

Zenger, John Peter

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ZENGER, John Peter

(1697-1746), German-American printer and journalist, born in the Upper Palatinate (now in Bavaria, Germany). He immigrated to America in 1710, and from 1711 to 1719 was an apprentice to William Bradford, royal printer for the colony of New York. They became partners in 1725, and the following year Zenger opened his own printing establishment. In 1730 he printed the first arithmetic textbook published in the colonies.

Three years later, Zenger founded the *New York Weekly Journal*, a newspaper backed by a group of influential local figures. Zenger printed his backers' articles criticizing the colonial governor of New York, and on Nov. 17, 1734, he was arrested and imprisoned on charges of seditious libel. The Scottish-American lawyer Andrew Hamilton defended Zenger during the trial, which took place in 1735. Hamilton eloquently argued that the antiadministration allegations printed in the *Journal* were true and therefore not libelous. Despite the contrary opinion of the judge, the jury accepted Hamilton's thesis and declared Zenger not guilty. This verdict is considered the first milestone in the history of American freedom of the press. Zenger was appointed public printer for the colony of New York in 1737 and of New

Jersey in 1738.

Description

More Information

Student

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