Post-Revolutionary American Magazines

Following the end of the Revolution in 1783, the pace of publishing increased dramatically, and magazines proliferated along with all other products of the press, including books, pamphlets, and newspapers. The United States Magazine, launched during the Revolution, was the 22nd American magazine undertaken since Bradford launched the first in 1741. Seventy-one more appeared in the 17 years between the end of the Revolution and the turn of the 19th century—more than three times as many in less than half the time.

The enthusiasm for publishing brought innovation and variety. Within the profusion of post-Revolutionary magazines, several represent a very high level of achievement, a few were entirely unique, and all influenced the direction of the industry: some as archetypes of long and successful lineages, others as evolutionary dead ends.

The following chronology of magazines launched between the Revolution and 1800 may be overly inclusively: it contains a few publications that might be considered newspapers, such as the Worcester Magazine or the Time-Piece, or hybrids of different publication types, such as the American Musical Magazine, or the New Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine. But judgment calls notwithstanding, the roster demonstrates 18th-century American publishers’ enthusiastic embrace of freedom of the press, their openness to experimentation, and their willingness to accept long odds in the gamble for success.

Magazines of the Seventeen-Eighties

Boston, having endured British occupation early in the Revolution, was the first city to produce new magazines after the war ended.

The earliest of these was the astutely managed Boston Magazine, launched in October, 1783, and run for three years, until October, 1786. Literary historian Harold Milton Ellis (78) called it “a substantial magazine, by no means devoid of merit.” Its publishers, John Norman and Joseph White, were printers, not editors. Aware of their lack of experience in developing content, they advertised prior to the magazine’s launch for the assistance of “gentlemen of leisure and learning,” in order to produce, “a Miscellaneous exhibition of the most valuable productions that can be procured.” They assembled a board of advisors whose members included clergics, academicians, and businessmen. According to Richardson (212f), the board met “in a special room lighted and warmed by candles and a fire, and surrounded by the good cheer of each other’s presence and accompanying wine, spirits, and tobacco,” which sounds like nice work if you can get it. Norman was a capable engraver, and provided the magazine’s illustrations (two per issue); the advisory board developed the rest of the content.

Their prudent delegation of editorial policy set Norman and White apart from the vast majority of founding publishers, which included as many inveterate tinkerers then as now. The advisors produced a well-written and well-received publication, which “published a considerable amount of original material, and some music,” according to Mott (I, 29). According to Tassin (4), the proprietors said they would rather be too grave than too sprightly, but would publish everything curious and entertaining.

The next American magazine, the monthly Gentlemen and Lady’s Town and Country Magazine, appearing between May and December, 1784 was another product of Boston. Despite its brief lifespan, the Gentlemen and Lady’s magazine had a long-lasting influence: it was the country’s first magazine to target a primarily female audience. Its staples included verse and sentimental stories. A
continuation of the title under different management was attempted in February, 1789, but in August, 1790 the second try met the same fate as the first. (Mott I, 29)

In October, 1785, a third Boston publisher tested the water with a new magazine, the first American magazine focused primarily on business and commerce. (Richardson, 234) Ezekial Russell produced only one issue of the American Monitor, or the Republican Magazine before ceasing publication, although that one issue included three pages of advertising, strong performance for the times. Richardson wrote (212) that Russell’s inability to find an audience “saved him from the fate of his more astute predecessors—a grander failure.”

The New-Haven Gazette was a four-page weekly newspaper established in 1784 by Josiah Meigs, a Yale alumnus, in partnership with Eleutheros Dana. In early 1786 the content was reorganized, four more pages were added, and the publication became the New-Haven Gazette and Connecticut Magazine. The first issue of the repositioned publication was February 16, 1786. Meigs’s Yale connections allowed the Gazette and Connecticut Magazine access to more original material than most contemporary periodicals produced, and the magazine’s contributors included Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, David Humphreys, and Noah Webster. The adventures of Daniel Boone ran through four numbers. The last issue was dated January 1, 1789. (Richardson, 237ff)

In 1786 Danie l Read, a Connecticut musician, and Amos Doolittle, an engraver, began publishing the American Musical Magazine in New Haven, offering their readers no contents other than sheet music, much of it religious. The magazine was undated and endured for 12 monthly issues. Richardson (237) referred to it as less a magazine than a book published in parts. (SIRIS)

In 1785 the Massachusetts legislature imposed a tax on newspaper advertisements. In response Isaiah Thomas, publisher of the Massachusetts Spy newspaper, folded his printed sheets twice more, and turned the four-page folio newspaper into a sixteen-page octavo magazine. The title changed, and the Spy became the Worcester Weekly Magazine, but the contents remained essentially the same. During its run from April, 1786 to March, 1788, the Worcester Weekly covered Shays’ Rebellion, conditions leading to the Constitutional convention, and the debate over Constitutional ratification. When the tax was repealed, the Spy resumed. But Thomas must have caught the magazine bug: a few months later, in January, 1789, he launched the Massachusetts Magazine, profiled below. (Mott I, 92f)

In December, 1786 two New Brunswick, NJ printers, Frederick Quequelle and James Prange, launched the monthly New Jersey Magazine and Monthly Advertiser, which survived through three issues, its last produced in February, 1787. According to Richardson (275), the magazine’s contents, mostly borrowed from other sources, “revealed an avid taste for sentimental essays and melancholy love stories.” It also contained poetry, literary criticism, and articles on medicine, social morality, and religion. (SIRIS)

Launched in Philadelphia in 1786 and modeled on the British Gentleman’s Magazine and the London Magazine, the Columbian Magazine assembled some of the country’s most talented writers and artists.

Its founders included publisher Matthew Carey, printer William Spotswood, engraver John Trenchard, and booksellers Charles Cist and Thomas Seddon. Among its editors and contributors were Francis Hopkinson, Timothy Pickering, Benjamin Rush, Jeremy Belknap, and Charles Brockden Brown, who wrote a series of essays under the pen name of “The Rhapsodist.” Brown went on to edit several other magazines, including the Monthly Magazine and Literary Review in 1799 (see below). The Columbian reprinted works by George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. This gave the magazine a historical focus to complement its other specialties, geography and natural science. Interspersed among the prose were some notable engravings by Trenchard, which helped to make the Columbian the “handsomest magazine of its century,” as Mott described it (I, 99).
The *Columbian's* name was changed to *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* in January, 1790, following a restructuring of ownership, and it was discontinued in 1792 due to that year’s Post Office Act, of which more below. But before closing it attained “a foremost place among the American magazines of distinction in the eighteenth century,” as Richardson wrote. (293) With its seven-year lifespan, it was also one of the longest-running.

In 1786 Carey left the *Columbian* to start his new magazine, the *American Museum* in Philadelphia; its first issue was dated January, 1787. Any list of influential 18th-century American publishers would have Carey near the top. An Irish immigrant, Carey had started the *Pennsylvania Evening Herald* newspaper in 1785, using as capital a $400 loan from the Marquis de Lafayette.

The *American Museum* was modeled on an English periodical, the *Remembrancer*. (Green) Among its fans was Washington, who wrote in June, 1788 that the magazine was “uniformly conducted with taste, attention, and propriety.” (Mott I, 101) Carey understood the value of celebrity endorsement. And published subsequent testimonials from other satisfied subscribers, including John Dickinson, Franklin, Rush, and Alexander Hamilton. (Richardson, 321).

The *American Museum* has been called “the first truly significant literary magazine in the United States.” (Axelrod) In its early years much of the *American Museum’s* content was reprinted from pamphlets and newspapers, or written by Carey himself. Writers included Thomas Paine, Philip Freneau, Washington, Franklin, Hopkinson, Rush, and Witherspoon. Carey also reprinted the Federalist Papers in the magazine’s second year. As it evolved, the *American Museum* began to include more original fiction and poetry, and promoted abolition as well as other social reforms.

Philadelphia historian Albert H. Smyth wrote, “In almost every page, however, of the Museum the reader catches glimpses of the anxieties and disorders of the critical years of party strife that attended the making and adoption of the Constitution.” (70)

Carey wanted the country to have a national magazine, but the country didn’t provide a distribution network or transportation facilities that would allow a national magazine to succeed. By December, 1789, Carey had developed agents in 39 different locations, ranging from Boston in the north to Charleston in the south and Winchester, VA in the west. (Green) Managing this network was an ongoing challenge, despite the magazine’s apparent popularity. Launched with only 20 subscribers, the new magazine achieved circulation of 1,696 within two and a half years, though many subscribers remained in arrears despite Carey’s competitive pricing. (Richardson, 314 ; Green)

Like the *Columbian*, the *American Museum* was a victim of the 1792 Post Office Act, and its last issue was December, 1792. In his autobiography Carey said, “I was much attached to this work and had great reluctance to abandon it, unproductive and vexatious as was the management of it.” (quoted in Tassin, 24)

Never was more labour bestowed on a work, with less reward. During the whole six years, I was in a state of intense penury. I never at any one time, possessed 400 dollars—and rarely three or two hundred... I was, times without number, obliged to borrow money to go to market, and was often unable to pay my journeymen on Saturday. (quoted in Green)

Carey went on to enduring success in book publishing, producing a popular Catholic Bible and several best-selling schoolbooks. By 1817 his company was the largest publisher in the United States. (Axelrod) His son and son-in-law continued the business after his death, and under their direction
Having established a reputation with his spelling and grammar books (and his advocacy of national copyright laws), Noah Webster turned to magazine publishing, launching New York City’s first monthly, the *American Magazine*, in December, 1787. The magazine attained about 500 circulation by publishing “a variety and spirit unusual for the times.” (Mott I, 104) In the editor’s words, its contents were “calculated both for instruction and amusement.” (SIRIS) Not surprisingly, education was often a topic of interest, as were politics (Webster was an ardent Federalist) and news, especially the Constitutional debate which occurred during the magazine’s one-year lifespan. The *American Magazine* was illustrated with a few engravings. Before he closed the publication in November, 1788, Webster discussed forming a partnership with Isaiah Thomas, in which the resources of his *American Magazine* and Thomas’s announced-but-as-yet-unpublished *Massachusetts Magazine* would be combined. The influential educator and the expanding and prolific publisher would have formed an interesting partnership. Ultimately, Thomas went his own way (more on the *Massachusetts Magazine* below). (Mott I, 106; Richardson, 282)

In January, 1789 America’s fourth religious magazine (and first Methodist magazine) appeared in Philadelphia. The *Arminian Magazine* was produced as an evangelical tool by the Methodist Episcopal Church’s ranking leaders, Bishops Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. John Dickins, one of the church’s founders, was its editor. The theology of Jacobius Arminius (1560 - 1609) had been a source of inspiration to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, whose sermons and essays the *Arminian Magazine* was instrumental in spreading. Modeled on a British magazine of the same name, the American *Arminian Magazine* enjoyed a 24-month run, at last suspending publication with the issue of December, 1790. (Smyth, 74; SIRIS)

The *Children’s Magazine*, the first American magazine dedicated exclusively to children, appeared in January, 1789. The editors provided their audience much more education and moral improvement than entertainment. Produced in Hartford by the proprietors of the *Connecticut Courant* newspaper, Hudson & Goodwin, the *Children’s Magazine* must have been tough sledding for all but the most serious young people. Mott wrote, “They were precocious children to whom it addressed its ‘Easy Introduction to Geography,’ its ‘Moral Tales,’ its Addisonian letters and its sentimental verses.” (I, 29) The *Children’s Magazine* lasted only four months, printing its final issue in April, 1789. Richardson blamed the age, not the editors, for its failure. “By dealing harshly, time dealt justly with the magazine… But the aim was sincere, and the program was formulated with some evident care. Its faults are only the faults of its century.” (337)

The *Massachusetts Magazine*, undertaken in partnership with Ebenezer Andrews, (Via, 79) was Isaiah Thomas’s third excursion into magazine publishing and the third American magazine launched in the month of January, 1789. In its seven years of publication, *Massachusetts* provided a considerable variety of contents, much of it very well executed. By the magazine’s own description (Mott I, 108), it contained “Poetry, Musick, Biography, History, Physick, Geography, Morality, Criticism, Philosophy, Mathematicks, Agriculture, Architecture, Chemistry, Novels, Tales, News, Marriages, Deaths, Meteorological Observations, Etc.” and to this Mott adds that Thomas also published essays, plays, and engravings. Much of the magazine’s content was reprinted from books and pamphlets, which Thomas blamed on a lack of original contributions, noting in 1791 that “expectations of Originality, were in some measure, delusively founded.” (Mott I, 110) Richardson says that Thomas appealed to “a popular rather than a cultivated taste.” (357) This was unusual for the times and demonstrates some very forward-looking thinking on Thomas’s part.

*Massachusetts* ended up changing hands twice, first to Alexander Martin in 1795, and then to Benjamin Sweetser and James Cutter. (Via, 79) Every proprietor was well aware of the element of risk in magazine publishing. At the end of its fourth year, the editors wrote, “The *American Museum,*
Columbian Asylum, New Jersey Repository, and Nova Scotia Magazine are now no more. Their passing shades move silently along and beckon the Massachusetts Magazine to follow. "Fond of life and anticipating length of days she bids them a tender adieu and presses forward to the mark of the high calling of the Literati.” (Tassin, 27) After seven years of publication, the final issue came in December, 1796. Mott wrote (I, 111), “Its variety was great, and its life, for those times, was long.”

While America was recovering from its revolution, France’s was beginning, and citizens of each country had an obvious interest in events in the other. Joseph Nançrède, a Harvard professor of French, felt the need for a journal promoting good relations between America and France, and with the encouragement of the Paris-based Gallo-American Society launched the Courier de Boston, Affiches, Annonces, et Avis. The eight-page weekly's first edition appeared on April 23, 1789. Like the New-Haven Gazette and the Connecticut Magazine, the Courier was a hybrid newspaper-magazine, containing both news and essays. Some material was produced in English and French in parallel columns. The Courier de Boston is noteworthy as the first American magazine published in French. The Courier was printed in several additional locations: Salem, MA, New York City, and Philadelphia. It ceased publication on October 15, 1789. (Richardson, 337ff; SIRIS)

The last American magazine launched in the decade of the 1780s was the Christian’s, Scholar’s, and Farmer’s magazine. Published by Judge Shephard Kollock, editor of the Elizabethtown New Jersey Journal, the large (128 pages per issue) and encyclopedic Christian’s, Scholar’s, and Farmer’s was noted for serialized essays on various subjects organized into five broad categories. Tassin (8) said that the Christian’s, Scholar’s and Farmer’s title “was a delightful illustration of that breadth of aim which most of our early magazines exhibited,” but Richardson (345) referred to it as “deadly factual and full of instruction.” It was the country’s first bimonthly. Its premier issue was April-May, 1789 and its last was February-March, 1791. (Mott I, 112f)

Notable Magazines of the Nineties

Fifty-three of the 70 American magazines published after the Revolution were launched in the 1790s. In this decade the publishing industry was growing rapidly, as was use of the press to advance political, religious, and social causes. The emergence of parties and partisan disputes helped fuel a constant increase in the number of American newspapers. The same forces were felt in magazine publishing.

Magazine growth was modest in the first half of the decade and prolific in the second. The primary reason for this was the dramatic increase in postage costs imposed on magazine publishers by the Postal Act of 1792, which raised rates for magazines to the same rates as letters. At least three magazines closed because of this Act, including both the Columbian and the American Museum, and its chilling effect on new launches was significant. Two years later postage for magazines was reduced in the Postal Act of 1794, and publishers responded with a flurry of start-ups. Consequently a chronology of magazines launched in the 1790s shows an entrepreneurial feast in the years 1795-1799, but famine in the preceding five.

The first magazine launched in the new decade was New-York Magazine; or, Literary Repository, which came to market in January, 1790, published by Thomas and James Swords, who were its printers and probably its principal editors. Frequent contributors included members of a New York literary society known as the Friendly Club, including William Dunlap, author of the magazine’s “Theatrical Register” column, and the club’s leader, Dr. Elihu Hubbard Smith. Smith was an early encourager of novelist Charles Brockden Brown, who wrote for New-York Magazine and who went on to found the Monthly Magazine and American Review in 1799 (see below). (Mott I, 114ff; Schaefermeyer)
Mott lists this monthly as one of the four most important magazines of the 18th century (the other three being the Columbian, American Museum, and Massachusetts). Produced for eight years, New-York was also one of the longest-running. It gave special coverage to theater and travel, and published longer articles than most other magazines of the time. Washington and John Adams were among its readers. New-York was illustrated with copperplate engravings, a costly feature that reflected the publishers’ commitment to quality. (Tassin, 24 ; Mott I, 114ff)

New-York’s last issue was December, 1797. At the end of its eight-year life, the editors asked in discouragement, “Shall every endeavour of this nature desist in these States? Shall our country be stigmatised, odiously stigmatised, with want of taste for literature?” (Tassin, 25) But, spanning almost 100 issues, New-York lived longer than most of its contemporaries, an endowed an impressive collection of American writing and art.

No American magazines were launched in 1791, but on January 6, 1792, the American Apollo appeared in Boston. Published weekly by Joseph Belknap and Alexander Young (later by Belknap and Thomas Hall), American Apollo contained eight to 12 pages per issue and was supplemented by the proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, of which Belknap’s father, Jeremy, was the founder. (Ellis, 76) Of its contents Joseph Buckingham wrote (147f):

     The selections, in general, were judiciously made, and evince care and industry in collecting and condensing intelligence, and purity of taste in gathering sentiments, anecdotes, and historical fragments from popular authors. Its politics were of the Federalist school, but neither ultra nor violent.

When the Historical Society decided to distribute their material separately the American Apollo was discontinued as a magazine with the issue of September 28, 1792. It continued as a newspaper through December 25, 1794. (Brigham)

June, 1792 saw the emergence of the country’s second women’s magazine. This was the monthly Lady’s Magazine, produced in Philadelphia by a “Literary Society.” In its prospectus the editors described their purpose: “It is to contain everything requisite to disseminate the knowledge of real life, portray virtue in the most amiable point of view, inspire the Female Mind with a love of patience, prudence, and fortitude,” in “the most lively prose and pathetic verse.” This took the form of stories, poems, essays, and a summary of the news. The Lady’s Magazine pursued its mission for a single year: its last issue came in May, 1793. (Tassin, 19f ; Scharf & Westcott, 1,978)

In January, 1793 Philadelphia publisher John Parker attempted a revival of the Columbian magazine. It was titled the Columbian Museum; or, Universal Asylum and only one issue was produced. (Mott I, 31 ; SIRIS)

The Reverend Abel Sarjent was a Universalist preacher from western Pennsylvania who relocated first to New Jersey and then to Baltimore. There he launched the Free Universal Magazine, a quarterly, in April, 1793. It was the country’s first Universalist magazine, and the first true magazine published in the South. It contained questions and answers on religious topics, hymns, and articles. Sarjent announced plans to continue it into a second year but was unsuccessful. Its last issue was January-March, 1794. (Thomas, A, 53ff ; Mott I, 31 ; SIRIS)

The New-Hampshire Journal; or Farmer’s Weekly Museum was founded in Walpole, NH on April 11, 1793 by Isaiah Thomas and David Carlisle, a native of Walpole and a former apprentice to Thomas.

1 The North-Carolina Magazine of 1764 is usually described as a newspaper.
It started as a hybrid newspaper-magazine, offering both news and essays. (Featherston)

This was an important and ground-breaking periodical for several reasons. One was its longevity. It became the first 18th century magazine to survive into 19th century; in fact, it enjoyed the longest lifespan of any magazine that America had yet produced, running until October, 1810. (Mott I, 789)

Its name changed several times in those 17 years, and the magazine is probably best remembered as the Farmer's Weekly Museum.

But more important than its longevity was the home it provided to one of the country’s most accomplished editors and writers, Joseph Dennie, whose first contribution was published in the issue of October 12, 1795. (Featherston)

Dennie was raised in a Loyalist family in Boston, son of a prosperous merchant. Ink may have been in Dennie’s blood: his mother, Mary Green Dennie, came from a long line of New England printers. Reflecting his father’s politics, Dennie was an arch-conservative, so reactionary and Anglophilic that he was accused of favoring monarchy. (Featherston)

Dennie trained as a lawyer but soon found that he preferred writing and editing. While at Harvard he contributed to Thomas’s Massachusetts magazine. Beginning in 1793 he co-wrote a popular and widely-reprinted series of essays with Royall Tyler under the pen names “Colon and Spondee,” for the Hanover, NH Eagle newspaper, and in 1795 Dennie launched the Tablet, a short-lived essay-paper profiled below. (Featherston)

When the Tablet closed in August, 1795, Dennie moved to Walpole, and he soon joined the staff of the Farmer’s Weekly Museum, where he wrote a column in the character of a country “Lay Preacher” (“exhibiting truths in a plain dress to the common people”), continued the Colon and Spondee material with Tyler, and ran the literary and political departments. (Featherston ; Via, 86)

Dennie must have been a handful to work with. Edmund Quincy wrote,

> Mr. Dennie was a most charming companion; brilliant in conversation, fertile in allusion and quotation, abounding in wit, quick at repartee, and of only too jovial a disposition. (quoted in Via, 82)

But Joseph Buckingham, who apprenticed as printer’s devil on the Farmer’s Weekly Museum and went on to become a noted editor, wrote in his memoirs:

> It was not uncommon to find him in bed at a late hour in the morning. His copy was often given out in small portions, a paragraph or two at a time; sometimes it was written in the printing office, while the compositor was waiting to put it into type. One of the best of his lay sermons was written at the village tavern, in a chamber where he and his friends were amusing themselves with cards… If he happened to be playing a game, when I applied for copy, he would ask someone to play his hand for him while he could give the devil his due. (197)

Once harnessed, Dennie’s wit was a force to be reckoned with. By 1797 the Farmer’s Weekly Museum had achieved circulation of 2,000, making it one of the largest periodicals in the country. Dennie claimed it had subscribers in every state except Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. But within a few years he began to look for new challenges. (Featherston)

He left the Farmer’s Weekly Museum in 1799 and moved to Philadelphia, working on the Gazette of the United States under John Fenno. In 1801 he launched the Port Folio, which will be profiled in a later
The Farmer's Weekly Museum continued along under changing ownership, but never regained the success it had enjoyed with Dennie in the editor's chair. Its final issue was dated October 15, 1810. (Mott I, 790)

A second periodical dedicated to the Granite State was launched in 1793: the New Hampshire Magazine. Its publisher was Elijah Russell (later spelled Russel), who at the time was publisher of a newspaper known as the Mirror (related to the New Star of 1797: see below). The New Hampshire Magazine's anonymous editor is said to have been the Reverend Martin Ruter. It ran through six monthly issues, from June to November, 1793. Russell later took on a partner and the firm became Russel & Davis. (Hammond, 22; Mott I, 31; Brigham)

The Monthly Miscellany and Vermont Magazine was launched in Bennington, VT in April, 1794 by Anthony Haswell. Haswell was a former apprentice and protegé of Isaiah Thomas and publisher of the Vermont Gazette newspaper, which he launched in 1783. In 1784 he was appointed Vermont's postmaster-general, a position he held until 1791. An outspoken Republican, Haswell became one of the few publishers actually convicted under the Alien and Sedition Acts, a result of his newspaper's support of Matthew Lyon, another outspoken Vermont publisher. (See Scourge of the Aristocracy, 1798, and National Magazine, 1799, below.) The Monthly Miscellany and Vermont Magazine closed after its sixth issue. (Cyclopedia, 261; Mott I, 31)

Only one other title appeared in 1794: a second United States Magazine (subtitled A General Repository of Useful Instruction and Rational Amusement), printed in Newark, NJ by John Woods, publisher of Newark's first hometown newspaper, Woods's Newark Gazette and Paterson Advertiser.² The new United States was a monthly containing 64 pages per issue of foreign and domestic news, essays and articles on a wide range of subjects, poetry, and humorous anecdotes. The editor was unnamed. It was launched in April, 1794 and folded in August of the same year.

In January, 1795, the American Monthly Review, or Literary Chronicle began publication in Philadelphia, printed by S. H. Smith. It was a literary miscellany and much of its contents was reprinted or translated. Its contents included novels, poetry, and plays, as well as articles with a European focus. The American Monthly Review ran for a year, from January through December, 1795. (Mott I, 122; SIRIS)

Also launched in January of 1795 was the Rural Magazine, or Vermont Repository, the state's second magazine. It was edited by Dr. Samuel Williams and published monthly in Rutland. Among other material the magazine published a collection of documents relating to Vermont's early history, a subject of personal interest to Williams. In December, 1794, only a month before the Rural Magazine's launch, Williams had started the Rutland Herald newspaper in partnership with his cousin, who, to the lasting confusion of historians, was also named Samuel Williams. The Rural Magazine ran for two years, with its last issue in December, 1796. (Mott I, 122; Duffy, 323)

In February, 1795 William T. Palmer launched the Philadelphia Minerva, a weekly whose contents included some news and "old and fugitive pieces." (Smyth, 75) It ran for almost three and a half years and was continued in 1798 by Dessert to the True American, described below. The first issue was dated February 7, 1795; the last came on July 7, 1798. (Scharf & Westcott, 1978; Mott I, 122)

The biweekly Literary Miscellany was launched in Philadelphia in 1795. Its mission was to contain "elegant selections of the most admired fugitive pieces and extracts from works of the greatest merit,

² For a brief time in 1776 Hugh Gaine's New York Mercury had relocated to Newark.
with originals, prose and poetry.” Each issue contained fiction and poetry, some by well known authors. Sixteen issues were produced. (SIRIS)

Before he joined the New-Hampshire Journal or Farmer’s Weekly Museum, described above, Joseph Dennie made his editorial debut in the weekly Tablet, a Miscellaneous Paper, Devoted to the Belles Lettres launched in Boston on Tuesday, May 19, 1795. The Tablet was a four-page essay-paper in the tradition of the Spectator or Tatler, containing Dennie’s Addisonian “Farrago” papers as well as criticism, biography, some poetry, but, as promised in the prospectus, “no tiresome news or advertisements.” Dennie’s business partner was William Spotswood, who as publisher and printer had the disagreeable task of telling Dennie after three months that the venture was not a success. Dennie wrote, “I sat down to the desk of composition, and was making extensive arrangements, when an unexpected and mortifying billet from Spotswood announced the death of my child! I had never felt the inconvenience of being poor, and the anguish of disappointment, till then.” The Tablet’s 13th and final issue appeared on August 11, 1795. Dennie moved to Walpole, NH and began his “Lay Preacher” essays for the Farmer’s Weekly Museum in October. (Ellis, 80ff ; Mott I, 225 ; Featherston)

The penultimate magazine of 1795 arrived on July 1. The New-York Weekly Magazine, later retitled the Literary and Sentimental Magazine, published the first American serial novel, St. Herbert, by “Anne.” The magazine also provided fiction, poetry advice, and theater notes. It ran for two years and produced its final issue on August 23, 1797. (Mott I, 121, 164, 167)

The last magazine launched in 1795 was the bimonthly Theological Magazine, the premier issue of which appeared in July, 1795. It was printed by T. & J. Swords for Cornelius Davis, an evangelical New York publisher and bookseller who went on to launch the New York Missionary Magazine in 1800. Mott said that the Theological Magazine’s contents ran to “many rather monotonous dissertations.” Although the magazine was not affiliated with any denomination, its contributors were chiefly Presbyterian and Congregational. Its final issue came in February, 1799. (Mott I, 131)

The first American magazine of 1796 was one of the shortest-lived. The prolific inventor Dr. Apollos Kinsley started a weekly in Hartford, which he called the New Star. In the course of his career Kinsley developed new processes for brick-making and pin manufacturing, along with a sort of precursor to the automobile, a steam-wagon. (Trumbull, 663) Unfortunately, it seems that the New Star produced only a single issue, dated February 2. (Mott I, 122)

The acerbic “Peter Porcupine,” William Cobbett, is probably best-remembered for Porcupine’s Gazette, the vitriolic daily newspaper he launched in 1797. But the paper’s origin came two years earlier, when Cobbett was hired by Thomas Bradford, a Philadelphia bookseller and publisher, to write a report on the proceedings of Congress. The resulting pamphlet, A Prospect from the Congress-Gallery, sold well and Cobbett decided to build on his success by continuing the pamphlet as a monthly periodical. The first issue appeared in March, 1796. By the time the second issue appeared, Cobbett had parted with Bradford and renamed the publication Porcupine’s Political Censor. (SIRIS ; Mott I, 158 ; Bass)

Regarding Cobbett’s unique style of journalism, Smyth wrote,

Up to that time no such cut and thrust weapon had been seen in America, and no such truculent foul-mouthed editor had plucked a pen out of his pilcher by the ears on this side of the Atlantic. We had known editors who were learned in profanity and gifted in vulgarity, but none that had just such a bitter trick of inventive. (82)

Matthew Carey, of the Columbian and American Museum, addressed Cobbett, “Wretch as you are,
accursed by God and hated by man, the most tremendous scourge ever vomited forth to curse a people by sowing discord among them…” and so on. (Mott I, 159) As it happened, the two ended up good friends. Mott wrote (I, 159) that personal attacks in the era’s vicious press weren’t always meant seriously.

High words sold copies, however. Cobbett realized that he could expand his business by publishing more frequently, and with the issue of March, 1797 Porcupine’s Political Censor ended and Porcupine’s Gazette began. (Mott I, 158)

In May, 1796, Reverend W. Phoebus launched the Experienced Christian’s Magazine, a New York monthly that Mott tells us contained many “edifying narratives of death-bed scenes.” (Mott I, 132) It ran for 12 issues, the last in April, 1797.

May, 1796 also brought the launch of the triweekly Nightingale, or Melange de Litterature, published in Boston by John Lathrop, Junior. Like many other 18th-century magazines, its goal was to promote American belles lettres. Said the editors, “We are sanguine that a literary publication can be supported in America… God forbid that any foe to our country ever shall have reason to say that our native town is the residence of Ignorance.” (Tassin, 26) The Nightingale’s prospectus promised impartial reviews of America’s diverse writers, noting, “Good humor has always smiled at their table, and variety has garnished the viands.” (Tassin, 3) The Nightingale sang for four months, ceasing publication in August, 1796.

A flurry of launches filled out the year 1796, but only one of the new magazines lived longer than the Nightingale.

The Long Island Magazine, or Universal Repository was launched and sank in Sagg Harbor, NY. David Frothingham was its publisher. Just one issue, 56 pages, was produced, dated June, 1796. (LOC)

In August, 1796 the first issue of the monthly Lady and Gentleman’s Pocket Magazine of Literary and Polite Amusement was printed in New York by John Tiebout for J. Lyon & Co. Many of its articles and poems were reprinted from European sources. Among other subjects it covered mythology, manners, and morals. Three more issues were produced, the last in November, 1796. (LOC)

The country’s first military magazine emerged in 1796. The Monthly Military Repository was published in New York by W.A. Davis and edited by Charles Smith, a New York bookseller. Its two volumes contain 650 pages on military topics, including historical essays, maps, and portraits. Material on the American Revolution is said to have been supplied by Baron von Steuben and General Horatio Gates. Issue dates are not recorded, but publication ceased in 1797. (LOC ; Wilson & Fiske, “Smith”)

The United States Christian Magazine, whose mission was, “to explain and support the doctrines of the Reformation, to refute error, and to promote vital practical piety,” was published in New York by T. & J. Swords. Contents included biography, letters, reviews, essays on doctrine and scripture, and religious news. Three undated issues were produced in 1796. (Mott I, 122 ; SIRIS)

The first magazine launched in 1797, the monthly Literary Museum, was printed in West Chester, PA, by Derrick & Sharples. It covered a broad range of subjects and included a selection of foreign and domestic news in its “Monthly Chronicle” section. The Literary Museum also contained some engravings. Its first issue was January, 1797 and its last issue was June of the same year. (LOC ; SIRIS)
The year’s second magazine was also a product of Pennsylvania. In January John Dickins, who had been involved with the *Arminian Magazine* (1789) noted above, launched the monthly *Methodist Magazine* in Philadelphia. It was printed by Henry Tuckniss. Smyth described its contents as “chiefly made up of sermons,” (76) but it also contained sketches, anecdotes, and poetry. It was discontinued after Dickins’s death in 1798, the final issue dated August of that year. (SIRIS)

Celebration greeted the arrival of the *South-Carolina Weekly Museum*, in January, 1797. In fact, celebration caused some delay in its appearance: the first issue, dated January 1, was held up due to staff holiday festivities “more liberal than usual” The *South-Carolina Weekly Museum* was edited by T.P. Bowen, and featured fiction, essays, poetry, and digests of the state laws. Its publisher, W.P. Harrison & Company of Charleston, announced a strict policy of cash only, which may have been one reason why the magazine survived 19 months, through July, 1798. (Tassin, 22 ; Mott I, 122)

At the same time the *South-Carolina Weekly Museum* was getting underway, a similar magazine with a similar name was launched in Baltimore. The *Weekly Museum*, published by J. Smith and C. Jackson, began publication with the issue of January 8, 1797. Mott described it as a Sunday miscellany (I, 122). In its five-month lifespan it published news, reports on legislation, and articles on agriculture and government, along with poetry and anecdotes. The *Weekly Museum* ceased publication with the issue of May 18, 1797. (LOC ; SIRIS)

Simultaneously but farther north, Reverend Joseph Brown of Exeter, NH launched the *Remembrancer*, a religious weekly, in January, 1797. Each issue contained an essay on “the being of God.” Its publisher was H. Ranlet, a local printer and newspaper publisher, and its short run ended in February, 1797. (Mott I, 122; SIRIS ; NJ)

The first week of January, 1797 was a busy one for printers throughout the country. On January 2 the *American Universal Magazine* was launched in Philadelphia, edited by Richard Lee and printed initially by Samuel Harrison Smith. Much of the magazine’s eclectic content was reprinted, but it did publish original engravings, mostly portraits, and frequent articles favoring abolition. The *American Universal* was launched as a weekly, but became a biweekly after its first four issues. The last issue was published on March 7, 1798. (Mott I, 122; Smyth, 76; Catalogue, 62)

On several occasions Philip Freneau, the “Poet of the Revolution,” tried to make a career of journalism. He had written for the *Freeman’s Journal* and the *United States Magazine* during the Revolution, and worked at the *New York Daily Advertiser* newspaper before Jefferson convinced him to launch the Republican *National Gazette*. When the Gazette closed in October, 1793, Freneau started a newspaper, the *Jersey Chronicle*, at his home in Monmouth County, NJ, but in 1795 it closed too.

In 1797 he joined with a group that included publisher Andrew Menut to launch the *Time-Piece, and Literary Companion* in New York City, the first issue appearing on March 13. The *Time-Piece* had many characteristics of a newspaper: it came out three times a week in four-page issues. But in addition to domestic and foreign news the *Time-Piece* also published longer articles with a focus on politics, along with poetry and anecdotes. The *Time-Piece* was no more profitable than any of his earlier ventures, and in March of 1798 Freneau resigned from what turned out to be his last position in periodical publishing. The *Time-Piece* continued for another five months without him, producing its last issue on August 30, 1798. (SIRIS ; Stowall ; Mott I, 121)

We noted above that Concord, NH printers Russel & Davis started a publication called the *New Hampshire Magazine* in 1793. Beginning in 1792 they also published a weekly newspaper called the *Mirror*, which after several intervening name changes eventually became the Republican *Gazetteer*. On April 11, 1797 the name changed again and the Republican *Gazetteer* became the *New Star*. The *New Star* offered a unique business model: it was actually produced as two separate publications with a
common name. One edition was subtitled “A Republican, Miscellaneous, Literary Paper,” and contained essays, poetry, and other literary material. The second edition was simply, “A Republican paper,” and contained news, articles on politics, and reports on legislation. The different editions carried the same volume and number. On October 3, 1797, the two editions merged and the New Star became the Mirror newspaper. (SIRIS ; LOC)

New York’s Friendly Club had a hand in launching three magazines: first, New-York Magazine in 1790, profiled above; second, the quarterly Medical Repository, which began publication in July, 1797; and, two years later, Charles Brockden Brown’s Monthly Magazine (1799), profiled separately below. The Medical Repository was the first American medical magazine and the first American scientific journal of any kind. (Mott I, 149, 215ff)

The Medical Repository’s founding editors were three physicians: Samuel Latham Mitchill, Elihu Hubbard Smith, and Edward Miller. A student of both law and medicine, Mitchill served several terms in Congress and was briefly a senator by appointment. The other two founders had literary as well as scientific interests. (Mott I, 215ff)

The Medical Repository’s “Introductory Address” promised special coverage of epidemics, the relevance of which was underscored by Smith’s death in the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1798, which killed 3,500 people. (Smyth, 77f) The magazine also published case histories, medical news, reviews of medical books, and articles on other sciences, such as natural history, geography, chemistry, and mineralogy.

Although it never had more than 300 subscribers (Mott I, 199), the Medical Repository was widely respected and enjoyed the longest run of any American magazine founded in the 18th century, lasting until 1824.

In July, 1797, the monthly New Hampshire and Vermont Magazine made a brief appearance. Published by John Moseley Dunham in Haverhill, NH, the magazine focused on government and politics. It lasted for four issues, the final in October, 1797.

The last magazine undertaken in 1797 was the American Moral and Sentimental Magazine, a New York weekly with the stated purpose of opposing the “torrent of infidelity” its editor-publisher, Thomas Kirk, saw rampant in the times. Its contents came “from the best authors, on religious, moral, and sentimental subjects, calculated to form the understanding and improve the heart.” (quoted in SIRIS) Tassin (6) wrote that it “reeked of edification,” and Mott (I, 132) said that it was full of “deathbeds, dying letters, narratives of conversion, and many ‘remarkable providences.’” In this vein it covered a variety of subjects, among them slavery. The American Moral and Sentimental Magazine’s first issue was dated July 3, 1797; its last was dated May 21, 1798.

January, 1798 saw the emergence of two new magazines in Philadelphia, first of which was the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine, edited and published by Thomas Condie. Its announcement read, “In America periodical publications may properly be termed the literature of the people,” (Tassin, 8) suggesting that the editor was seeking broad circulation. By December he had found 900 subscribers but had difficulty hiring help. (Mott I, 14)

The Philadelphia Monthly published several works of special interest, including a life of Washington which may have been the country’s first serialized biography (Mott I, 175), and in-depth coverage of the Philadelphia yellow fever epidemic of 1798 which killed more than 3,500 people. (Smyth 77f; Mott I, 123) Other contents included weather reports, prices current, rates of exchange, and engravings. (SIRIS) As for poetry, Condie wrote, “Magazine poetry has usually been considered as synonymous with the most trivial and imperfect attempts at verse-writing.” (Mott I, 46) He
published poems anyway. The *Philadelphia Monthly Magazine* ran from January through December, 1798.

* Philadelphia’s second magazine launch of 1798 was a more-targeted publication, the monthly *Thespian Oracle, or Monthly Mirror* published by J. B. Freeman. This was the country’s first periodical devoted exclusively to the theater, and its contents included articles on the theater, biographical sketches of actors, and reviews. Unfortunately, its first issue, January, 1798, was also its last. (SIRIS; Mott I, 165)

* One other American magazine was started in January, 1798. This was the weekly *Key*, published in Fredericktown, MD by John D. Cary. Its first issue was dated January 13, 1798; its last, July 14, 1798 (SIRIS; Mott I, 790)

* On February 3, 1798, the first issue of the Philadelphia *Weekly Magazine* appeared. Its founder was James Watters, the young manager of the American edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and an enthusiast of novelist Charles Brockden Brown, who went on to launch the *Monthly Magazine and American Review* (described below) in 1799. Brown began a series entitled “The Man at Home” in the first issue, and his novel *Arthur Mervyn* was later serialized in the *Weekly*. Other contents included fiction and a series of articles on art. The magazine was suspended in August 1798, following Watters’s death in the yellow fever epidemic, and begun again six months later by a new editor-publisher, Ezekial Forman. The last issue is dated June 1, 1799. (SIRIS; Smyth, 79f; Mott I, 123, 149)

* Charleston’s second magazine, a “diminutive weekly” (SIRIS) arrived on February 27, 1798. This was *The Vigil*, which published one essay per issue on topics of human frailty, such as selfishness or idleness. Its editor was W.P. Young; its editor Richard Beresford. *The Vigil* ended on April 3, 1798. (SIRIS)

* Another weekly came to market in Newark, NJ at about the same time as the Philadelphia *Weekly Magazine*. On February 7, 1798, the first issue of the *Rural Magazine* was produced at the press of J.H. Williams for Jacob Halsey & Co. The *Rural Magazine’s* contents spanned a broad range of subjects, from agriculture to religion, in a broad range of forms, including essays, poems, and stories. The magazine ran for a year, publishing its last issue on February 9, 1799. (SIRIS; Hill and Collins, 21; Mott I, 790)

* In the spring of 1798 two magazines bloomed in Connecticut. The first was the biweekly *Religious Monitor*, published in Danbury by Douglas & Nichols and containing articles on religion and morality, sketches, anecdotes, poetry, and hymns. The *Religious Monitor’s* first issue was April 7, 1798 and its last was September 22 of the same year. (SIRIS; Mott I, 791)

* Up the road in Newfield, CT, L. Beach launched the biweekly *Humming Bird, or Herald of Taste* on April 14, 1798. This charmingly entitled magazine contained poetry, anecdotes, and sentimental fiction, and lasted through five numbers, the final published on June 9, 1798. (SIRIS; Mott I, 791)

* In May, 1798 the country’s second German magazine was published in Philadelphia by H. & R. Kimmerer. The *Philadelphisches Magazin, oder Unterhaltender Gesellschafter, für die Deutschen in America* contained a wide range of material, including biographies, history, poetry, and articles about unusual events and exciting adventures. It appears that only one issue was produced. (SIRIS)

* Later that spring Baltimore’s third magazine was launched: the monthly *General Magazine and Impartial Review*, published by Hannah & Greene. Its contents included sentimental fiction and poetry, essays on religion and marriage, and some plays. The magazine lasted for three issues: June,
July, and August, 1798. (SIRIS; Mott I, 791)

**June 5, 1798 saw the launch of the weekly Rural Casket, from the press of Power & Southwick in Poughkeepsie, NY. Self-improvement was one of the magazine’s goals, and its contents included essays on virtue, vice, and morality, along with poetry, foreign and domestic news, medical remedies, marriage advice, and humor. The Casket’s last issue was dated Sept. 11, 1798. (SIRIS)**

**On July 14, 1798 a new weekly appeared in Philadelphia, The Desert to the True American, published by Woodruff & Turner. The new magazine was a continuation of the Philadelphia Minerva (1795), described above. (LOC) It courted a female audience with an emphasis on fiction, including serialized romances, as well as poetry and essays addressing manners and morals. This seems to have been a relatively successful formula: the magazine lasted until August 19, 1799. (Mott I, 791; SIRIS)**

**In October, 1798, Fairhaven VT printer James Lyon launched a political magazine, the semimonthly Scourge of the Aristocracy, and Repository of Important Political Truths. Lyon was the son of Matthew Lyon, printer and congressman, who was jailed under the Alien and Sedition Acts. Not surprisingly, the Scourge of the Aristocracy was strongly Republican, covering political issues, speeches, and current events. Its first issue was dated October 1, 1798; its last December 15, 1798. After it closed Lyon moved to Richmond, VA, where in 1799 he started a daily newspaper called The Cabinet of the United States, and a second magazine, the National Magazine, described below. (SIRIS; Duffy et al, 192; Mott, I, 791; Bryan I, 367)**

**On December 8, 1798 the first issue of the Christian’s Monitor was published by Rand & Burdick in Portland, ME, with the goal of waking the soul by “gentle admonition.” Thirteen more issues followed, the last dated June 8, 1799. This biweekly was Maine’s first magazine and the last American magazine launched in 1798. (SIRIS; Williamson II, 343; Mott I, 791)**

**The first magazine launched in 1799 appeared in January. This was the monthly Philadelphia Magazine and Review, edited by Benjamin Davies. Tassin wrote (6) that Davies was “skeptical of originality.” According to Smyth (84), Davies believed that “spurious patriotism” inhibited American editors from using non-native material. Thus the Magazine and Review contains numerous reprints, especially from British sources. Its last issue was dated June, 1799. (SIRIS)**

**April, 1799 saw the emergence of the Monthly Magazine and American Review in New York City. Charles Brockden Brown was its founding editor. Brown had been a regular contributor to the Columbian and Philadelphia Weekly Magazine, and had published one of the first American novels, Wieland, before joining the Monthly Magazine. Brown was encouraged by Elihu Smith and other members of New York’s Friendly Club (see Medical Repository, 1797, above). He believed that 400 subscribers would cover annual expenses of $1,600 (Tassin, 23) but he never succeeded financially despite his gifts as a writer and editor. Mott says that there were elements of tragedy in his attempt: “Courageous effort was followed by disappointment and death.” (I, 218)**

Brown’s goal of addressing a broad range of topics was handicapped by a lack of original material. As was so often the case in the 18th century, supporters’ promises of plentiful submissions went unfulfilled. As a result, the magazine remained focused on scientific and literary subjects. (Schaefermeyer) Nevertheless, the Monthly Magazine had “plenty of diversity, with essays, good literary criticism, fiction by the editor, and so on,” according to Mott (I, 124).

In 1800 the Monthly Magazine was renamed the American Review, and Literary Journal, and reduced its frequency to four issues per year, thereby becoming America’s first quarterly literary review. The
American Review survived until the fall of 1802. Brown went on to edit two other publications: the Literary Magazine and American Register, launched with publisher John Conrad in 1803, and the American Register or General Repository, which Brown launched on his own in 1807. (Schaefermeyer)

Brown’s essays reflected his eclectic interests, covering (among other topics) mesmerism, somnambulism, mysticism, and flaming meteorites. (Schaefermeyer) Smyth (80) noted that “Brown’s genius naturally dealt with weird and sombre subjects and extraordinary passions and experiences.” Cleman wrote that Brown prefigured Poe with his use of “multiple points of view, with the psychology of terror… with the melodramatic charm of the powerfully erring individual will—the Promethean villain.”

We noted above that James Lyon, publisher of the Scourge of the Aristocracy (1798) relocated from Vermont to Richmond, VA in 1799 and launched a newspaper there called The Cabinet of the United States. On June 1, 1799 he also launched Richmond’s first magazine, the weekly National Magazine, slanted heavily toward Republicanism whose motto was “Moderate Salaries, Frequent Elections and Universal Suffrage.” In October, 1801 the newspaper and magazine were merged and Richard Dinmore was made editor. (Bryan I, 367f; SIRIS)

In 1799 Matthew Carey attempted a revival of the American Museum. It was contemplated as an annual, and only one issue was produced, printed by W. & R. Dickson in Lancaster, PA. (Ford, 73)

Strays and Orphans

Eighteenth-century publishers left a few castaways and scattered mysteries to tantalize the hardcore history sleuth. Here are a couple of magazines mentioned by historians but not catalogued in the Library of Congress, Gregory’s Union List of Serials, or the Smithsonian.

Dr. John Barclay Biddle of Philadelphia is said to have started a journal called the Medical Examiner in 1787, which produced one volume in one year of publication. (Ford, 8)

Reverend Elhanan Winchester, an American Universalist evangelist and founder of the first Universalist church in Philadelphia, spent seven years in London starting in 1787 and while there edited a British journal called the Philadelphian Magazine, founded in 1788. It may have been reprinted in the United States. Several sources (Smyth, 73; Ford, 8f; Young, 271) describe two volumes encompassing February 1788 through November 1789, although the sources may be copying from each other. (BL; Dictionary of Universalist, etc.)

Smyth mentions another magazine which apparently left few traces: “The Pennsylvania Magazine, of the very slightest significance, was issued in 1795, and made one volume.” The Pennsylvania Magazine is also listed in Young (271).

Both Smyth (75) and Young (271) also mention The American Annual Register, or Historical Memoirs of the United States, produced in one volume in Philadelphia in 1796.

One last stray waif is Wisdom in Miniature; or the Young Gentleman and Lady’s Magazine. Matthews (71) says that one issue was produced in Hartford, CT in 1796.

3 Sometime in 1800 Lyon relocated his business to Georgetown, making the National Magazine the first magazine published in District of Columbia—in other words, the first American magazine to be the first magazine in two different locations. (Bryan I, 368)