Church

69 Mays, I, 187.
70 Chamberlayne, 166.
71 *Virginia Gazette*, June 23, 1768.
72 *Ibid.*, June 1, 8, 1769.

for the first time after marriage; when an excellent sermon from the 24th Chapter of Genesis, verse 20, And Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her, was delivered by the Reverend Mr. Dunlap. In handling the discourse, the preacher, in his usual animated manner touched upon the tender passion of love as a necessary requisite in courtship and marriage, the duty of husband and wife with respect to acquiring and preserving domestick happiness, concluding with some very pertinent animadvertices on the conduct of parties in regard to the disposition of children in marriage, and how far duty between both ought to be reciprocal. The whole discourse was handled in a new and striking manner.

This innocent bit of public relations would have done little more than cause smiles in sophisticated Stratton Major had not a satirical poem appeared shortly thereafter called "A Consolatory Epistle to the Reverend Mr. D——p, upon the unlucky discovery of his being the Author of his own Panegyrick published in Purdie's *Gazette*," which for twenty-one verses poked fun at the rector of Stratton Major.

> That he, who wordly things disclaim'd
> With much Vociferation,
> Should his own Doctrine thus forget,
> And pilfer Approbation.

These verses disclose Dunlap's political leanings.[73]

> For Wilkes and Liberty thou roar'st
> And for the Patriot Junius
> Their writings from the pulpit quot'st
> As Saints of Inspired Genius.
>
> Thou prov'st that we in Conscience ought
> The Parliament to hate
> And if we would be saved, must curse
> All Ministers of State.

At the December 22, 1772, vestry meeting of Stratton Major the minister "signifying his interest in the West Indies demanded his immediate attention," was given a year's leave of absence.[74] George

[73] *Ibid.*, Mar. 7, 1771.
[74] Chamberlayne, 198.

Esmand had died in 1771 and William Walker the following year, leaving Dunlap's investment in the Barbados press unattended.[75] Dunlap returned to Virginia in late summer 1774, and, after the October vestry meeting, disgruntled George Lyne, author of the "Consolatory Epistle," wrote another piece. He did not like the minister's evangelistic style, he disliked the new vestryman Benjamin Robinson, he deplored the vestry's generosity in paying the preacher a salary for fourteen of the twenty months he was on leave, and he resented the vacancy on the vestry being saved for "a certain gentleman expected to reside in the county soon."[76] This place which the vestry wanted to save for George Washington's Custis stepson would never be filled.

If Dunlap hoped that peace would settle over the parish during his absence, he was to be disappointed. The blood of the people was indeed soured and feuds filled the papers. Freedom of the press and the use of pseudonyms led to personal abuse in the colonial journals, and Pinkney's *Gazette* in 1775 was unrestrained in its use of libel. The attack on the minister grew into a tangle of charges and countercharges in which Dunlap was forgotten. In clearing up some confusion of anonymous insults, George Lyne wrote: "I declare I never suspected the rev. W—— D–n—p to be the author. First, because his outward appearance carries too much of goodness, secondly because I always thought him too simple."[77]

It was in the midst of this newspaper war that Dunlap's wife, aged forty-three, died on February 15, 1775. She had survived Aunt Deborah by only two months. Deborah Franklin died in Philadelphia of a stroke on December 19, 1774. Not long after these events Dunlap was in uniform. The Orderly Book of General Andrew Lewis noted on April 9, 1776, "the Rev. Wm. Dunlap is appointed Chaplain to the Sixth Battalion, and is to be obeyed as such."[78] As chaplain, Dunlap may have seen action in the campaign which culminated in an attack on "Jack Dunmore's Gang" on Gwyn's Island in the middle of July.

The month after Dunlap joined the army, *The Virginia Gazette*

75 Shilstone, 28, 30.
76 *Virginia Gazette*, Nov. 10, 1774.
77 *Ibid.*, Mar. 2, 1775.
78 *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XLI (1933), 136.

carried the notice of the death of Francis Franklin Dunlap in May. The following August Dunlap wrote to Benjamin Franklin that his "unhappy Frank was engaged some months in the marines in which service he died."[79]

There is a reference in the Journal of the Committee of Safety for Virginia of June 20, 1776: "Ordered, a warrant to Rev'd Mr. Dunlap for use Phil. Rootes for £6 for a rifle of which he was disarmed."[80] Philip Rootes, vestryman of Stratton Major, "suspected to be inimical to the rights and liberties of America," voluntarily agreed to deliver up his arms, but William Graham, Benjamin Robinson, and Thomas Corbin of King & Queen county "refused to take the oath prescribed and were ordered disarmed."[81] The Reverend Dunlap had an unenviable position in reconciling a pastoral role with military duties.

The July 29, 1776, issue of *The Virginia Gazette* carried important news. It contained accounts of the "severe drubbing" given Lord Dunmore's "miscreants" on the Maryland shore, of thanks from General Lewis to the officers and men who served in the action at Gwyn's Island, and of news in an issue from William Dunlap's former printing house. John Dunlap's broadside had reached Williamsburg. "The Declaration of Independence of the United Colonies" was proclaimed at the State House, with a discharge of small arms and illuminations. Tucked in between these momentous announcements was "Marriages—the Rev. William Dunlap, Rector of Stratton Major parish, King & Queen co., and Chaplain the 6th regiment, to Mrs. Johanna Rowe of Gloucester co., an amiable lady of an handsome fortune." Little is known about this union, except that Johanna Greene Rowe was from an old Gloucester County family, where she was living in 1786 and owned ten slaves.[82]

In September 1776 the 5th, 6th, and 7th Virginia Regiments were ordered to New York to join Washington, but Dunlap must have returned to his parish. Because of divided loyalties Stratton Major was in upheaval. In August 1777 Dunlap seems to have been called

79 Dunlap to Benjamin Franklin, August 1776, American Philosophical Society.
80 *Calendar of Virginia State Papers* (Richmond, 1890), VIII, 213.
81 *Virginia Gazette*, Sept. 20, 1776.
82 *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, III (1896), 324.

to St. Paul's Parish in Hanover County, although his resignation was not recorded at Stratton Major until April 1778. St. Paul's had been the church of the Reverend Patrick Henry, uncle of the orator. Once again Dunlap was caught in crossfire between the vestry and parishioners. Thanks to letters of an indignant parishioner, Richard Chapman, there is an account of affairs at St. Paul's. In October 1778 the vestry rebuked Chapman for "wresting from the vestry their just and legal rights and inciting dissention in the parish."[83] Chapman replied that the vestry had "occasioned Mr. Dunlap to resign" in March 1778, and had appointed Benjamin Blagrove in his place. The Whig members of the church, although not on the vestry, asked Dunlap "to continue his ministerial labors among them" and raised a sum for his salary. Blagrove was charged with having Tory friends on the vestry, and Chapman proposed that Dunlap preach to the Whigs in "our" church and the vestry and Blagrove take the other church.[84] Although later in the year Dunlap applied for the Kingston Parish in Gloucester, perhaps to be near his wife's estate, he must have agreed to the arrangement at St. Paul's, for it was there that he died on September 25, 1779. *The Virginia Gazette* of October 9 carried the following notice:

To be sold at the dwelling house of the late Rev. William Dunlap agreeable to his last will and testament on Wed 27 October—All his household and kitchen furniture, a very large valuable library, consisting of several hundred volumes, a genteel spinnet, 2 riding chairs, three valuable slaves, & a few head of cattle. 12 mo credit. All who have claims against the estate of the deceased will please to submit them without delay. Those who are indebted are earnestly requested to pay their respective balances immediately as the distressed situation of his family makes it absolutely necessary. Those gentlemen who have borrowed books from the deceased are desired to return them before the day of the sale.

Benjamin F. Dunlap Rich. Chapman executors

Benjamin Franklin Dunlap had attended the College of New Jersey as a divinity student under the benevolence of an English patron until this support was cut off by the events of July 4, 1776. The perennially bankrupt Dunlap then requested Benjamin Franklin

83 *Virginia Gazette*, Oct. 9, 1778.
84 *Ibid.*, Oct. 12, 1778.

to take his son under his patronage, a letter which Franklin filed under "letter of small import."[85] Young Dunlap seems to have joined a printing shop, probably John Dunlap's, and to have been sent to South Carolina. He may have accompanied the portable press which General Nathaniel Greene took on his southern campaign. *The Royal Gazette*, published in Charleston, South Carolina, during the occupation by the British in 1782, noted: "The rebels in the country contrived to publish something which bears the likeness . . . of a newspaper. . . ."[86] The rebels had fled up the Edisto River where Benjamin F. Dunlap issued *The Jacksonburgh Gazette* in April 1782. He also printed *The Parker's Ferry Gazette* "in the field" in June. His short career ended September 9, 1783, when he died at the home of William Hart in South Carolina.[87]

In April of the next year his sister, Deborah, married John Robinson, son of John Robinson of Middlesex County, and nephew of the Reverend Commissary William Robinson of Stratton Major.[88] This John Robinson seems not to have had a military career, but his brother served with the British army in New York and many Robinsons were Loyalists.

The church of Stratton Major advertised for a rector in 1779, but the vestry book indicates that no successor was ever chosen. The largest church in colonial Virginia, built on Goliahs Field, stood empty. According to a son of Richard Corbin, his Tory father lived out the Revolution restricted to his plantation.[89] At his death the church of Stratton Major was sold with his estate, and the next owner sold the building for its bricks.[90] St. Paul's in Hanover County fared better. It still stands, one of the few frame colonial churches in existence in Virginia.[91]

85 Dunlap to Benjamin Franklin, August 1776, *op. cit.*

86 Clarence S. Brigham, *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers* (Worcester, 1947), II, 1051.

87 *Ibid.*, II, 1052; also Richard Walsh, ed., *Writings of Christopher Gadsden* (Columbia, S. C., 1966), footnote 188.

88 *William & Mary Quarterly*, Series 1, XVIII (1909–1910), 185; *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XVIII (1910), 229.

89 *Ibid.*, XXX (1922), 84.

90 George C. Mason, *Colonial Churches of Tide Water Virginia* (Richmond, 1945), 303.

91 Harold W. Rose, *The Colonial Houses of Worship in America* (New York, 1963), 486.

William Dunlap did not live to see the Revolution won. By consensus he was a simple man, certainly he was a business failure, with flaws, faults, limited abilities, and modest talents, but he seems to have been consistent in his dedication to American liberty as he understood it. If his career in the pulpit and the issue of his press left but a small mark, his nephew John was to put his imprint on the most valued work ever printed in America, the first printing of *A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in General Congress Assembled.*

St. Paul, Minnesota MARY D. TURNBULL