

*R. H. Carnie  
Irish Decorative Bookbindings  
at the University of Calgary  
Amphora 28, no.2 (1977)  
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Students of Irish decorative bookbindings belonging to the period 1600 to 1800 are well served by Maurice Craig's standard study which appeared in 1954.<sup>1</sup> North American students of the bibliopagic art will be interested to know that the Rare Book Room of the University of Calgary has a small group of exemplars of Irish decorative bookbindings belonging to the second half of the eighteenth century. These bindings are not recorded in Craig's 'List of noteworthy bindings with their locations', nor in his companion 'List of published Irish bindings'.<sup>2</sup>

The bindings at Calgary, although unlisted, provide no surprises. Three of them represent the various styles of decorative morocco bindings found on Dublin almanacks of the period 1750 to 1800. The fact that each of these three bindings covers not one but two almanacks, printed and published by rival Dublin establishments, suggests that they are 'bespoke' and not 'trade' bindings. The fourth binding is on a set of the eight volume edition of David Hume's *History of England* published in Dublin in 1780. It invites, although unsigned, direct comparison with the signed bindings, on the selfsame book, bound by William McKenzie, printer and stationer to Trinity College, Dublin, which are to be found in the Royal Irish Academy and in the National Library of Ireland.<sup>3</sup> Although the bindings at Calgary closely resemble similar bindings illustrated or discussed by Craig, none of them is exactly the same. As Craig gives only a handful of locations in North America, and none at all in Canada, the presence of these bindings in a Canadian institution is worthy of note.

As well as the four bindings described below, the University of Calgary Rare Book Room has five other examples of eighteenth century Dublin almanacks in decorative bindings. These are:



*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*, Dublin, 1757. Red morocco binding.



*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*, Dublin, 1759. Red morocco binding.





*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*, Dublin, 1762. Red morocco binding.



*The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*, Dublin, 1769. Stained calf binding.



*The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*, Dublin, 1779. Red morocco binding.

In view of Craig's dictum that: 'Almanacks have a double advantage to the student of bindings, for there is always a strong presumption that they were bound in the place of publication and in the year before that to which they refer',<sup>4</sup> these five bindings are probably datable Dublin bindings. Their gilt decoration, however, is modest compared with the other exemplars, and none of the tools used seems to me to be exclusively or distinctively Irish. As I have no clues as to their provenance previous to their acquisition by the [book collector, Edgar Osborne](#)<sup>5</sup>, a decision on their 'Irishness' must await further study of their decoration.

Notes on the four bindings which are unmistakably Irish follow:<sup>6</sup>



**Binding A** (see illustration A. [Click image for full-size](#))

This binding covers two almanacks of the same year bound together. They are:

- a) *The Gentlemen's & Citizen's Almanack*, compiled by Samuel Watson, Bookseller, For the Year of our Lord, 1776 ..., Dublin: Watson and Stewart, 1776. 8vo. in fours. (A)B-1/2.<sup>4</sup> Sections B & C interleaved with blank pages. 136p. (minus interleaves).
- b) *The English Registry for the Year of Our Lord, 1776* ..., Dublin: John Exshaw, 1776. 8vo. in fours. (A)B-R.<sup>4</sup> 112p. (4 unnumbered pages and 108 numbered.)

The red morocco binding measures 6" x 1/4" x 3 3/4". The spine is divided into five panels. The coloured date piece is missing from panel 2, and the date has been inserted in black ink. Panels 1 & 4 are decorated by gilt wavy lines; panels 3 & 5 are quartered, with a flower and dot design. The front and back covers have a narrow gilt border enclosed within triple and single fillets. The centre of both covers carries a lozenge onlay of stiff white paper, heavily tooled in gilt. The area is between the border and the lozenge is tooled in gilt, using characteristically Irish 'flame', 'leaf-carrying bird' and 'undulating spray' tools. The binding has gilt edges and the endpapers are white.

NOTES:



This binding has a strong generic resemblance to that illustrated by Craig as Plate 47. Craig's exemplar covers the 1772 edition of the first of the two almanacks covered by the binding at Calgary. One of the main differences between the two bindings, which probably emanated from the same workshop, is the absence from the example now at Calgary of the solid, straight vertical tool on either side of the obtuse corners of the lozenge. The binding was purchased by the University of Calgary in November, 1971, through the good offices of Mr. H. Campbell, Chief Librarian, Toronto Public Library, from Mr. Edgar Osborne.<sup>5</sup>



**Binding B** ( *see illustration B. Click image for full-size*)

This binding also covers two almanacks having exactly the same bibliographic description as those listed under Binding A, except that the almanacks are for the year 1777. The red morocco binding measures 6 x 1/4" x 4". The spine is divided into 6 panels. Panel 2 carries a dark-green lettering piece, giving the date. The other five panels are quartered and decorated with acorn tools. The front and back covers are enclosed in a triple fillet and a deep gilt border. Within the border are rose tools and elaborate leaf sprays. The symmetrical flourish pointing to all four corners is a popular Irish tool. In the centre of both front and rear covers is the Royal Coat of Arms. The edges of the binding are gilt. The endpapers are [comb-marbled](#).

**NOTES:**

This binding is a close relative of the one illustrated by Craig in Plate 49, which covers a copy of a 1776 almanack. According to Craig, the presence of the Royal Arms may suggest that these bindings were done for officials in Dublin Castle. While the provenance may not be as precise as this, there seems little doubt that they would be created for members of the Anglo-Irish community in Dublin.

Purchased from E. Osborne, 1971.



**Binding C**

A similar binding to that described under B, this time on a pair of almanacks dated 1775. Like Binding B, it carries the Royal Coat of Arms, but differs in the details of the rest of the tooling. This binding measures 6 x 1/4" x 3 3/4", and has gilt edges and comb-marbled endpapers. It is too badly damaged to warrant either illustration or full description. Purchased from E. Osborne, 1971.



**Binding D**

There are matching bindings on all eight volumes of *The History of England. . . by David Hume. A New Edition Corrected . . .*, Dublin: J. Williams. 1780. The volumes are large 8vo, and the bindings measure 9" x 5". The bindings vary in condition from volume to volume, and are made of sturdy tree calf. The spines are flat-backed and are divided into seven panels. Panel 2 contains a red lettering piece carrying a gilt title *Hume's England*. Panel 5 carries a dark green lettering piece with a red oval centre for the volume number. There is no gilt decoration on the front and back covers other than the gilt [prize book stamp](#) of Trinity College, Dublin. The bindings have white endpapers.

**NOTES:**

The Trinity College prize stamp is a less delicate one than that illustrated by Ramsden in *Bookbinders of the United Kingdom (outside London) 1780-1840*, Plate XV. There is no binder's ticket but the bindings are very close in appearance to the McKenzie bindings on the same book at the Royal Irish Academy. (Craig, item 150.) A full description of William McKenzie, printer, stationer



and bookbinder to Trinity College, Dublin, can be found in Ramsden, pp.241-2. McKenzie flourished from 1783 to 1817. This binding does not illustrate McKenzie's 'Dublin style of lettering' with the place of the publication at the head of the spine and the date at the foot, on strips of red leather laid on. There can be little doubt, however, that it is McKenzie's work. In addition to the TCD prize stamp, and the close resemblance to the signed binding at the Royal Irish Academy, volumes 1-5 of this set carry a prize ticket which tells that the book was awarded as a prize to one John Madden in the Michaelmas term, 1792. The engraved [prize ticket](#) carries the legend: *McKenzie, Printer & Stationer to the University*. (Illustration C) Ramsden seems to have seen some TCD prize tickets with McKenzie's name given as bookseller and printer to the University. The volumes were acquired by the University of Calgary in 1967, and were formerly in the collection of R. Travers Smith, St. Bartholomew's Vicarage, Dublin, whose book-stamp is to be found in all eight volumes.

#### FOOTNOTES

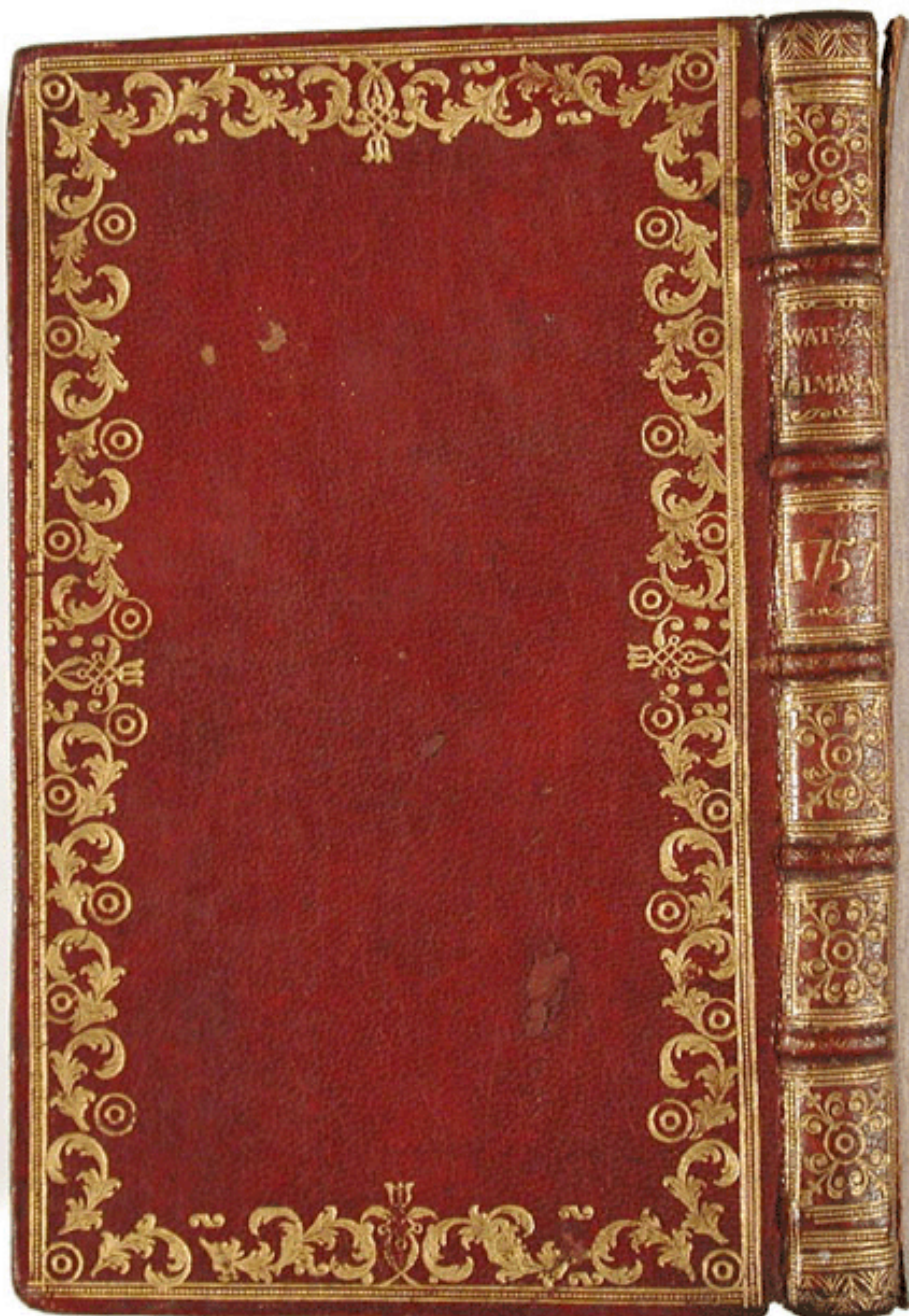
1. Maurice Craig, *Irish Bookbindings 1600-1800* (London, 1954).
2. These lists are to be found in Craig, 27ff; and pp.38-40.
3. Cf. Craig, p.35. Items 149 and 150.
4. Craig, p.2.
5. The noted collector of children's books. 6. I am indebted to Dr. K.M. Glazier, Chief Librarian, University of Calgary, for permission to study the bindings, and to [Ms. Apollonia Steele](#), of the Rare Book Room, for facilitating my work. [Robert Hay Carnie](#) is Secretary to General Faculties Council and Professor of English at The University of Calgary.

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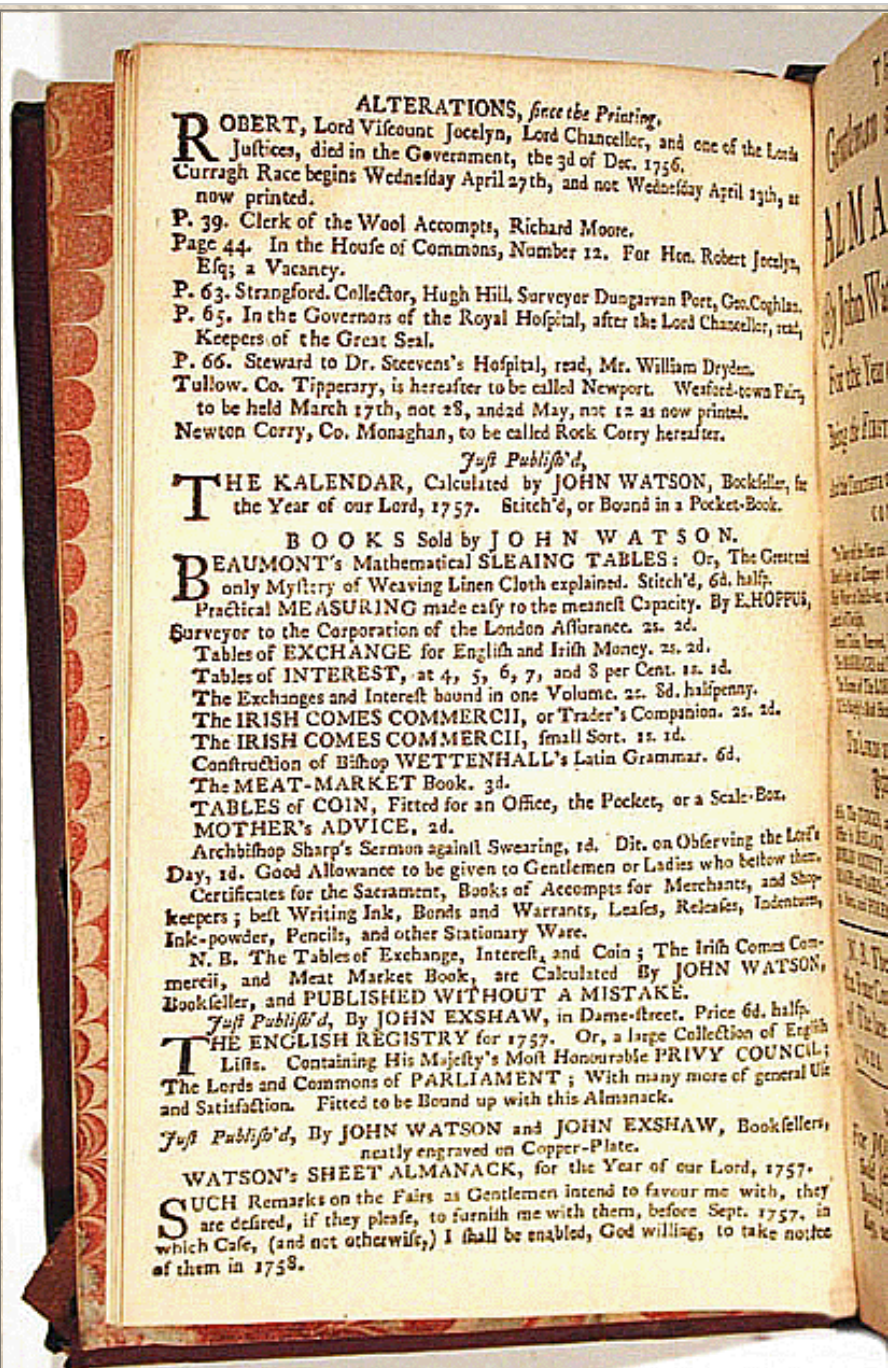
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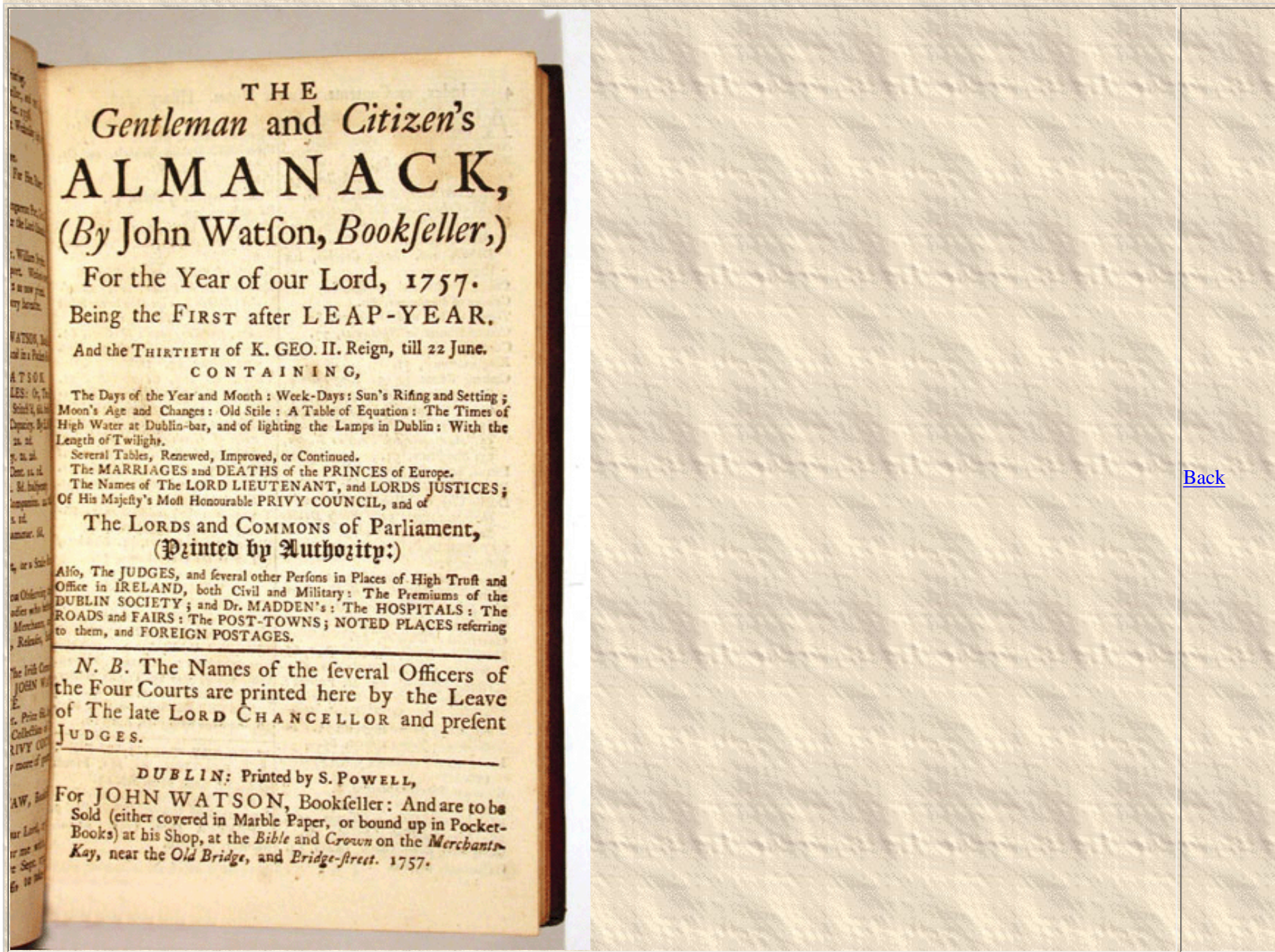




*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1757







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*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1759

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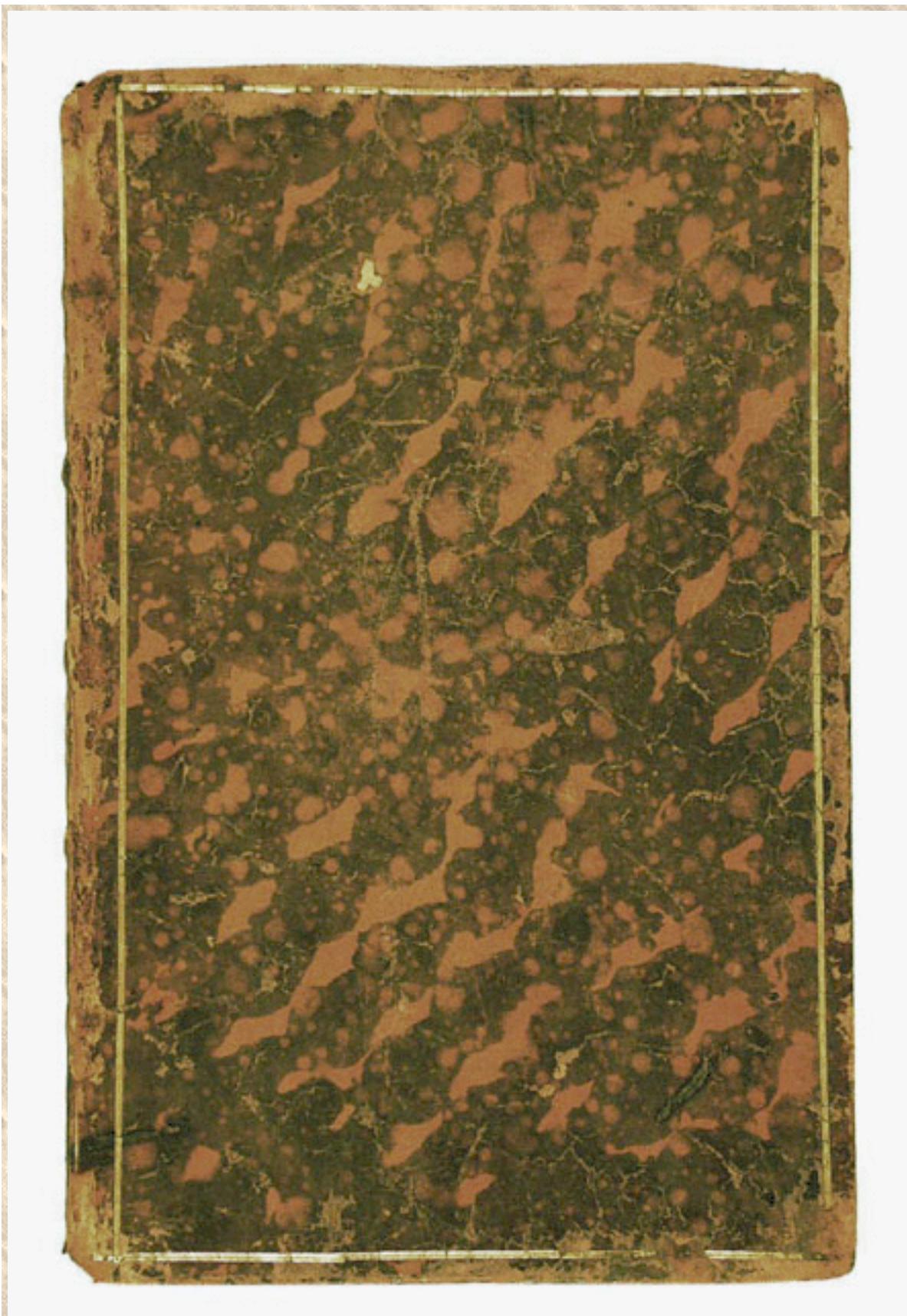
*The Gentleman and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1762

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*The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1769

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*The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1779

Photograph and digitization by Jim Burton



2<sup>d</sup> Sepions - 5<sup>th</sup>

chose. Number of Derby unanimously -  
 the same Day the French & Americans  
 were entirely Defeated at Savannah  
 in Georgia by Maj<sup>r</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup>. Prevost &c.  
 their Loss 1200 Men killed & wounded  
 ours 80. killed & wounded. Capt. Jew  
 with the banner of the 71<sup>st</sup> who had  
 great share in the victory -

26<sup>th</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Feb. before Mill<sup>l</sup> son

Note tipped into *The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*  
 Dublin, 1779

Photograph and digitization by Jim Burton



Just Published, by S. WATSON, at *Virgil's Head*, (No. 48) *Dame-st.*  
WATSON's Compleat MEMORANDUM BOOK for 1779.  
(Humbly Inscribed to Her Grace the Dutchess of LEINSTER)

Printed on fine Paper, from very elegant engraved Copper Plates; contain-  
ing an Account of Calls received and expended, Engagements, and occa-  
sional Memorandums; bound up with the KALENDAR (which contains all  
the Tables necessary for the Pocket) in a Variety of Morocco Bindings, ele-  
gantly Gilt; and some with Asses Skin Leaves for writing on, an Ivory ruled  
Rule, Paper Cutter, black Lead Pencil tipped with Silver, &c.

THE EXPERIMENTAL SOCIETY OF DUBLIN,  
FOR promoting NATURAL KNOWLEDGE, instituted Wednesday Nov.  
19, 1777, by a set of Gentlemen, Lovers of Science.  
President. THOMAS ELLIS, M.D.  
Vice-President. SIR THOMAS BELL, Kt. M.D.  
Secretary. SAMUEL WHYTE, Esq;

This Society propose distributing three honorary Gold Medals, annually,  
for the most approved Discovery, Invention or Essay, on any Mathematical  
or Philosophical Subject.

Note. They meet at their House in Spring-Gardens, Dame-Street, every  
Wednesday Evening at Six o'Clock—All Letters free'd, addressed to the  
Secretary as above, or at his House No. 75, in Grafton-Street, will be  
duly attended to.

Just Published, By J. EXSHAW, (No. 86) Dame-street, Price 6d. halfp.

THE ENGLISH REGISTRY for 1779. Or a large Collection of English  
Lists. Containing His Majesty's most Honourable PRIVY COUNCIL,  
The Lords and Commons of PARLIAMENT. With other useful Lists.

#### THE MANUFACTURE OF WRITING PAPER

IS carried on in a very Improved and Extensive Manner by RICHARD  
NUN, No. 46, *Bridge-street*, who has studied with peculiar Attention  
and considerable Success, the best means of bringing that Branch to Perfec-  
tion; and being also largely in the Manufacture of PRINTING and LAY-  
PING PAPERS, can at all times furnish the Wholesale Buyer with com-  
plete Assortments.

#### STEWART'S INK-POWDER.

THO. STEWART, Bookseller, No. 1, *King's-Inn-Quay*, Dublin, with  
Pleasure informs the public, that he has brought that necessary Article  
to a Perfection equal to any imported from London. A Paper, which is sold  
for a British Sixpence, making a Pint of fine Ink in 5 Minutes, by mixing it  
with a Pint of Water; as the Direction sealed about each Paper shews at  
large.

N. B. Stewart's Name is in Copper-plate Engraving on each Paper.

GENTLEMEN are requested to send any Alterations necessary to be  
made in the PAIRS, before the first of September, and Alterations in NAMES,  
&c. before the first of October, that they may be in Time for Insertion in  
the Almanack for 1780.

## THE Gentleman's and Citizen's ALMANACK,

COMPILED BY

SAMUEL WATSON, Bookseller,

For the Year of our Lord, 1779.

Being the Third after LEAP-YEAR,

And the NINETEENTH YEAR of K. GEORGE III. Reign,  
till 25 Oct.

#### CONTAINING,

The Days of the Year and Month: Week-Days: Sun's Rising and Setting:  
Moon's Age and Changes: a Table of Equation: The Times of High  
Water, at Dublin-bar.

Several Tables, Altered, Renewed, or Continued.

The MARRIAGES and DEATHS of the PRINCES of Europe.

The Names of The LORD LIEUTENANT; of His Majesty's Most  
Honourable PRIVY COUNCIL, and of

The LORDS and COMMONS of Parliament,

(Printed by Authority:)

Also, The JUDGES, and several other Persons in Places of High Trust, and  
Office in IRELAND, both Civil and Military: The DUBLIN SOCIETY:  
The HOSPITALS: The ROADS and FAIRS: The POST-TOWNS:  
NOTED PLACES referring to them, and FOREIGN POSTAGES.

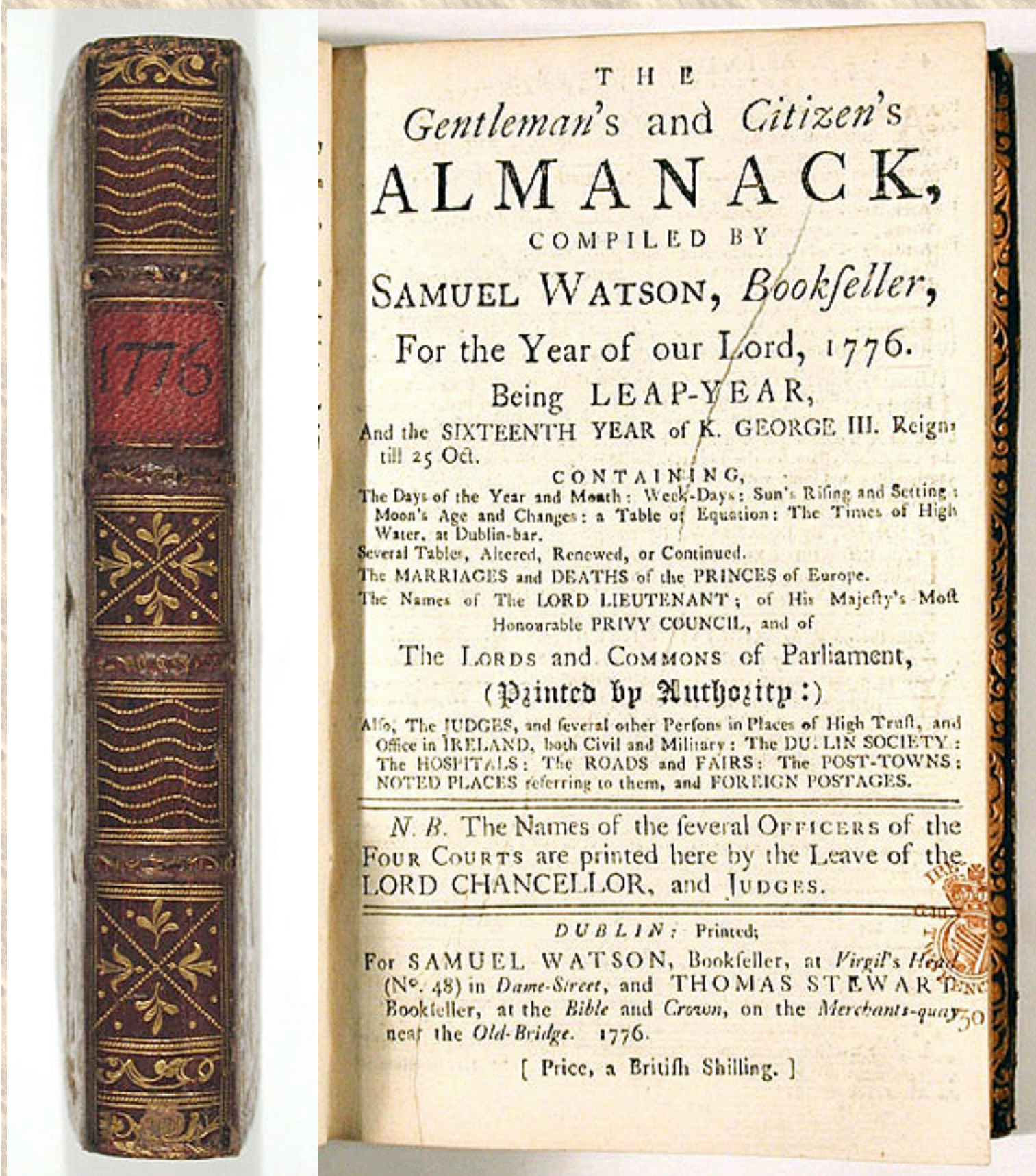
N. B. The Names of the several OFFICERS of the  
Four Courts are printed here by the Leave of the  
LORD CHANCELLOR, and JUDGES.

DUBLIN: Printed,

For SAMUEL WATSON, Bookseller, at *Virgil's Head*,  
(No. 48) in *Dame-Street*, and THOMAS STEWART,  
Bookseller, (No. 1,) *King's-Inn-Quay*, 1779.







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Binding B  
Comb-marbled endpapers

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Binding C

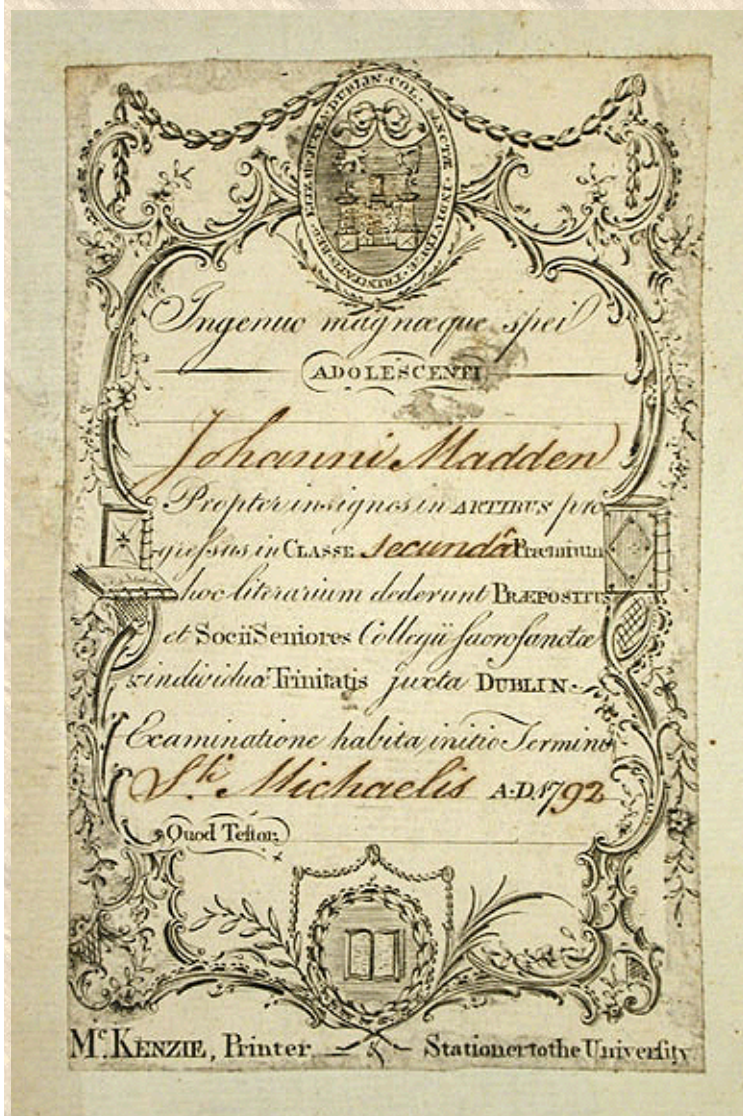


*The Gentleman's and Citizen's Almanack*  
Dublin, 1775

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Binding D  
David Hume. *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688*. In eight volumes. A new edition, corrected.  
Dublin: Printed by James Williams, MDCCLXXX (1780)

Photographs and digitization by Jim Burton





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