

Meredith, Hugh ^[1]

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by William S. Powell, 1991

ca. 1697–ca. 1749



Masthead for *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754. From the Library of Congress American Treasures Exhibit. Hugh Meredith partnered with Benjamin Franklin in 1729 to purchase the paper, although by 1732 Franklin had acquired Meredith's share. Meredith had relocated to North Carolina by the time this edition was printed.

^[2]Hugh Meredith, printer and pioneer visitor to the Lower Cape Fear ^[3], was of Welsh descent, born in the country near Philadelphia and "bred a farmer." He was the son of Simon Meredith. When he was thirty, Hugh went to Philadelphia and entered an apprenticeship to learn the trade of printing. He and Benjamin Franklin ^[4] were employed in the shop of printer Samuel Keimer. In the autumn of 1727 Franklin organized the Junto ^[5], "a debating society or club for mutual improvement," of which Meredith was a member. About 1728 Meredith and Franklin formed a partnership, with Simon Meredith providing half of the necessary money. In 1729 the two men bought Keimer's newspaper, *Universal Instructor in All Arts and Sciences: Pennsylvania Gazette* ^[6], and entered into a printing partnership. The following year Franklin undertook to buy Meredith's interest in the venture. He commented that his partner was seldom sober. By May 1732 Franklin had completed the financial transactions necessary to acquire Meredith's share in his own name.

About the time the partnership was dissolved, Meredith noted that many Welsh people had left Pennsylvania to settle in North Carolina, where they could easily acquire land. Others went from Delaware. He expressed an inclination to join them "and follow my old employment." Whether he meant farming or printing he did not say, but probably the former since there was no printer in North Carolina until 1749. Franklin noted that Meredith left Philadelphia soon after they agreed to end the partnership—undoubtedly in the summer of 1730. Preparing to leave, and as a part of the settlement of expenses, Meredith asked Franklin for a new saddle, suggesting that he rode horseback.

The next year, after reaching the Lower Cape Fear region of North Carolina where other Welsh had settled, Meredith wrote Franklin two very long letters informing him of conditions in the Welsh Tract where he was living. Franklin printed them in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of 29 Apr. and 6 May 1731 ^[7]; they contain information on the countryside, weather, wildlife, water transportation, Indians, farming, and settlers, including Welshmen David Evans and Thomas James. Although the record seems to be silent as to Hugh Meredith's subsequent life, he most likely returned to Pennsylvania as it has been documented that Franklin lent him a modest sum of money in 1739.

References:

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Additional Resources:

Meredith, Hugh, ed.; Swem, Earl Gregg. "An Account of the Cape Fear county, 1731." Perth Amboy, N.J.: Charles F. Heartman. 1922. (East Carolina University Digital Collections, <http://digital.lib.ecu.edu/17033> ^[9], accessed May 21, 2014).

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The Pennsylvania Gazette (Philadelphia), May 9, 1754. American Treasures, Exhibitions, Library of Congress. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/franklin-cause.html> ^[2] (accessed May 21, 2014).

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