

Two Contracts between Isaiah Thomas and authors

2

Memorandum of An Agreement made this fifteenth day of August, one thousand, Seven hundred & Ninety three between Peter Whitney of Northborough, in the County of Worcester & Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Clerk, on the one part; & Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, in s^d County & Commonwealth, Printer, on the other part, witnesseth that the s^d Whitney hereby sells & relinquishes to the s^d Thomas the Copy-Right of a Book, whereof he is the Author entitled "A history of the County of Worcester, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: with a particular account of every Town from its first Settlement to the present time, &c. together with a Map of the County at large, from actual Survey,"—for the Consideration that the said Thomas give him the said Whitney Ninety four Copies of said Book, when published, bound and lettered, Six Copies bound lettered and gilt, and Fifty Copies in Sheets (said Thomas to bind said Fifty Copies for said Whitney, he paying said Thomas therefor the sum of Two Shillings for each copy); and further to give said Whitney one hundred Copies, bound and lettered, of all future Editions of said Book provided said Whitney revise, correct and add to the same whatever may by said Thomas be deemed necessary, and also by said Whitney.¹³

Peter Whitney
History of the
County of
Worcester
Worcester, 1793

of December 28, 1791, his contract with Thomas & Andrews disposed of the copyright, for which Belknap, his heirs, and assigns would receive one-third of the copies in sheets, or the full value of the sheets at wholesale price, of every edition

Jeremy Belknap
The Foresters
Boston, 1792

to be paid as fast as the Books shall be sold. Provided that the s^d Belknap, his heirs & assigns shall not receive any part of his third part of the first Edition of said Book (excepting six copies only if called for) until there shall be so many copies of s^d Book sold as will pay the amount of the paper on which said first Edition is printed—and if at the Expiration of two years from the first publication of said first Edition, there should not be so many copies sold as will pay the amount of the paper aforesaid, then the s^d Belknap, his heirs & assigns shall pay to the s^d Thomas & Andrews, their heirs & assigns one half the value of the s^d paper, and the said Thomas & Andrews their heirs & assigns shall deliver to s^d Belknap his heirs & assigns one third part of the printed copies which shall then remain unsold in sheets.⁷

Another clause defined the wholesale price of the book in sheets as equal to half the price of the same book bound.⁸ The author therefore received a number of his own books equal in value to one-sixth of a bound edition. In this instance he assumed a slight risk but was still saddled with part of the distribution.¹⁴

Rollo Silver, The American Printer, 1967