

## This Day in History... September 25, 1639

### The First Printing Press in America

On September 25, 1639, the first printing press in America was set up in Cambridge, Massachusetts Bay Colony. The press remained in continuous use for 150 years, printing some of the first books in the New World.

Reverend Joseph Glover had been a fervent supporter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, founded in 1630 by a group of 60 English Puritans seeking religious freedom. The colony grew quickly, with 17 ships bringing thousands of settlers. Glover believed that the colony should have a printing press, so he raised money to have one built by Stephen Daye, a locksmith by trade. Daye agreed to travel with Glover to America in return for £51 and the passage of his family along with him.

In 1638, Glover, his family, and Daye sailed for America. Glover died on the journey, but his family and Daye made it to shore and were determined to carry out his wishes. His widow decided to settle in Cambridge and the press was set up at Harvard College.



Stamp issued for the 300th anniversary of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

September 25, 1639 is generally considered the date the press went into operation. It's believed the first item Daye printed was *The Freeman's Oath*, a pledge taken by every man over the age of 20 who owned a house and wanted to be a citizen of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. That first

year Daye also printed William Pierce's *Almanack* (it's been suggested he may have printed this first). The following year he printed about 1,700 copies of the *Bay Psalm Book*. Daye's Cambridge Press was soon printing catechisms, schoolbooks, legal documents, sermons, and almanacs.

For his work, the colony gave Daye 300 acres of land. However, while he claimed to be a good printer, people took issue with the quality of his work. While the type was new and unworn, the impressions were uneven, there were typographical errors, and commas and periods were used incorrectly. By 1648, Daye was fired and replaced by Samuel Green. In

the years to come, his press was used to print the Bible in different Native American languages.



Stamp salutes the roles of printers and pamphleteers who produced the words to unite patriots, keep their courage high, and urge Americans to fight for freedom during the Revolution.

Daye's press changed hands and was eventually owned by Timothy Green, who took it to New London, Connecticut in 1714. It then moved to New Hampshire and later Vermont, where it printed that colony's first newspaper, *The Vermont Gazette*. It was later moved to Windsor, Vermont, to print *The Vermont Journal* and the *Universal Advertiser*. The press remained in use for a total of 150 years before it was retired. Today it's on display at the Vermont Historical Society in Montpelier, Vermont.



Stamp issued on this date in 1939 for the 300th anniversary of this event.



Pictures a colonial-era flatbed press.

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