

THE MELDRETH PSALM BOOK

General description

Leather-bound book, part printed, part manuscript, with autograph and "Meldreth". Printed part of the book is Benjamin Cuzens' Five anthems and five collects and Six anthems. Then follow handwritten psalms and anthems from a number of sources. Book purchased by Linda Collins at an antique fair in Biggleswade, 1994, for £15.

Physical description

- Size

9.25 inches/235mm wide; 13.75 inches/350mm high.

- Binding

Leather, split skin. No tooling, lettering, decoration of any kind. My guess is a home-bound item.

- Construction

Printed section (pages 1-68) edge-stitched too tight to count sheets in each gathering:

Manuscript section (pages 69-154)

first part difficult to tell

pp85-88 missing

Last two gatherings have 5 sheets in each

Pages 155, 156 and whatever followed are missing - stub left in binding.

[My assumption (see under Watermarks below) is that the manuscript section is made up of individual leaves folded together to form gatherings] [I will later record each page number and what bit of what watermark is on it - will then be able to see which pages form which gatherings]

Stitched, strung; cardboard boards, leather of spine shaped over the strings.

In binding under front endpaper is a sheet, upside-down, with handwriting:

Treble Nov 13th 1805 / Treble 1807

In ink. At right angles:

Ann

followed by another word

Down right-hand side, pencilled figures (sums of money?)

3-4 / 3-2 / 2-7 / 3-11 / etc

- Watermarks

(Manuscript section only)

Every sheet has a watermark [does this suggest separate leaves rather than folded sheets?]

First lot of sheets have a coronet atop a fleur de lys sort of thing with E & P underneath; opposite half of sheet has Edmeads and Pine / 1799

Later pages have the same motif but CA instead of E & P, with C. Ansell / 1815

[I have some further information on these papermakers, carefully filed somewhere really safe]

- Paper

Laid paper

- Condition

Binding well rubbed; bottom of spine split; piece of leather 3in x 2in missing from front edge

Endpapers coming loose

Stitching loose

Front sheet loose

Page edges beginning to crumble and tear. Printed section generally more worn than manuscript section.

~~Some pages missing~~

Overall condition is not bad for its age and would repay attention by a paper conservator - simple if tedious repair job. Binding could be more difficult to repair, but certainly rescuable.

History

After binding the printed and manuscript pages into one book, the pages have been renumbered (from p41 of the printed section onwards) into a single sequence. An index has been prepared, written in two columns on the front endpaper, one column for Anthems, one column for Psalms. This list shows that the last item is missing, as is the last page of the penultimate item.

Binding must have been done after 1815, as the later pages bear that date in the watermark. [When was Cuzens printed?] [Significance of paper of two dates?]

Steve Fletcher
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