

**EARLY AMERICAN PLAYS, 1714-1830: A  
COMPILATION OF THE TITLES OF PLAYS  
AND DRAMATIC POEMS WRITTEN BY  
AUTHORS BORN IN OR RESIDING IN  
NORTH AMERICA PREVIOUS TO 1830**

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Early American Plays, 1714-1830: A Compilation of the Titles of Plays and Dramatic Poems  
Written by Authors Born in or Residing in North America Previous to 1830 by Oscar Wegelin

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**OSCAR WEGELIN**

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BY

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Compiler of "Early American Poetry."



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*To*

EVERT JANSEN WENDELL, ESQ.

FOREMOST AMONG AMERICAN COLLECTORS OF  
DRAMATIC LITERATURE, I DEDICATE  
THIS BOOK





## PREFACE

IN his ably written introduction to the first edition of this work, Mr. John Malone makes the following statement: "It may be set down as a safe rule of judgment as to dramatic quality that the plays which were printed were fit for no more than the use to which an indulgent Providence and the Dunlap Society have dedicated them—to serve as examples of the good-will and sympathy with which a few great and good men in the days of our country's fiery trial held out their helping hands to the gentle art of drama."

This statement, with a possible exception or two, is in the main correct. Few of the plays which are here catalogued have survived because of their literary excellence. We, however, must not look at the contents of this book from this view-point, but rather from the historical. Poorly written as many of the plays may be, they still possess to the student of American history an interest which far exceeds that of every other class of writing, the purely historical excepted. The *first* play written by a resident of what is now the United States was *Androboros* (the Man-Hater) written by Robert Hunter, Colonial Governor of New York, assisted by Lewis Morris. This play, or rather dramatic satire, was written to ridicule sundry residents of that colony, principally Dr. Vesey and several members of Trinity Church. This play, which was issued in 1714, was not followed by another dramatic production, as far as known, until *The Suspected Daughter*, a farce by

### EARLY AMERICAN PLAYS

"T. T.," was printed at Boston in 1751. Who "T. T." was is not known, nor can I trace a copy of the play. Little of importance came to light previous to the Revolution, but that event, stirring as it was, seems to have been a stimulant to native ambition, and a number of dramatic productions were written and printed. Among these may be mentioned *The Battle of Bunker Hill* and *The Death of Montgomery* by Brackenridge, then a schoolmaster; *The Adulateur* and *The Group* by Mercy Warren, afterwards well known as one of the foremost dames of the colonies; and several others, some from the Royalist side, as Sewell's *Cure for the Spleen* and an anonymous production, *The Battle of Long Island*.

The second war with England was also celebrated by our early playwrights, as was the war with Tripoli.

The dramatic history of no country would be complete which did not celebrate the deeds and war-like exploits of its aboriginal inhabitants, and the American dramatist was not slow in recognizing the many-sided character of the North American Indian. His wars, his fluent oratory, his virtues, are all told, the best of these efforts being embodied in Stone's *Metamora*, made famous by the acting of Edwin Forrest.

But all of the dramatic productions which were written prior to 1830 did not relate to America, and a glance over the list will show many plays which take for their groundwork the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian Empire and its people, while Love, that mysterious something which lays its finger upon all whether we will or no, is found, as in our fiction, in nearly all of them. What the dramatist, poet, and novelist would do without the help of the fickle goddess is an unsolvable problem.