

EARLY NEWSPAPERS IN THE US

In America the development of newspapers followed a parallel track to the UK. However, they became much more significant as politicians and businessmen alike saw them as one of the key elements in creating the spirit of the nation by offering support for a fledgling democracy and a growing economy.

The first American newspaper appeared in Boston in 1690, when the Colonies were still under rule from London. It was entitled Public Occurrences, but was banned by the British after just one edition. It took 14 years for the colonists to have another one, and in 1704 the Boston News Letter was tolerated by officials, although the Massachusetts Governor reserved the right to censor its contents. In 1721 James Franklin started the New-England Courant, but within a year he had clashed with the authorities and was thrown in jail. A colonial court decreed: "James Franklin be strictly forbidden... to print or publish the New-England Courant." To get around this his younger brother Benjamin took over, writing under the pen name Silence Dogood. Ben Franklin enjoyed being a newspaper magnate and a few years later took control of the Philadelphia Gazette.