

*Female Printmakers and Printsellers in the
Early American Republic
Eliza Cox Akin and Mary Graham Charles
Allison M. Stagg*

In London in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there are documented examples of women asserting some form of influence on the print market. Male engravers and printsellers had assistance in their businesses, and occasionally that help came from various family female members: wives, siblings, children. Mary Cruikshank, wife of Isaac Cruikshank, provided comments on her husband's engraved plates and designed a caricature that was later engraved by him, while Catherine Dighton, an actress and the wife of the British caricaturist Robert Dighton, was involved in her husband's printselling business later in life.¹ Further to this, several women were even more proactive, such as the successful print shop proprietor Hannah Humphreys, who had a professional (and personal) relationship with the British caricaturist James Gillray, and Mary Darly who had her own print shop in London, independent from her husband, Matthew.² Archival documents have survived that provide some insight into these relationships, revealing that women played a role in general business operations; however, in the United States there is far less information available. Surviving account books, even for male printsellers and shop proprietors, are rare and

I would like to express my gratitude to Becky Geller at the Newburyport Public Library, Newburyport, MA, and Laura Wasowicz at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA, for their correspondence, knowledge, and assistance in locating archival information in their collections that greatly aided my research on Eliza Cox Akin and Mary Graham Charles.

¹ See J. Baker, *The Business of Satirical Prints in Late Georgian England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017), 89–90 and E. B. Krumbhaar, *Isaac Cruikshank: A Catalogue Raisonné, with a Sketch of His Life and Work* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), 18–20. Mary Cruikshank designed the print, *The Treasury Spectre. Or the Head of the Nation in a Queer Situation*, 1798, engraved by Isaac Cruikshank (British Museum 9226). On Robert Dighton, see S. Houfe, 'Some Letters of Robert Dighton', *Print Quarterly*, 19(1) (March 2002): 45–49.

² See Chapters 10 and 13 by Sheila O'Connell and Tim Clayton, respectively, in this volume; Mary Darly had her own print shop, located in Ryder's Court. S. O'Connell, 'Mary Darly: Visual Satire and Caricature in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in N. Streeten and C. Tate, eds., *The Inking Woman: 250 Years of Women Cartoon and Comic Artists in Britain*, exhibition catalogue (London: Cartoon Museum, 2018), 10–11.

information that might provide important details as to the roles that early American women had in the printing world is largely unknown.

The following chapter focuses on two women, Eliza Cox Akin and Mary Graham Charles, who were involved in their respective husbands' business of printmaking and printselling in early nineteenth-century Philadelphia. Eliza Cox Akin was married to the American caricaturist James Akin (1773–1846), while Mary Graham Charles was married to the Scottish caricaturist and bookseller, William Charles (1776–1820).³ Both men published caricature and other engravings in Philadelphia in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Surprisingly, although they had similar social and professional networks in Philadelphia, no evidence has been located that connects the two men: despite both being caricaturists, neither referred to the other in the newspaper notices, in letters, or in their artistic output. The city of Philadelphia in the early nineteenth century was not large, and it is likely that they crossed paths. Their wives, Eliza and Mary, also likely intersected at some point: perhaps they knew one another from the simple act of walking down the same Philadelphia streets, attending the same church, and purchasing groceries from the same shopkeeper. Today, two engravings have survived by Eliza Cox Akin, while newspaper advertisements and published books reveal that Mary Graham Charles took over her husband's print and bookshop after his untimely death. For both women, scant details are known of their early lives. Indications as to how they felt in their marriages, or indeed in their larger lives outside the domestic sphere, are not yet known: it is the intention of this chapter to introduce these women into the discipline of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century printmaking, to recognise the largely invisible labour they contributed to their husband's professions.

Eliza Cox Akin

In the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC, is a curious object: a silk certificate with an engraving that was given to a female member of the Newburyport Female Charitable Society in Massachusetts on its founding in June 1803 (Figure 15.1).

³ For further information on nineteenth century caricature in the United States and on the careers of James Akin and William Charles, see A. M. Stagg, *Prints of a New Kind: Political Caricature in the United States, 1789–1828* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, April 2023). Additionally, two important articles on Akin and Charles were published in the 1970s by L. W. Lanmon, 'American Caricature in the English Tradition: The Personal and Political Satires of William Charles', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 11 (1976): 1–51 and M. O. Quimby, 'The Political Art of James Akin', *Winterthur Portfolio*, 7 (1972): 59–112; Quimby also wrote her MA thesis on Akin, and offers brief remarks on Eliza, writing, 'Mrs. Akin was acquainted with the techniques of her husband's art, but she probably was not as an accomplished craftsman as she has been credited'. M. O. Cole, 'James Akin, Engraver and Social Critic', Unpublished MA thesis, University of Delaware, 1967, 6.



Figure 15.1 Eliza Cox Akin, *Membership Certificate, the Female Charitable Asylum*, c. 1803.

Engraving on silk, 28.1 × 18.9 cm, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum purchase through the Robert Tyler Davis Memorial Fund, 1984.5.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century, throughout the United States such societies founded and run by women were growing in popularity. In Massachusetts alone, the Newburyport Society was one of many that had been formed with neighbouring female members in Salem establishing their society in 1801. The engraving is signed by 'Mrs. Akin'.

In total, seven certificates for the Newburyport Female Charitable Society have been located: the Smithsonian example is one of three known surviving silk membership certificates, with a further four certificates printed on paper.⁴ There is no explanation as to why some certificates were printed on silk, while others were printed on paper, although it is possible that incoming members received both certificates. This is true for at least one member, Sally Sweetser, whose two certificates, one silk and the other on paper, have survived.⁵ Six of the seven surviving certificates all contain the same date of 12 June 1803; the seventh impression, on silk, at the American Antiquarian Society has been cut and the date and name of the recipient are not known. The other certificates include the names of members Lucy Mills, Sarah Johnson, Sally Sweetser, Lucy Kimbell, and Elizabeth Wood: all names and dates have been handwritten on both silk and paper, including the names of the directress of the society, Hannah Balch, and the secretary, Mary Woart.

The certificate contains an oval-shaped vignette with a sentimental scene, in keeping with the occasion and the reason for its production. The engraving contains the depiction of a kindly woman situated in the middle of the scene. She directs four small children on her left, showing them the way to the asylum, its door open. Three women wait, ready to receive the children. The vignette is framed with drapery and an angelic face with wings under which is written a short quotation, 'Delightful task! To rear the tender thought. To teach the young idea how to shoot___'. Below this can be found the name of the woman responsible for the print, Mrs. Akin, stating, '[she] furnishes each member with a specimen of her abilities in the Graphic Art, emblematic of the institution'. The certificate was engraved by a woman, for women.

⁴ At least seven of these certificates are known, five of which are in Massachusetts: one impression at the American Antiquarian Society, three impressions at the Museum of Old Newbury, one impression at the Peabody Essex Museum, and one impression at the Worcester Art Museum. Additionally, there is an impression at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, DC.

⁵ These two *certificates*, one silk, one on paper, are in the collection at Museum of Old Newbury, Newburyport, MA.

In modern scholarship, the authenticity of the engraved name on the engraving has been occasionally doubted, with the suggestion that James Akin, Mrs. Akin's husband, was responsible.⁶ As well, because it does not include a first name, occasionally it was thought that 'Mrs. Akin' was James's second wife, Ophelia, whom he married after Eliza's death in 1834.⁷ It is possible that James did have a role in the design and execution although it is more likely that this was a collaboration, especially as this was not Eliza's first attempt at engraving. She contributed a woodcut of a rooster in the 1800 edition of the illustrated book, *Mrs. Barbauld's Lessons for Children*, in which her husband James had also produced engravings.⁸ His name is found on the title page, with the inscription, 'Adorned with cuts / Engraved by James Akin'. Within the book, only two engravings are signed, one with James's initials, J. A., and the rooster by Eliza; the other engravings were left unsigned, and these have previously been attributed to James based on the inscription of the title page.⁹ However, due to Eliza's engraved print of the rooster found within the book, and that James approved her signature to be so prominently included in the finished product, this might point to a collaborative effort between the two. The other engravings are not signed, and this allows for the possibility that Eliza and James worked on these engravings together; or, even that Eliza herself was responsible for the design and execution of the other engravings. The subject of this book, focused on children, might have aligned with Eliza's personal life, as a newlywed preparing for the children that did not come, and in her next known project, the Newburyport Charitable Society certificate. This 1800 example of the rooster further expands on what her general knowledge of engraving was and provides evidence that in 1803 Eliza was not a novice in engraving.

⁶ J. Currier in his *History of Newburyport: 1764–1909* (Newburyport, MA, 1909) attributes the engraving to James Akin while Mary O'Brien Quimby is dismissive that the attribution to Eliza Akin is correct.

⁷ P. Benes, *Old-Town and the Waterside: Two Hundred Years of Tradition and Change in Newbury, Newburyport, and West Newbury, 1635–1835* (Newburyport, MA: Historical Society of Old Newbury, 1986). Although Benes does not reproduce one of the certificates, he does include in the Appendix under 'D. Artists, engravers, ornamenters and woodcarvers in Newbury and Newburyport before 1835' the name of 'Ophelia Akin (active 1800–1810), Nbpt [Newburyport] engraver'. Ophelia was James's second wife, whom he married after Eliza's death and she could not have been responsible for this engraving.

⁸ Mrs. A. L. Barbauld, *Mrs. Barbauld's Lessons for Children, Part II: From Four to Five Years Old* (Wilmington, DE, 1800). I consulted the edition in the collection of the American Antiquarian Society: DP A1277.

⁹ Quimby, *The Political Art of James Akin*, 84–85.

What is known of Eliza's life before she signed the rooster engraving in 1800 is reserved to the date she was married to James, on 30 November 1797 in Philadelphia. Her relationship to James is further complicated because of her name, which she shared with James's sister, Eliza Akin, a prominent and wealthy member of Charleston, South Carolina society. This Eliza was a frequent feature in southern newspapers, and preliminary searches for 'Eliza Akin' are predominantly about her. Eliza Akin, wife to James and female engraver, has far fewer references in newspapers. Indeed, her obituary published in November 1834 is a rare newspaper appearance. Eliza died on 6 November 1834 and this was reported in the Philadelphia newspaper *Daily Pennsylvanian* some days later. She was referred to as, 'wife of Mr. James Akin, Engraver'.¹⁰

It is not known where Eliza was born – whether she was American or British – or in what year. While other obituaries from this period occasionally provide the age at death (for example, when James died in 1846, his age was listed in newspaper obituaries), this was not the case for Eliza. In the year prior to marrying Eliza, James was in London where he immersed himself in the art scene, attending classes and lectures at the Royal Academy that were 'sanctioned' by president and fellow American Benjamin West, and meeting artists such as Thomas Stothard and James Heath.¹¹ Because their marriage came soon after he returned from his time abroad, Eliza may very well have been British or European. Eliza's birth certificate has not been located; until further evidence is found, it is possible that James met Eliza during his time in London or, indeed, that Eliza was the daughter or sister of an artist or craftsman, a part of the artistic community in London that James encountered.

The Akins lived and worked in Philadelphia from 1797 until around 1803, when the date of Eliza's certificate for the Newburyport Charitable Society places them in Massachusetts. In the six years that James was active in Philadelphia, his engraving business was busy. He had a brief partnership with William Harrison Jr. that resulted in a small number of commissions. The partnership also produced the first mourning image to commemorate the death of first President of the United States, George Washington.¹² Likely because of the sensation of the Washington engraving, Akin split from his partnership with Harrison, with the next

¹⁰ *Daily Pennsylvanian* (Philadelphia), 12 November 1834.

¹¹ See Stagg, *Prints of a New Kind*, ch. 2.

¹² *America Lamenting her Loss at the Tomb of General Washington*, etching and engraving by James Akin and William Harrison Jr., 1800, impression at Mount Vernon Museum, SC-16.

engravings he published all containing his name only. He received enough commissions during this period that he hired at least one apprentice, with a surviving invoice providing clues as to the kind of work he was receiving and how he was delegating the engraving tasks.¹³ It is clear from the entries that Akin had a diverse clientele that resulted in diverse engraving jobs, from engraving names on medicine vials to engraving text and images on fine arts prints. This invoice and countless others provide an opportunity to witness that, despite a final art object being attributed to one person, on occasion other hands played a role in its successful completion. In this instance, both James Akin and his apprentice William Kneass contributed their engraving skills to numerous fine arts prints, including a William Russell Birch 1802 print, *The City of New York, in the State of New York, North America*. The engraving naturally does not contain either Akin's or Kneass's name.¹⁴ This is illustrative as to how engravers worked during this period, outsourcing areas in the design and execution to those better skilled. While Eliza is not referenced in this invoice, when considering her contribution to the 1800 illustrated book commission, it is possible that she too had a role in his printmaking business in Philadelphia. Possibly Akin taught Eliza her engraving skills if she did not come into the marriage already with them. Like an apprentice, similarly to William Kneass, perhaps she performed other tasks, in contributing to aspects of engraving for the existing commissions James received. Without documentation, is it not possible to specifically know what Eliza's role was, but it does appear that James trusted his wife and included her in his business. He included his wife's name on letters to politicians and to other artists, and she was known to some of his contacts, perhaps in both a personal and professional context. As Antony Griffiths has noted, wives, daughters, and mothers took on various roles with the predominantly male print and publishing businesses. Some wives worked as engravers or colourists, while others were involved in the publishing and selling of prints, or even acting as managers and book-keepers.¹⁵

¹³ 'Kneass, William, engraver v. James Akin', McAllister Miscellaneous Manuscripts, McAllister Collection, LCP, MSS 025. According to the invoice, Kneass had previously worked as an apprentice for the Philadelphia engraver James Thackara, but this arrangement expired on 25 September 1802. Kneass likely worked out of Akin's address, '37 Pewter Platter Alley', the same address provided by Akin in newspaper advertisements for his bleeding services.

¹⁴ *The City of New York, in the State of New York, North America*, William Birch, 1802. Historical Society of Philadelphia: Bc68/N567f & Bc68/N567e.

¹⁵ A. Griffiths, *The Print Before Photography: An Introduction to European Printmaking 1550–1820* (London: British Museum Press, 2016), 226.

Although Newburyport, Massachusetts is hundreds of miles north of Philadelphia, this city was not foreign to the Akins due to James's relationship with engraver Jacob Perkins, who lived in Newburyport with his wife Hannah and their growing family. Any number of reasons might have tempted James and Eliza north, but that his dear friend and colleague was there must have made the city more inviting. By 1803, James was in negotiations to start a new engraving position with the Newburyport bookseller and printer Edmund March Blunt.¹⁶ While James did not start his new role until 1804, it is possible that in the year prior he and Eliza visited Newburyport, perhaps to visit Jacob Perkins and family. Although no letters are known in which the certificates were discussed by the directress of the society and other members, it might be possible that Eliza was introduced to the society and its members by Jacob Perkins, his wife, or Edmund Blunt. Although the relationship between James and Blunt quickly soured, Eliza found a sense of community in the coastal New England city. Her relationship with the Female Charitable Society grew from producing the initial engraved image for the group in 1803 to becoming a member herself in 1806. Eliza might have been compelled to belong to such a group of women, who were committed, as their plan and regulations state as their first priority, to 'provide, and carry into effect, means for the support and education of indigent female children from three to ten years old; the first attention to be paid to Orphans'.¹⁷

Eliza's interest in this particular commission, an association with a group of benevolent women offering to help young, orphaned girls, might have stemmed from her own family situation, as it does not appear that if she and James had children any survived. A few letters from politicians and artists to James, and some of those letters bid a brief hello to 'Mrs. Akin' but not any children.¹⁸ After Eliza's death, James remarried and had at least two children, one of whom was listed in his will.¹⁹

Between 1805 and 1807, James was often in court against his former employer Edmund Blunt, and during this time Eliza may have been her husband's confidante while also assisting him on various engraving projects.²⁰

¹⁶ For further discussion on James Akin and Edmund Blunt, see Stagg, *Prints of a New Kind*, ch. 3.

¹⁷ 'An Account of the Plan and Regulations of the Female Charitable Society of Newburyport, Organized, 8 June 1803'. Pamphlet. Newburyport Public Library, Newburyport, MA.

¹⁸ Timothy Pickering to James Akin, 5 November 1805, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14, letter 135.

¹⁹ James Akin, Will no. 174 (186), Will Book no. 18. Philadelphia City Archives.

²⁰ To read about the complicated relationship between Akin and Blunt, please see L. C. Rubenstein, 'James Akin in Newburyport', *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 102, no. 4, October 1966 and Stagg, *Prints of a New Kind*, ch. 3.

In an 1805 letter from Timothy Pickering to James, in which Pickering offered advice and counsel to James with regard to Blunt, Pickering referenced how difficult the situation must have been for him ‘and Mrs. Akin...’²¹ When she and James left Newburyport to return to Philadelphia, Eliza withdrew her membership from the Female Charitable Society. In Philadelphia, James continued to work as an engraver. He also returned to exhibiting works of art, as he had advertised doing in the late 1790s. In 1811, he announced that he was exhibiting several paintings by the American artist Jeremiah Paul and that he was offering exclusive days and times for ladies to visit, ‘who have heretofore, manifested great liberality and publick spirit to promote the arts in every department’.²²

As yet, no other prints have been located that can be associated with Eliza; however, this does not mean she did not produce other engravings. As early as the twentieth century, Eliza’s efforts in engraving were known to scholars of early American prints. She was included in the important resource by Mantle Fielding, *American Engravers Upon Copper and Steel*, although there was uncertainty as to her first name, and she is referred to as ‘Mrs. James Akin’.²³ In 1940, the Worcester Art Museum impression of the certificate was included in the exhibition, *Art in New England, Early New England Printmakers*.²⁴ Fascinatingly, thirty-nine engravers were represented in the exhibition and in the catalogue, but the organisers failed to recognise and highlight that while the majority were male, they had also included two female engravers. Eliza Akin was the only woman active in America, while the other was the British printer, caricaturist, and shop proprietor Mary Darly.

Mary Graham Charles

As with Eliza Cox Akin, very little is known about Mary Graham. In February of 1803 she married the Scottish-born caricaturist William Charles at St Mary’s Church in Lambeth, South London. She was some years older than her new husband, marrying when she was either thirty or thirty-one and Charles was twenty-seven. The marriage certificate refers to William as a ‘bachelor’ and Mary as a ‘spinster’ implying that Mary had not been married before and that this was her first marriage.²⁵ Mary’s birth

²¹ Ibid. ²² *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), 24 April 1811.

²³ M. Fielding, *American Engravers upon Copper and Steel* (Philadelphia, PA, 1917), 9, entry no. 30.

²⁴ *Art in New England, Early New England Printmakers*, an exhibition held in collaboration with the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester Art Museum, July 1939–January 1940.

²⁵ An ‘internment of burial’ lists her age as ‘50’ in 1823; she may have been born in 1773 or 1772: Pennsylvania, Philadelphia City Death Certificates, 1803–1915, database with images,

certificate has not been located and it is not known if she was born in Scotland and knew William from his time in Edinburgh; it is possible that William and Mary met in London. The artistic output that survives by William was first signed in 1803, after their marriage. Because he was twenty-seven when he published his first known caricatures, he likely had a different profession prior to this. Mary, like Eliza, might have been from a family of artisans and craftsmen in London, whom William met on arrival.

It is not known to what extent Mary played a role in William's printmaking business during his lifetime: unlike Eliza, no examples of engravings are thought to have been made by her. It is more likely that she was involved in assisting her husband's print and book selling endeavours and in shopkeeping. Between 1803 and 1806, William was active as a caricaturist in London and Edinburgh and in 1806 the family emigrated to America, first to New York where William had a shop from where he sold caricatures and prints, and then to Philadelphia, where they remained until William's sudden death in 1820 from an accident at sea. During their marriage, Mary was busy growing their family: according to newspaper obituaries for William in 1820, Mary and William had at least seven children.²⁶ When William died he was not destitute, leaving behind a considerable estate of \$2,400.²⁷ Despite this, Mary soon took charge of her husband's business. Advertisements from the following year reveal that Mary was operating out of the premise on 'South Second Street, between Chesnut and Walnut' where William had last been active. Mary announced that she was in possession of, 'a larger assortment of Children's Books (coloured and plain) than any establishment in the United States, which she offers for sale on very low terms'.²⁸ In the same advertisement, she also noted that she had a few copies remaining of *Dr. Syntax's Tour*, a popular illustrated book,

FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:JDBN-95X> accessed 18 February 2021), Mary Charles; Philadelphia City Archives and Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; FHL microfilm 1,903,133.

²⁶ There is inconsistent information as to how many children Mary and Charles had together during their marriage. At the time of William's death in 1820, newspaper obituaries stated he left behind seven children. When Mary died in 1823, her obituary stated eight children. As Mary was in her early thirties when they married and had a number of children in the first two decades of the 1800s, it is conceivable that she could have been pregnant at the time of her husband's death in 1820, when she would have been 46 or 47 years of age.

²⁷ This information was published in H. B. Weiss, *William Charles: Early Caricaturist, Engraver, and Publisher of Children's Books, with a List of Works by Him in the New York Public Library Collections* (New York: New York Public Library), 834. *Pennsylvania, City of Philadelphia, Administration Files; Author: Philadelphia (Pennsylvania). Register of Wills; Probate Place: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*, no. 264, 1820, Book M, 241.

²⁸ *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), 25 December 1821.

published by Rudolph Ackermann and containing hand-coloured aquatints by Thomas Rowlandson.

As Antony Griffiths has noted, the role of family was critical, and this was the case for both James Akin and William Charles.²⁹ Both men had wives that enhanced their printing endeavours. Although Griffith's research focuses on the European print trade, some of his models can be applied to both Eliza and Mary's family situation. Because Mary assumed responsibilities of her husband's print and book selling business after his death, it is likely that she had performed some role within this business while he was alive and had intimate knowledge of how her husband ran its operations. For example, she maintained existing professional contacts her husband had with other Philadelphia printsellers, including Mathew Carey. In November of 1821, she sold several items to Carey in the amount of \$45.00.³⁰ Mary also reissued many of the books that her husband had published previously. Her name can be found in such books with the inscription, 'Published and sold wholesale and retail by Mary Charles no. 71 South Second Street'.³¹ Some of these books were also reissued and published by the firm Morgan & Yeager, whom William had worked with before his death, 'At Their Juvenile Bookstore'.³²

It is likely that in maintaining her husband's shop and business, she had help from her children, although birth records and information for them have not been located. As well, Charles's brother Henry was a copperplate printer and was also active in Philadelphia in the 1810s and 1820s.³³ Mary died suddenly on 24 January, 1823 from a stroke.³⁴ Colleagues in Philadelphia rallied around the orphaned children, with advertisements published within two short weeks of Mary's death announcing the sale of items to benefit them. Information on what was to be sold included household furniture, remaining book stock, and paintings, in addition to 'two copperplate printing presses, with apparatus and ink', and a 'great

²⁹ Griffiths, *The Print Before Photography*, 226.

³⁰ Mathew Carey Account Books, AAS, vol. 34, acct. 6519; for a brief overview of invoices between Carey and Mary's husband William Charles, see Weiss, *William Charles*.

³¹ *The Cat's Concert: Embellished with Sixteen Copperplate Engravings* (Philadelphia, PA), edition at American Antiquarian Society.

³² Weiss, *William Charles*, 838.

³³ Soon after Mary's death, a notice in *Poulson's Daily Advertiser* announced a 'Constables' Sale' at the house of Henry Charles in which the following objects would be sold: '1 large cog wheel Copper Plate Press, two do. Without cogs, all with lignumvitae rollers, and complete, two stone slabs &c. and a quantity of Copper Plates, and Map Frames, one Patent Printing Press.' These items were evidently 'seized for house rent, as the property of Henry Charles'. *Poulson's Daily Advertiser* (Philadelphia), 13 September 1823.

³⁴ *Poulson's Daily Advertiser*, 25 January 1823.

variety of Prints and Caricatures'.³⁵ This information is revealing, as it means that Mary had been able to hold on to much of her husband's business possession, including the two copperplate printing presses. Although details have not been located, Mary could have potentially acted as 'principal printer' renting out the use of her printing presses.

In conclusion, when considering both Eliza Cox Akin and Mary Graham Charles, much is left to speculation and interpretation because of how much of their lives was never documented in the way that their husbands' lives were. It is hoped that more material on these women will be found in museums, libraries, and archives. Their husbands left behind rich resources, both in their artistic output but also in the ways in which they utilised newspaper advertisements and notices, for their broader professional and personal networks, and in the letters that have been saved. As more documents are digitised, Eliza and Mary's names might very well be found within the archives. Despite this, women have been too frequently overlooked and both women, even if for limited periods – Eliza as an engraver and Mary as a shopkeeper and publisher – produced lasting objects and persevered in the printselling world. These two women deserve to be considered alongside their husbands, but also as wives, mothers, and widows, who had to suppress their talent, skill, and interest due to the period and times in which they lived.

³⁵ *National Gazette and Literary Register* (Philadelphia), 12 February 1823.