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Royal Library's copy of Mark Catesby's *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* containing original watercolours

E. Charles Nelson

Abstract

Study of the text pages in the three bound volumes of Mark Catesby's *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* in the Royal Library, Windsor, England, which were purchased in 1768 for King George III, and which contained Catesby's original watercolours, indicate that they could not have been assembled before 1754. Using the distinctive decorated capitals, it is possible to identify pages originating from the second edition, which was not printed and published until 1754. Who compiled the volumes and had them bound remains unknown.

Three leather-bound volumes (see McBurney 1997, p. 28, figs. 17 and 18) in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, contained almost all of the original watercolours that were the templates for the engraved copperplates in Mark Catesby's two-volume *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* (hereafter *Natural History*), which he published himself between 1729 and 1747 (Overstreet 2014, 2015).¹ Not all the originals are present because Catesby copied and adapted images prepared by others, including Georg Dionysius Ehret (see, for example, Nelson 2014), and there are some unpublished extra watercolours and sketches in these volumes. Some of the images are not by Catesby but

by other artists including Ehret (Meyers 1997, McBurney 1997, 2015). Furthermore, a few hand-coloured, engraved plates from the published work were substituted when an original watercolour or drawing had not been at hand when the volumes were assembled.

The early history of these volumes is uncertain—for example, who compiled them and when; who added the incongruous decorative borders; who bound the pages into three rather than two volumes—but some of this history can be reconstructed by examining the *text* pages. Whereas the original artworks have been closely studied and documented (Meyers 1997; McBurney 1997, 2015), and almost all are available on the Royal Collection's Web site, the text pages have largely been ignored.

Catesby's watercolours were not dated by him, and all that can be stated about the original images is that they preceded the engraving of the copperplates from which the book's plates were printed; in other words, the watercolours pre-date the issuing of the respective individual fascicles (as dated by Overstreet 2014, 2015) and all have to pre-date July 1747 in which month the final, eleventh part ("Appendix"), was issued. The text pages can be dated by the documented dates of publication of the fascicles, and, by identifying the part and "edition" in which a text page appeared, a *terminus post quem* can be derived for the compilation of these three volumes. Indeed, study of the text pages in these royal volumes provides more, and unexpected,

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details of the publication history of Catesby's magnificent book, especially the so-called second edition.

Methods

Digital scans of the three volumes were made available to the Catesby Commemorative Trust² by the Royal Library, Windsor. These were examined by the present author, opening by opening: as in the published work, each image faces a page of printed text describing the animals and plants depicted. Each leaf was printed on recto and verso, so each leaf holds two pages of text.

The text pages were classified according to the style of the decorative capitals. These differ between the first edition (printed before July 1747) and the second (printed in or after

1753). The decorative capitals at the head of each column of text—English on the left and French on the right—in these two editions are distinct in style so that it is possible to tell immediately whether a text page was printed before July 1747 (Fig. 1) or after late 1753 (Fig. 2). The third edition, published in or after 1771, has no decorative capitals on the text pages, so it also is distinct.

Each text page was compared with the same page in several online copies of Catesby's *Natural History*. First, each was compared with the Smithsonian Institution's copy (**SI**)³ of the first edition, formerly belonging to Dr Cromwell Mortimer (Overstreet 2015) and known to comprise some of the earliest fascicles released by Catesby. This copy is generally believed to represent the original state of the *Natural History* as issued between



Figure 1. *Above*, Historiated initials: four examples from first edition of Catesby's *Natural History*, printed by Godfrey Smith between 1729 and 1743 (copy in Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation): examples shown are *A* (vol. 1, p. 13), *C* (vol. 1, p. 18), *I* (vol. 1, p. 14) and *L* (vol. 1, p. 13; this initial was also used in J. J. Dillenius, *Hortus Elthamensis*, 1732). Photography by Frank A. Reynolds, Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation.

Figure 2. *Below*, Decorative initials: four examples from second edition of Catesby's *Natural History*, printed after late 1753 (call no. 508.75 C28n 1754, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia): *A* (vol. 1, p. 13), *C* (vol. 1, p. 18), *I* (vol. 1, p. 14) and *L* (vol. 1, p. 13). Photography by David J. Elliott, The Catesby Centre, University of South Carolina.



May 1729 and July 1747. Second, each was compared with the copy now in the California Academy of Sciences (**CAS**), which also represents the first edition but differs from **SI** in various ways, particularly in the amended printing, including the use of different ornamental capitals, of some of the text pages of the first four fascicles (up to and including volume 1, plate 80).

Those pages in the Royal Library copy that have second-edition decorative capitals were compared with the same pages in four online copies of the *Natural History*: Missouri Botanical Garden (**MO**), University of North Carolina (**UNC**), University of Wisconsin (**WISC**) and Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid (**RJB**). These do not represent a single printing of this edition: it is extraordinary that copies of this edition are also composed from distinctly different typesettings. **MO**, **UNC** and **RJB** are very similar if not identical, whereas the second-edition portion (volume 1, pages 1–20 and 41–60 only) of **WISC** evidently represents a different print run. The comparison also revealed that the Royal Library volumes contain pages representing a third typesetting not detected in online copies. Moreover, three different versions of the title-page have been noted.

Results

The Royal Library copy does not contain any text pages with plain initials at the head of the columns of text, so it does not include pages of text printed in or after 1771. As there is a statement inscribed in the first of the three volumes that they were “purchased in 1768 of M^r Thomas Cadell for £120 pounds,”¹⁴ the absence of pages from the 1771 edition leads to the conclusion that Cadell sold the three volumes as a completed compilation and no text was added after purchase for King George III. It is not known whether the three volumes had been bound before they were acquired for

the Royal Library, but the binding is not by a recognizable royal bindery (McBurney 1997, p. 32, n. 16).

Given that the text in the Royal Library's three-volume set comes from either the first edition printed between 1729 and 1747 or the second edition printed in or after 1753, these volumes cannot have been prepared by Elizabeth Catesby, as suggested by McBurney (1997, pp. 30, 32, n. 15) simply because the second-edition text was only printed after her death. Moreover, Collinson indicated that she had sold the originals, a fact apparently confirmed by the absence of any mention of these valuable works in her will.

Volume I

The first volume contains the watercolours corresponding to the 100 plates issued in the original first-printed volume with the 100 accompanying text pages (50 leaves). Its title-page, dated 1731, comes from the original issue in which the typographic error “Perfixed” (*sic: Prefixed*) was not corrected. This is followed by the Preface in the distinctive 1743 typesetting (**SI**) with the repeated fleurons of Godfrey Smith forming a headpiece on the first page (p. v). The text pages represent a mixture of pages from several print-runs.

It is noteworthy that the general compilation seems to be in eight-plate sections as advertised for the second-edition subscriptions (see below), not in 20-plate sections of Catesby's original issue, strongly suggesting that the compiler attempted to re-create the 1754 (or 1756) version, most probably after the conclusion of the subscription issues.

The text pages accompanying plates in the first volume are datable as follows:

1 to 16	1754	match WISC
17 to 20	1729	match SI
21 to 24	1754	text pages do not match any of the printings viewable online

25 to 28	1730	match CAS
29 to 32	1730	match SI
33 to 40	1730	match CAS
41 to 64	1754	text pages do not match any of the printings viewable online
65 to 80	1731	match CAS
81 to 100	1732	match SI & CAS (no variant print-runs distinguished)

Volume II

The text pages in the second volume, which is prefaced by a title-page dated 1743 and comprises nine 8-plate fascicles with 72 plates, can be dated as follows:

1 to 20	1734	
21 to 40	1736	
41 to 60	1737	
61 to 72	1739	

No second-edition typesettings were detected in this volume.

Volume III

Lastly, the text pages accompanying plates in the third volume, which is apparently composed of six 8-page fascicles and has a hand-modified title-page of the original second volume (the number II was altered to III) from 1743, can be dated as follows:

73 to 80	1739	
81 to 100	1743	
App. 1 to 20	1754	text pages do not match any of the printings viewable online
Index		text pages do not match any of the printings viewable online

In summary, the text pages in volume I represent both first-edition and second-edition print-runs: 56 pages came from the first edition, with 44 from the second edition. Of the 44 second-edition pages, 16 pages match the typesetting in the **WISC** copy, while 20 pages represent a distinctive print-

run not known from any other online copy of this edition (although only three other copies containing second-edition typesettings were represented online when this paper was written in November 2018). Volume II contains only first-edition pages but also contains only 72 plates. Volume III has 28 first-edition pages accompanying second-volume plates numbered from 73 to 100, followed by 20 pages from a second-edition print-run not known from any other online copy of this edition.

First edition: Printing and publication

1729–1747

Overstreet (2015) described the process of publishing *Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands* based on the dates when Mark Catesby presented each of the eleven parts to the Royal Society of London, as recorded in the Society's records. She also noted that there were multiple printings of the first four parts (containing plates 1 to 80), positing that this happened because the number of subscribers eventually exceeded the number that Catesby had estimated. It is most unlikely that Catesby or his printer kept standing type, so if stock of a text page dwindled to nothing, a new print-run from new type was needed. It is also possible that Catesby initiated new print-runs of individual text pages because of typographic errors or changed circumstances. For example, when the first part was issued in May 1729, Catesby's friend the nurseryman Thomas Fairchild was alive, but he died in October that year, and his business was taken over by his nephew Stephen Bacon. That rendered the text of a few pages inaccurate, and amended text was printed subsequently.

Catesby was his own publisher. We know nothing about the arrangements he made

with his printer Godfrey Smith of Spitalfields, London, identified by Overstreet (2015, p. 160) by finding that the historiated capital *L* as well as the fleurons comprising the preface's headpiece were also used in *Hortus Elthamensis* (1732) by Catesby's contemporary, Johann Jacob Dillenius. The distinctive capitals *A* and *C* were also repeated by Smith in Brest's *Dissertation sur l'Usage du Mercure* (1735), while *Psalmodia Germanica* (1732) and Missy's *Les Larmes du Refuge* (1735), both printed by Smith, also contain ornaments found in Catesby's *Natural History*.

Holding the very bulky stock of printed leaves required to make up copies for his subscribers must have been one of Catesby's major concerns. A complete copy of the *Natural History* comprised 220 hand-coloured plates and a folded, double-page map, with 110 leaves of accompanying text, two title-pages and more than 30 leaves of additional text and indexes—a substantial quantity of paper that had to be stored so that subscriptions could be fulfilled. Unless his printer held the stock, Catesby had to keep it himself, presumably in his house behind St Luke's Church on Old Street in London. Coping with this, maintaining contact with subscribers (at least until they died), keeping track of subscriptions, invoicing and ensuring payment was received, preparing and collating the 20-plate fascicles, engraving new plates and writing the accompanying English text, co-ordinating the French translation from his unnamed friend, and liaising with his printer must have been a full-time occupation for Mark Catesby up to the end of his life. It is known that Catesby had financial difficulties and that Peter Collinson made funds available to him. It is indeed probable that the subscribers were tardy paying or perhaps even never paid for one or more parts—the fact that some named “Encouragers” had died before the final parts were released illustrates the likely

complications of maintaining the economic viability of this work over almost two decades.

Second edition, 1754 and 1757: Printing and publication

Mark Catesby concluded his work on his *Natural History* in the spring of 1747, according to his friend Peter Collinson, and the finished “Appendix” (the eleventh fascicle) was presented to the Royal Society of London on 2 July that year. Advertisements printed in April 1748 included a note that “Single Parts to complete Sets will be had ... for twelve Months from the date hereof, and no longer, the Author intending after that to dispose of none but complete Sets” (*General Evening Post*, 16 April 1748, p. 4). This clearly indicates that Catesby had unsold parts in stock in the early part of 1748.

The copperplates, which Catesby himself had engraved, were evidently carefully preserved—these would have been just as difficult to store as printed pages. Judging by dated watermarks on printed plates—watermarks dated 1794, 1800, 1809, 1812, 1815 and 1816 are recorded—the engraved images were being printed from those original copperplates until at least 1816 for inserting into copies of the third edition, originally published in 1771. The text, however, was almost certainly not preserved as standing type, as numerous variant settings of the second edition can be quantified and described.

Mark Catesby died on 23 December 1749. He left no will, suggesting his death was sudden and rather unexpected: “...in Crossing the way in holbore, he fell and was taken up Senceless and So continued 2 or 3 days when he dyed, he receivd in his fall a bruse in his head which might caus his death or the fall might be from an appoplectic fit....” Writing almost two decades later, George Edwards,

Bedell of the Royal College of Physicians and one of Catesby's friends and colleagues who was to "edit" the second edition, recorded that Catesby's "whole fortune: household Stuff, Copy of his histor[y], original drawings and Copper plates did not amount in the whole to 700 £." According to Collinson, Catesby "liv'd to the age of 70, well known to, and much esteemed by, the curious of this and other nations, and died much lamented by his friends, leaving behind him two children and a widow, who has a few copies of this noble work, undisposed of." Collinson inscribed this further comment in his own copy of Catesby's *Natural History*: "... it afforded a Subsistence to himself, his Wife and 2 Children to his Death, & his Widow subsisted on the Sale of it for about 2 years after=wards. Then the Work, Plates &c^a sold for 400£ and about 200 [£] more left by the Widow was divided between the two Children—a Son and a Daughter."

Advertisements for all eleven parts of Catesby's *Natural History*, "the Copies ... coloured from the original paintings," being sold by R. Manby and H. S. Cox of Ludgate Hill, London, appeared in London newspapers during March 1750, three months after Catesby's death. Richard Manby had been named on the earliest prospectuses and on the title-pages of the two volumes, so had been involved with *Natural History* from its start in, or shortly before, 1729. H. Shute Cox was not named on the title-pages and appears to have formed a partnership with Manby around 1744. However, the copies being offered could have been some of those remaining completed, but unsold, at Catesby's death, Manby and Cox perhaps acting for Catesby's widow.

Elizabeth Catesby was buried on 18 February 1753, little more than six weeks after making her will, which contained no mention of, nor instructions about, the original artwork and the engraved copperplates. This strongly suggests that she had disposed of these items,

perhaps to raise cash to support her family, some time before her death.

There is no contemporary document giving the names of the purchasers of the engraved copper printing plates or the original watercolours. However, when the second edition was first advertised in October 1753, a prospectus and separate advertisements made a number of significant points.

First, three new publishers who had not been involved, as far as is known, with the original edition were listed: Charles Marsh, Thomas Wilcox and Benjamin Stichall (or Stichall; see below). All their names appeared on two of the second-edition title-pages, but Stichall's name was omitted from a third version. An advertisement in the *London Daily Advertiser* (22 October 1753) noted that George Edwards will "in regard to his [Catesby's] Memory, ... inspect every colour'd Plate that shall be exhib'ted to the Publick." The original watercolours were not mentioned in this publicity material nor was Edwards mentioned as anything other than an inspector of the colouring.

Second, the proposal for re-publishing the *Natural History* specified that "28 Numbers" would be issued at fortnightly intervals, each comprising "Eight Plates, coloured, and two Sheets of Letter-press" at a cost of half a guinea (£0 10s. 6d.), starting on New Year's Day, Tuesday, 1 January 1754. This schedule was apparently maintained; the second part was advertised as published on 12 January (a Saturday) and the third on Saturday, 29 January. The entire issue of 28 parts cost 14 guineas (£14 14s. 0d.) and would have been completed on 21 January 1755.

A few days before the supposed date of completion, a new series of advertisements commenced in newspapers, including the *Whitehall Evening Post*, with somewhat different wording from the series that started in October 1753. The two volumes were stated to have

been “Revised by Mr. Edwards,” and “any one may judge how near the Colours of the present Edition come up to Nature, by comparing them with the Author’s original Drawings, now in the Hands of the Proprietors.”

In some of the advertisements and in a separate prospectus issued on 25 October 1753, it was made clear that the proprietors were Marsh, Wilcox and Stichall. Marsh’s address was given as Round Court in the Strand. According to an obituary in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (June 1782, p. 310), he was “an eminent bookseller... [and] the author or alterer of four plays.” Thomas Wilcox, also a bookseller, had premises in the Strand, at Vergil’s Head opposite New Church. He bought and sold libraries, and published catalogues. Benjamin Stichall (or Stichall) of Clare Court, off Drury Lane, is generally designated as a bookbinder although his name, variously spelled, is in the imprint of a small number of other books issued in the 1740s and 1750s. Notably, he is credited with binding the copy of Catesby’s book subscribed for by Lord Lovel (Thomas Coke FRS) in 1744 (Nixon and Foot 1992, p. 89). These three apparently only co-operated in issuing this edition of Mark Catesby’s *Natural History*, and it was being advertised by them in London newspapers between October 1753 and April 1756. Being the “Proprietors” they held the original watercolours but whether one had full responsibility for these or they shared the collection is unknown and unlikely ever to be discovered.

Eighteenth-century publishers’ advertisements can be confusing with such phrases as “*This Day was published...*” repeated at frequent intervals even though a book had been issued many days, weeks or months earlier. In the case of Catesby’s *Natural History*, the evidence of the advertisements indicate that the first part of the new edition appeared on 1 January 1754, with parts issued fortnightly

on Saturdays until late January 1755. The title-pages for the two volumes are both dated MDCCLIV (1754). New advertisements, promising the same fortnightly sequence of publication, began appearing in late February 1756. The fifth condition read: “The First Number to be published on Tuesday, March 30, 1756.” An advertisement in *The General Evening Post* on 1 April 1756 announced that the first number was “*This Day... published.*” The sequence of 28 parts, if all were published on time, should have been concluded in late April 1757. No title-page dated 1756 (MDCCCLVI) or 1757 (MDCCCLVII) is known, so it is uncertain whether the 1756 issue differed in any way from the 1754 one. However, a variant title-page, the text reset and the French part corrected, is known although not well-reported. Significantly, but also inexplicably, Benjamin Stichall’s name is omitted from this version. In 1759 Thomas Wilcox inserted an advertisement leaf in *An Impartial Account of Lieut. Col. Bradstreet’s Expedition to Fort Fontenac* advertising Catesby’s *Natural History*, but this notably made no mention of Marsh and Stichall as co-publishers; his co-publishers for Bradstreet’s narrative were Owen, Cooper and Cooke.

Clearly, the second edition of Catesby’s *Natural History* had an extended history between 1753 and 1757 and perhaps longer when Wilcox’s 1759 advertisement is taken into account. As noted, three versions of the MDCCLIV title-page are known, and, as the Royal Library’s three-volume set containing the original watercolours demonstrates, there certainly were three separate printings of the text of some other pages. These can be recognized by comparing the text settings, and, at a glance, they can be distinguished by the distinctive decorative initials that the printer(s) used.

Were these produced by three different printers? We do not know the name of the

printer engaged by Marsh, Wilcox and Stichall. Like the original issue, there is no printer's name in the imprint or elsewhere in the volumes. Using the decorative initials, the fine engraved headpiece of the preface, and two tailpieces does not lead definitively to a named printer, only to other publications.

The headpiece (Fig. 3) used for the preface in Catesby's *Natural History*... has been traced in two other publications, Thomas Hale's *A Compleat Body of Husbandry*... and Patrick Browne's *A Civil and Natural History of Jamaica*. Both were published in 1756. The imprint of Hale's book stated: "printed for T. Osborne and J. Shipton in Gray's-Inn; J. Hodges on London-Bridge; T. Trye near Gray's-Inn Gate; and S. Crowder and H. Woodgate in Pater-Noster Row." Browne's work was printed for the author, and sold by Osborne and Shipton. No printers were named in these books, and none can be traced. The headpiece was used no fewer than seven times in Hale's work, on pages 14, 111, 211, 433, 482, 650 and 732, but none of the decorative initials with the possible exception of a small *T* (which may be the same as the *T* on Appendix p. 120E). In Browne's volume, the headpiece only was printed on the first page of the Preface (p. v).

Ten of the distinctive decorated capitals from the main text pages in the two volumes

of Catesby's book were also employed in *The Adventurer*, in the edition "printed for" John Payne, at Pope's Head in Pater Noster Row. These are *A* (5×), *E* (1×), *L* (2×), *N* (2×), *O* (3×), *P* (2×), *S* (1×), *W* (1×) and especially *T* (21×) and a one version of *I* (23×). Furthermore, the initial *T* (with a deer) has been noted in *The Repository, or General Review...* (1756) and in *A Discourse on the Establishment of a National and Constitutional Force in England...* by the Earl of Liverpool (1757), while *W* occurs in J. Dalton, *A Descriptive Poem, Addressed to Two Ladies...* (1755).

The different decorated initials that were used only in printing the Appendix, which is in the Royal Library copy, have been traced in several other works (page numbers in Catesby's *Natural History*... have *E* (= English) or *F* (= French) to indicate the column);

- A* (p. 10E): in E. Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman...* 1754; F. Hare, *The Works of...* 1755.
- C* (for example, p. 3F): in F. Hare, *The Works of...* 1755.
- I* (p. 18E): in E. Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman...* 1754; F. Hare, *The Works of...* 1755.
- I* (p. 18F): in F. Hare, *The Works of...* 1755.
- L* (p. 13F): in *The Memorials of the English and French Commissaries...* 1755.
- T* (for example, 1E): in W. Maitland, *The History of London...* 1756; F. Hare, *The Works of...* 1755.
- T* (for example, 1F): in S. Rudd, *The Negative on that Question...* 1753.
- W* (4E): in *The Memorials of the English and French Commissaries...* 1755.



Figure 3. Headpiece of the preface in the second edition of Catesby's *Natural History*, printed after late 1753.

In addition the tailpiece found in Catesby's "An account of Carolina and the Bahama Islands" (p. xxxvii) has been traced in G. Berkley & J. Hill, *The Naval History of Britain*... (1756).

None of these works has any printer named. One initial, *I* (18E), was also apparently used in the second volume of Hare's *The Works*... issued in an edition published in 1746, which was printed by Edward Owen, but this pre-dates the re-issue of Catesby's *Natural History*... by eight years and so cannot be taken as a definite attribution to a printer.

Royal Library hand-coloured borders

A major difference between the published *Natural History* and the Royal Library volumes is that each original watercolour (or substituted engraving) is surrounded by a narrow ornamental border that has been glued in place along the four sides of each painting. This border is composed of a repeated pattern of flowers, foliage and ribbons suggesting that the sections were cut from a printed pattern-book. The colouring of the segments is variable; unlike the underlying printed design the pattern of colours is not repetitive. It is probable that the segments were painted in watercolour by hand before being fixed in place. It is most unlikely that this border has anything to do with Mark Catesby, and it could even have been put into place after the three volumes came to the Royal Library (see McBurney 1997).

Summary

Analysis of the text pages indicates that the three volumes forming the Royal Library's copy containing the original watercolours could not have existed before the second edition was published in 1754, a little less than a year after the death of Mrs Elizabeth Catesby, who previously had sold the original

watercolours. The paintings were in the hands of the "Proprietors" who published this second edition when the work was advertised to subscribers, for a second time, early in 1755. The compilation probably took place after 1755, once all the colouring had been completed for the two sequences of subscriptions advertised in London newspapers. The volumes perhaps were bound at this stage, too, before this copy was purchased for King George III's library.

Acknowledgments

The assistance of the Royal Library, Windsor Castle, is gratefully acknowledged by the Catesby Commemorative Trust.²

Notes

1. The original watercolours no longer are in these volumes having been removed for conservation. They are now housed separately, while facsimile copies have been inserted into the bound volumes (McBurney 1997, p. 31).
2. The Catesby Commemorative Trust has been integrated into The Catesby Centre newly (21 June 2019) established in the University of South Carolina, Columbia.
3. Acronyms in bold, for example **SI**, are used here to identify copies.
4. The purchase price today would have been (by one measure) around £14,000 (US\$18,600), comparatively many times less than recent prices paid for first-edition copies at auctions in the United Kingdom and United States. In effect, Cadell charged the Royal Library less than ten shillings for each original sheet of artwork.

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