

# MR. DAVY'S DIARY

1794

## PART II

EDITED BY NORMAN B. WILKINSON

Friday Octr. 3d dined very pleasantly with Doctor Priestley whose Wife is much pester'd & provok'd from the impossibility of getting or keeping Servants. The Doctor has bought a Lot of 11 Acres (exclusive of that he is building on) which commands a delightful View of all the Rivers, both Towns & the Country. It



"PRIESTLEY"

*The home of Dr. Joseph Priestley at Northumberland.*

*Courtesy Mr. and Mrs. George Neff*

cost him £100 Cy. His Son has an excellent Brick House & Gardens at 20 Gui. pr. ann. Rent. There are but few Brick Houses, they are chiefly of Wood or Stone. At present there is no Market here but if many English Families settle this will soon follow as there is an excellent supply of every necessary & even Luxury in the Neighbourhood. The perfect Independence of every American Family who supply themselves even to most Linnen & Woollen Articles, renders a Market to them, almost unnecessary.

Saturday 4th Cold Weather but beautifully clear, went over the

Island.<sup>53</sup> Find on it good Land, plenty of Timber, a decent House & Gardens, Orchards & delightful Walks & that it is very healthy, never overflow'd. The House stands high & on a good Spot for the convenience of Superintending the whole. It contains 240 Acres.

Sunday 5th This is a very solemn time with the Presbyterians as a preparation for a high Sacrament celebrated only once in four years.<sup>54</sup> Their Shops are shut from Friday morning to Monday night & all Business is at a Stand during the preparation & the Sacrament is administer'd on the Monday. People from all parts of the Country attended being chiefly of this persuasion.<sup>55</sup> There is indeed a Lutheran Church at Sunbury<sup>56</sup> & a Westlian Meeting at Northumberland.<sup>57</sup>

Monday Octr. 6th I saw Scott the proprietor of the Island which I find has good & valuable Fisheries. The land last year produced 35 Bushl of Wheat pr. Acre. After that some two Crops of Clover at two Ton pr. Acre & other excellent Crops of Buck Wheat. Its price 8 years ago was only £848 Cy. He now asks £4000.

Tuesday Octr. 7th I find Wheat is sown here in the Fall (beginning of Sept.) Clover & timothy Grass is generally sown with it. The Wheat is cut in June or beginning of July after which the Grass grows very rapidly & always affords two Crops. Where Grass has not been sown they harrow the Ground well where the Wheat is taken off & sow Buck Wheat which ripens by the beginning & through September is excellent food for Poultry & Cattle & makes good Cakes. On the Rivers, Canoes & paddles are in general use & the Dress & manners of the People more nearly assimilate to those of the Indians than lower down, but the purest English Language is universally spoken. At Northumberland is a Brewery<sup>58</sup> but the Malt made from Oats & Wheat as well as Barley, appeared bad. There is also a tannery, two Potteries,<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Shamokin Island, which Abraham Scott had acquired in 1786. Sunbury Airport is now located at its northern end.

<sup>54</sup> Fall communion customarily occurred in early October; the quadrennial observance mentioned here eludes identification.

<sup>55</sup> The Reverend Hugh Morrison was pastor of the Presbyterian churches at Sunbury, Northumberland, and Buffalo Cross Roads, 1787-1804.

<sup>56</sup> The German Lutheran Church was located at Third and Church Streets.

<sup>57</sup> The first Wesleyan or Methodist church in Northumberland was on the site of 360-362 Third Street.

<sup>58</sup> Operated by Bernard Hubley, Revolutionary captain, and Brigade Inspector of Northumberland County, 1793-1800; author of an early history of the American Revolution published at Northumberland, 1807.

<sup>59</sup> An early tanner was Thomas Bonham; John Leisenring operated a pottery.

a Potash Manufactory & an ingenious Clock & Watch maker, also a printing Office from which a Weekly Newspaper is publish'd<sup>60</sup> & a number of Stores for hardware & other Articles which the Country cannot supply itself with, particularly Whiskey & Spirits of which great quantities are used. Little Beer or Cyder, the latter is drank very new.

Wednesday 8th Mr. Priestley, Madge & myself examined the Lands for many Miles up the North Branch of the River & find many desirable tracts, but the Price is doubled this Year & for some tracts considerably more, being advanced from £3 to £6 & even £7 . 10Cy. pr acre for 1/3 improved Lands.<sup>61</sup>

Thursday 9th The Wyoman Troops now here are equipped entirely in Accoutrements & Arms mark'd GR which were taken from Burgoyne & Lord Cornwallis in the last War. I am assured that many of the Muskets had not the Touch holes drill'd out. The English Colours are here also.<sup>62</sup> The Military appearance of these Troops & the Martial Music of the Drum & Fife have so animated the People that they are enrolling themselves this Morning as Volunteers for the Defence & Support of their Laws & Government. At 11 O'Clock Mr. Priestley & myself left Northumberland in Company of Esquire Wallace (so called here) of Muncy.<sup>63</sup> The Road for the first five Miles good through the Woods with here & there a Plantation mostly of very recent clearing at this distance. We pass'd a good Flour & Saw Mill in excellent condition & full Work.<sup>64</sup> A Saw Mill costs £100 Cy. in the erection & is said to clear itself annually, a Flour Mill 2 pr.

<sup>60</sup> *The Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette*, established 1792, was published by Andrew Kennedy.

<sup>61</sup> Speculation in lands of the Six Districts, State surveyors' districts embraced within the West and North branches of the Susquehanna River, was extremely active in the mid-1790's. The Land Office had opened this region for purchase following the Fort Stanwix Purchase of 1784.

<sup>62</sup> The undrilled touch holes would give an opera bouffe touch to the chastising of the "Whiskey Boys" if Davy is correct. At the battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778, Pennsylvania troops led by Captain William Wilson captured the English standard carried by the Royal Grenadiers under Colonel Monckton. The flag long remained in the possession of the Wilson family in Northumberland County and was displayed on July 4 and other patriotic celebrations.

<sup>63</sup> Samuel Wallis, originally from Harford County, Maryland, had been a Philadelphia merchant associated with Abel James and Reuben Haines. As early as 1768 he had moved into the Muncy Valley and subsequently became one of the largest landowners and speculators in lands in the northern part of the State. A number of Philadelphia speculators were associated with him, principally James Wilson whose failure in 1798 was a severe blow to Wallis' fortune.

<sup>64</sup> William Wilson and John Boyd operated a mill a short distance from the mouth of Chilisquaque Creek.

Stones £400 Cy. & is also very profitable. Here we entered the Chabasquaue Valley<sup>65</sup> bounded on the West by the West Branch of the Susquehanna Waters & on the East by uncleared but good Wood Lands being a perfect Plain to a very great Extent. The clear'd Lands are a perfect Garden but this Year unhealthy & for the distance of  $8\frac{1}{2}$  Miles the Road is on the Border of the River without the least undulation. The variety on the Farms & in the River is delightful, the former in Orchards, Meadow, Pasturage & Tillage, the Wheat in which is now very strong. In the latter the Channel is intersected by a number of rich & fruitful Islands of from 10 to 100 Acres extent. Passing by Tarrstown<sup>66</sup> on the opposite Shore we arrived at a new Establishment, Milltown, & proceeded to Major Pait's Inn  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Mile beyond it.<sup>67</sup> Here is a fine Estate, an appendage to the Township of Northumberland (tho so far from it) consisting of 530 Acres with a good Saw Mill on it (had a Corn Mill but was destroy'd by the British & the Indians during the late War).<sup>68</sup> A good deal of it is fine, rich fertile Meadow. There has been offer'd & refused £3000 Cy. for it. It w'd be cheap in a much larger Sum. From Pait's a good road through the Woods very level for 8 or 9 Miles with many fine Plantations begun. We then enter'd Muncy Hills on which for five Miles no Cultivation or habitation is seen except two or three Squatters, a Class of People worthy of description. They came from no Body enquires where, or how, but generally with Families, fix on any Spot in the Wood that pleases them. Cut down some trees & make up a Log Hut in a Day, clear away the underweed & girdle (girdling is cutting a ring of the Bark off, which kills the Tree when they are either left to rot down or are burnt down in the Winter). The Trees they have no use for if cut down after their Hut is made. They dig up & harrow the Ground, plant Potatoes, a Crop which they get out in three Months, sow Corn etc., (& having sown in peace by the Law of the Land they are secured in reaping in Peace) & continue at Work without ever enquiring whose the Land is, until the Proprietor himself disturbs & drives them off with Difficulty. Mr. Wallace informs us that from motives of Humanity as well as Interest, he never disturbs but has protected more than 100 of them on his Estates, many of whom have become in time good

<sup>65</sup> Chilisquaue.

<sup>66</sup> Derrstown, now Lewisburg.

<sup>67</sup> Milton, established 1792. John Piatt owned considerable land in Turbut Township north of Milton, and kept the "White House" or Road Hall tavern on Penny Hill, south of Montgomery.

<sup>68</sup> Tory and Indian raiders in the summer of 1778 struck terror into this region causing the "Great Runaway" when the settlers fled to Sunbury and points farther south.

Tenants or Purchasers.<sup>69</sup> We now pass'd Muncy Creek & had from the high Lands a fine view of the distant Allegheny Mountains, universally Wild & Desert indeed they are. But a reflection on the astonishing Improvements that are going forward in their Valleys (principally the Property of the rich Pultney but in the name of Williamson)<sup>70</sup> produces in the Mind the most pleasing Effects & the very reverse of those arising from a view of a rich & fertile Country in a State of Devastation & ruin, from the Despotism & Ambition of murderous Tyrants. We next enter'd Wallace's Lands which extend in a direct Line without



"MUNCY FARM"

*The central balconied section was the home built by Samuel Wallis in 1769. Believed to be the oldest existing dwelling in the West Branch Valley.*

Courtesy Mrs. Henry G. Brock

<sup>69</sup> The poor enforcement of Pennsylvania's ambiguously worded land laws allowed speculators to lay claim to vast acres of land from which they tried to keep squatters until the lands had risen sufficiently in value to insure a good profit if disposed of in large quantities. Violence and burnings sometimes marked the clash between speculators' agents and the settlers. Wallis, as did some other speculators, entered into compromise agreements with those who had settled on his lands, but a mass of litigation accumulated in the courts on this issue for more than a half century.

<sup>70</sup> Davy is in error about the location of the Pulteney lands. These were in western New York State, part of the original Phelps-Gorham Purchase, which Robert Morris had sold in 1791 to the Pulteney Associates of London. Sir William Pulteney sent Charles Williamson to open and develop the lands; in this pursuit he had the Williamson Road constructed from near Williamsport to the Pulteney lands to aid migration into that region. The road, or cartway, had been cut from the Susquehanna northward in 1793.

an intervening Acre of another Person's Six Miles on each side the Susquehanna River<sup>71</sup> which is here deep & about half a Mile wide. On the Eastern Side & about  $\frac{1}{2}$  way on the Estate stands his Mansion House, a solid Stone Building on the Margin of the River.<sup>72</sup> He has built a Quaker's Meeting,<sup>73</sup> a School House, & a Tavern, besides a great number of small miserable Farm Houses for there are no Labourers Cottages in the Country every Family being at Work for itself. Squire Wallace's Family consists of his Wife,<sup>74</sup> seven Children grown up, a Bro. in Law<sup>75</sup> & Wife, a Schoolmaster, a Surveyor & some Nephews & Nieces & about twenty Servants—Almost all of them Germans bought on their Arrival at Philadelphia & therefore styled Servants<sup>76</sup>—in all 35 Persons & has the appearance of an excellent Patriarchal Establishment in which Order, System & Economy reign. Every Necessary is provided in the Family. They last Year kill'd 8000 lbs of Beef, Pork, & Mutton, 500 Fowls, a great Quantity of Game, 3 Hogsheads of Shad (a Fish salted & Pickled like Salmon), made 1000 Yards of Linnen, work'd up all their own Wool, made their own Sope & Candles & a good supply of Maple Sugar. Is not this a more valuable Establishment than that of a Lord Courteny<sup>77</sup> or of any Lord in yon Lordly Countries. The Maple Trees yield about 5 w of Sugar each on an average annually, some give as much as 15 ws but these are rare. It is drawn off in April & May by boring holes in the Tree into which Quills & Canes are introduced to convey the Juice to a Trough placed round the bottom of it. This juice is boiled down to Sugar & clarified with very little trouble & is very good. The use of it is fast increasing & I think may be made a good Article of Commerce.<sup>78</sup> Great quan-

<sup>71</sup> Samuel Wallis is said to have owned all the land along the Susquehanna from Muncy Creek to Loyalsock Creek.

<sup>72</sup> Muncy Farm, a one-and-a-half story house with stone walls three feet thick, still in good condition and considered the oldest existing house in the West Branch Valley. Now the property of Mrs. Henry G. Brock. Fort Muncy was erected a few hundred yards north of the Wallis home in 1778.

<sup>73</sup> A log meeting house in "Indian Grave Field." It was replaced by a stone meeting house at nearby Pennsdale about 1799. The Wallises had been members of Exeter Meeting but later transferred to Catawissa Meeting in 1795.

<sup>74</sup> The former Lydia Hollingsworth, daughter of Zebulon Hollingsworth, merchant of Baltimore and Philadelphia.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Hollingsworth, overseer of Muncy Farm.

<sup>76</sup> An instance of this was in 1788 when Wallis paid £30.10 passage money for John and Dorothea Betz, newly arrived at Philadelphia from Rotterdam. They were indentured to him as servants for a term of four years.

<sup>77</sup> This reference to Lord Courteny at first suggested that W. Davy, the diarist, might be William Davy (1743-1826), a curate of Devonshire, and author of a voluminous *System of Divinity*. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, v. 14, p. 198.

<sup>78</sup> On prospectuses and on maps of Pennsylvania of the 1790's attention is drawn to its northern part as "Country Abounding in the Sugar Tree," an

tities of Honey are also used here. Wallace's own Family live in very good Style & have every thing that is good served on their Table without Ostentation or Luxury. Tea & Supper is but one Repast in this Country & you see on the Table Coffee & Wine, Tea & Pickles, Toast & butter, & Beefstakes or Veal Cutlets, Honey & Sallads, etc., etc. Water is the general Beverage dash'd with a small quantity of Spirit & qualified with a Glass or two of Madiera after, but of this there is no Profusion except in Cities. Wallace's family are very well Educated or Instructed, but have so great a respect for Him that they seldom venture to speak in his presence. Mr. Woolstencroft (Brother to the Authoress) spent several Months in this agreeable Family & it is said with a particular object in view, in which he has been disappointed.<sup>79</sup> Wallace's whole Property was destroyed & all his Buildings (a few Vestages of which I saw remaining) & Estates were ravaged & many of his People kill'd during the Late War by the British & Indians<sup>80</sup> & it is only three Years that his Wife & Family have returned here. On the side of the River which he lives on he has 7000 Acres (exclusive of a rich Island of 140 Acres opposite his House)<sup>81</sup> on which is an abundance of Wood, Lime Stone, & Streams of water for watering Meadows of which there is great Plenty. The Land is so rich that one of his Tenants has plow'd the same spot of Land eight years following & taken double Crops without giving it an Ounce of Manure & he always has great Crops. In a new Field of 80 Acres he had this Year 70 of Rye which ran 7 to 7½ Feet high & a full Coon. The other 10 Acres had Wheat which overgrew itself & was spoil'd. They grow little Barley, no Beans, a very few Turnips altho the Ground is well

inducement that, it was anticipated, would sell extensive tracts of land. The Holland Land Company was one of the principal purchasers, and its general agent, Theophile Cazenove, envisioned a bright future for the maple sugar industry. Anti-slavery advocates later dreamed of maple sugar replacing slave-produced cane sugar, an economic blow that would weaken the slavery system.

<sup>79</sup> Charles Wollstonecraft, who came to Pennsylvania from Carmarthen, South Wales, in 1792, was the brother of the English authoress Mary Wollstonecraft. He went into farming near Philadelphia but became interested in speculation in lands. During the summer of 1794, he was examining lands in Northumberland County as agent for Matthew McConnell who contemplated purchasing 100,000 acres from Judge James Wilson. Wilson's inability to furnish clear title caused the negotiation to fall through. Wollstonecraft made his home at Wallis' while on this venture and accompanied surveying gangs onto the lands contemplated for purchase. In his own name he purchased 10,217 acres on Loyalsock and Muncy Creeks for \$7,662.75 from Samuel Wallis, June 3, 1794. He resold the same tract on September 6, 1794, to George Lewis, New York merchant, for \$10,217. In 1795, with Archibald H. Rowan, he established a calico mill on the Brandywine, near Wilmington, Delaware.

<sup>80</sup> See note 68.

<sup>81</sup> Later known as Hall's Island.

calculated for them. Potatoes are in great abundance & very profitable in this light Soil & with Pomkins of which they raise great quantities between the Rows of Indian Corn form a principal part of the Winter Fodder for the Cattle in the Choice of which Wallace is very curious. He has excellent Horses, Blood & Draft, fine English Bulls,<sup>82</sup> as well as the Buffalo kind,<sup>83</sup> various Breeds of Hogs & by them he is improving the Country. Sheep are not well understood, little attended to, are very often destroyed by the Wolves & few People therefore except of good Capital keep them.

Friday Oct. 10 Mr. Wallace accompanied us to the Loyal Sock Creek. The rides & roads here & up hence to the Allegheny Mountains are in the Summer delightful & the views highly picturesque. People are now making their last Crop of Hay. We saw some fine Meadow Grass new cutting & the Weather is delightful for making it. We pass'd the Loyal Sock Creek where the Waters are very rapid & in the Winter must be a great Torrent. From it however near the Entrance there are several very secure & excellent Harbours running  $\frac{1}{4}$  &  $\frac{1}{2}$  Mile up into the Country, which is here very desirable for the Establishment of a Town,<sup>84</sup> & it is in good Cultivation & worth £7 to £8, probably more pr. Acre. The passn. the Creek however is a great drawback from the convenience & comfort of this Situation. The Waters of the Susquehanna are here very deep & their progress gentle & tranquil. There is a Pool  $\frac{3}{4}$  Mile long quite across the River too deep for any Line to fathom wch. Phaemimenon it is very difficult to account for.<sup>84a</sup> In the Winter Sleighs are in general use on the Rivers & on Land & it is the time of Visiting & Jollity throughout the Country. As a proof of the Independence of all Employed even the Stable Boys never address their Employers in any other way but will Mr. Wallace look at the Horses & not will you Sir, etc. The Woods here are so full of Walnuts, Chesnut, Hickory & Hazle Nuts & Acorns that great quantities of Hogs are made fat by feeding on them alone. The Trees in the Woods are chiefly Oak of three or four various kinds as the White, Black, Iron, Spanish & live Oak, the Hickory, Walnut, Chesnut, Pine of great variety, many Poplars, very few Elms. Beach in almost all stony Lands, some Persimmons (an excellent wild fruit when fully ripened by the Frost) a few of the Modsono

<sup>82</sup> Durham Shorthorns were being imported at this time to improve American cattle.

<sup>83</sup> Buffalo were fairly numerous in the Susquehanna Valley until about 1800, and were known to cross with native cattle.

<sup>84</sup> Davy's description fits Otzinachsón, an eighteenth century Indian village, later named Montoursville after Andrew Montour.

<sup>84a</sup> Referred to locally as the "Cannon Hole."



or wild Strawberry & the Dogwood Tree (handsome in form, bark & Flower). The underwood is Allar, Willow, Shumack, Alder, short Firs, Thorns, Box Laurel, Sassafras & the Poke Berry Shrub, with immense quantity of Hurtleberries on all the poor Lands. The Men are very dextrous in the use of their Axe (which is better constructed than the English having a better Head) & will cut down each of them 30 large Trees in a Day & more expeditiously than 2 Men can cut them with a Cross cut Saw. In our presence an old man fell'd a Pine Tree 18 ins. diameter in ten Minutes, which much surprised us & silenced our Recommendation of the Saw. Very large tracts of Woods are frequently set on Fire by Surveyors & Huntsmen & make an awful appearance at a great distance. Wallace's Tennants, & it is the plan of the Country, pay him their Rent in produce free, which is always  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the Grain &  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the Hay, the fore & after Grass being the Tennants. All his Servants & Labourers in the hottest Harvest Weather even drink only Water pure cold from the Stream. Those he hires he gives 6d a Day extra to rather than Spirits, so that they as well as his household People eat more Meat & nourishing animal Food than when they drink Whiskey & other Spirits, & he declares that they are healthier, heartier, & stronger, & never faint or tire on the hottest Days. This is a curious Fact ascertained by a curious Experiment. At Mr. Wallace's we met Mr. Adlum,<sup>85</sup> a first rate Surveyor, connected with the great Bingham of Philadelphia, who has made a large Fortune by Land Jobbing, is a sensible, pleasant, intelligent Man, has been lately much with the Indians in their Settlements & particularly was several Days with their famous Chief Cornplanter<sup>86</sup> who permitted his Son to accompany Adlum down to some of the American Posts but before his Departure the Father (who is in every respect a great Man) delivered an affectionate Harangue of near an Hour to his Son impressing on his Mind a sense of Honour & Independence cautioning him

<sup>85</sup> John Adlum had explored the headwaters of the Susquehanna River with Samuel Maclay, surveyed tracts at Presque Isle and Fort Le Boeuf, and had been appointed State surveyor of District I of the Six Districts in 1792. In this capacity he was also agent and partner of William Bingham, Philadelphia financier and speculator, for whom he selected several hundred thousand acres of the best lands in his own and neighboring districts. Adlum was also associated with Samuel Wallis and James Wilson in land deals. In 1795 he was named judge of Lycoming County; later he moved to Georgetown, D. C., where at his home, "The Vineyard," he cultivated grapes and wrote two books on viniculture and wine making.

<sup>86</sup> Cornplanter, or John O'Bail, part-white Seneca, outstanding figure in affairs of the Six Nations. Adlum's stay with Cornplanter seems to have been for the purpose of persuading the Six Nations Indians to remain neutral in the struggle between the whites and the western Indians, notably the Miami Confederacy, which Anthony Wayne had recently defeated at Fallen Timbers, August 20, 1794.

to guard against the Arts of Agriculture fitted only for Slaves & bad Men,<sup>87</sup> not to learn the Vice of Lying known only to White Traders & Commissioners, to preserve his Love for his Country & its Customs & particularly to exercise himself in hunting Game & to depend on his dexterity therein for Subsistence. Cornplanter informed Adlum that Johnson, a British Commissioner,<sup>88</sup> had been with them last Spring to represent the Impropriety of their submitting to have their Lands taken from them by the Americans & to urge them to resistance & Hostility.<sup>89</sup> He replied that the great King beyond the Waters had once deceived them & the Americans were become mightier than he. Adlum thinks however that this Agent had much influence in producing the offensive System they have lately threatened the Thirteen Fires with.<sup>90</sup> While at peace the Indians treat the Americans with more Humanity & Hospitality by far than they ever experienced in return, indeed they dare not venture down the Country for fear of being murdered & much Censure do the Americans in the back Country deserve on this Revengeful Subject.<sup>91</sup>

Saturday Octr. 11 took leave of Mr. Wallace & Family . Call'd on Mr. Adlum who entertained us with a sight of great a variety of curious presents, various articles of Dress & Weapons he & his Party lately rec'd from the Indian Cornplanter.<sup>92</sup> We arrived at Northumberland in the Evening.

Sunday 12th Doctor Priestley being requested by the Officers & many principal Inhabitants Preach'd to the Troops in the Presbyterian Meeting (where he had once before Preach'd) on a general subject, but composed an excellent concluding Prayer for

<sup>87</sup> Strange advice from one bearing the name of Cornplanter! The Indian equivalent was Gyantwahta.

<sup>88</sup> William Johnson, British agent and interpreter to the Six Nations. Presque Isle, the Erie Triangle, and the Genesee lands in New York State were the regions involved.

<sup>89</sup> The Seneca lands in the Genesee country had been bought by Robert Morris and associates from Massachusetts in 1791. Much of the 4-million acre region had been sold to the Holland Land Company the following year, but Morris was prevented from "quieting" the Indian rights because of his own financial difficulties and also the precarious balance of white-Indian relations of the mid-1790's. Native resistance to white encroachment weakened after Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers and the Jay Treaty by which the British agreed to surrender the frontier posts on American soil. At the Treaty of Big Tree, 1797, the Senecas relinquished their lands to Morris for \$100,000, plus other douceurs and annuities paid to their leaders.

<sup>90</sup> See note 86.

<sup>91</sup> An observation that has been confirmed many times by the more objective students of white-Indian relations.

<sup>92</sup> Adlum's home on Wolf Run near Pennsdale still stands, and is now used as a two-family dwelling.



### JOHN ADLUM HOME

*On Wolf Run, near Pennsdale. The stone portion on the right was the original structure, built in 1794.*

the occasion & was well attended to tho' it is unusual to hear Preaching from Notes.

Monday 13th Again examined some Lands in the Neighbourhood & find some good Tracts of 300 Acres each may be purchased at £4 to £5 pr Acre within 5 or 6 Miles of this Town. Doctor Priestley appears perfectly pleased with his Situation & having a Printing Press close by him is a great Satisfaction & Entertainment,<sup>93</sup> & he is now printing a Sequel to his Letters to French Philosophers & an answer to Paine's Age of Reason (a Book much read in this Country).<sup>94</sup> He is very anxious for the arrival here of his Books & Apparatus & they are coming by Water, that he may resume his favorite Studies, but still more anxious to get Society that he may again pursue his principal Object, by publick Instruction in a Place of Worship, & by Lectures to Youth, as well as the Establishment of a Publick Seminary, &

<sup>93</sup> More than likely the press of Andrew Kennedy who published *The Sunbury and Northumberland Gazette*.

<sup>94</sup> *An Answer to Mr. Paine's Age of Reason, being a Continuation of Letters to the Philosophers and Politicians of France on the Subject of Religion, and of the Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever*. Northumberland, 1795, 8 volumes.

he declares he would happily engage in these without any Prospect of Fees or pecuniary Reward. The Doctor enjoys a game of Whist & altho he never hazards a farthing is highly diverted with playing good Cards but never ruff'd by bad ones.

Tuesday 14th The Election for a Senator, a Congress Man & Representative & Sheriffs for the County & Town Officers takes place this Day. Every man paying any Taxes & having resided one Year in the Country is entitled to a Vote. These are taken in each Township on the same Day by every Individual delivering into an Office a Paper with the names of all the Persons he votes for written on it, thus little or no confusion is created except what would on any other occasion occur from noisy quarrelsome Fellows getting in Liquor. Of this we had in the Even.g some proof & the Soldiers were under Arms but it being merely a drunken squabble without any political dispute it terminated in a few broken Heads & bloody Noses & by 10 O' Clock the Town was as quiet as ever. There are it seems in Chilisquaque Valley a Set of wild Irish who on all Occasions are very turbulent and violent. They are much disliked by their Neighbours who however are not sparing in their threats of Bloody revenge on them. I observe in the Inhabitants of this Country a great Apathy not attracted by any thing Novel in Art, or beautiful in Nature; the most respectable (even Lawyers) have few or no Books, fine Cloaths, good Furniture, handsome Equipages, or even Magnificent Buildings excite no Respect, or little attention, & a Clobber having Business with the first Man in the Country would not hesitate to enter his Parlour & seat himself before he explains it. The general address is Tommy, Billy, Harry etc. Mr. or Sir are seldom in use.<sup>95</sup> The Weather is every Day beautiful beyond any that I ever experienced in any part of Europe, fine, clear, unclouded. Thus for many days successively it has I am persuaded from my own experience & that of every other Englishman I meet with a great Influence on the animal Spirits & the Vigor of the Mind & more real pleasure is enjoyed in this Climate than can be in England, the lowness of Spirits & dejection so generally experienced there must be increased, if not actually occasioned by a heavy atmosphere & the close & gloomy Weather which so generally prevails in the Fall & Winter.

Wednesday 15th Octr. Mr. Priestley, Madge & Myself went to Machensy's Farm 1½ Mile from Northumberland Ferry. He

<sup>95</sup> Rochefoucauld's comment on our democratic habits: "It appears somewhat strange to Europeans, to see the coachman eat at the same table with the passengers; but it would seem equally strange to Americans, to see the coachman eating by himself. It is futile to argue against the customs of a country; we must submit."

was a Soldier in the British Army, taken Prisoner at Stony Point. Having his Wife with him, he preferred remaining in this Country to returning, on which tho he has resided only three Months, he has cleared twelve Acres of Land & rais'd as fine a crop of Potatoes for Quantity & Quality as was ever seen. They were planted exactly three Months since. The Soil appears very good with plenty of Springs from which a great deal of the Land can be easily water'd. There is an abundance of Timber of almost every Species. For the Firs he is offer'd 15d pr Tree in place. The Estate extends to the brow of the Mountain over the N.E. branch of the Susquehana from where there are the most extensive, picturesque & sublime Prospects possible. The precipice is so rapid but so even, that Trees can be with ease & safety lower'd over it to the very border of the River. The Estate is 204 Acres exclusive of Allowance which is 6 pr%. Mr. Priestley & myself purchas'd it for the sum of £300 Cy ready money.<sup>96</sup> The old Mackensy to continue a Tennant on at least one half of the Estate. By this he & his Wife are render'd comfortable & happy. They appear to be very good People & have a strong source of happiness in a contented mind, which is strikingly portrayed in the Cheerfulness of their Countenances & the healthy clean Appearance of their Children. Their Habitation is a mere open Log House without Door, Window or Chimney but a very neat Room with 3 Beds in it. She provided us with a good Dinner of Fowls, Potatoes, etc. If in a Log House they want to make a Stone Chimney they set one Corner of the House on Fire (to save the trouble of Sawing or hewing the Logs) & burn it out just of a size for the intended Chimney when the Fire is extinguished with ease the Logs laying (all) horizontally. Many of the Trees (& particularly one on the Island) have now the richest Appearance that can be seen. Nature assumes or obtains a splendid gaiety in the richness of the Colours of their Leaves, beautiful clear Scarlet intermixed with others of a pale Green, a Nut Brown, dark Green, & Firs & Pine Leaves of various shades. In the Town every House has a Cow which stays in the Woods all day but returns regularly every Morning & Evening of herself to the Door of her Owner who has no other Trouble but that of keeping a Bell about her Neck & milking her. Near this place is a Weaver who weaves Bed Quilts of new Patterns & something like Car-

<sup>96</sup> This location would be in Tuckahoe Valley, in the vicinity of Lithia Springs, a short distance from the Northumberland pumping station. Northumberland County deed books contain no record of a sale from Machensy, or Mackenzie, to Davy and Priestley. They did purchase on October 23, 1794, a tract named "Bethell," containing 200¼ acres, located on the headwaters of McBride's Run, from John Spohn of Reading for £200 in gold and silver. A year later, August 10, 1795, Davy sold his half interest in "Bethell" to Joseph Priestley, Junior, for £200 lawful Pennsylvania money.

peting at 2 Dollars each Quilt. The Family dye & spin the Wool & deliver the Yarn to him. We find that Chesnut makes the best rail Fencing. As there are no Hedges in the Country, a Man will make 300 cleft Rails pr. Day of  $11\frac{1}{2}$  Feet<sup>97</sup> long & is paid half a Dollar pr Day. I found it is the custom here to sell Estates on what is call'd Gales. That is to be paid for by Instalments, some yearly, some half Yearly & seperate Bonds are given for each Payment but without Interest.<sup>98</sup>

Friday 17th Went with Madge to Mackenseys & fix'd on the plan of improvements to be proceeded on, particularly a clump of good Trees to be left in the centre of every plot of 10 Acres & also some good strong Plants & young Trees to be left in the Fences. For want of these all the cleared Lands in this Country have a most unpleasant appearance. The Lands are much injured by this injudicious Conduct both in Summer & Winter & no Shelter whatever is afforded to Cattle. The Americans see no Beauty or Utility in Trees. I also ordered plenty of Apple or Peach Trees to be planted in detached Places, at a distance from the Roads. Old Mackensy fed his Oxen with chop'd Straw & ground Rhye wet with Water & a little Salt sprinkled over it (they greedily eat Salt out of his Hand) & this keeps them tho work'd hard in very good Condition & Sleek. The old man remark'd in the course of our Walk that many a Tear had he shed when he thought how many poor Creatures were starving in the old Country while so much good Land lies uncultivated in this which they might live in plenty on. Old Macleod a Scotchman & his Family 18 years ago built a Log hut on this side of the River & clear'd some Land, has gone on progressively until he has now about fifty Acres, has never paid any rent hitherto to Mr. Haines the Proprietor,<sup>99</sup> who is however now benefited by the Improvements which have rendered the Plot worth £3 to £4 pr Acre but old Macleod will not purchase at this high price but has bought 160 Acres in the Genesee Country for a Trifle & is going there to settle.<sup>100</sup> We returned by way of Sunbury about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Mile from which place is the most beautiful Prospect that the Eye can be gratified with particularly on the Rivers in every direction which are surrounded with the most Sublime scenery possible. I find it a very general Evil in the Country that Farmers have too much Land, for this prevents them from manuring & improving any.

<sup>97</sup> Phenomenal output! Can some woodsman or farmer furnish a figure that does not strain credulity? Schoepf, in his *Travels* (1783-1784), says that  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 cords a day was the usual output.

<sup>98</sup> Davy has no entry for Thursday, October 16.

<sup>99</sup> Reuben Haines, Philadelphia brewer and merchant, and early landowner in Sunbury and the neighboring country.

<sup>100</sup> Possibly in the Pulteney lands. See note 70.

They go on from one new Spot to Another & rack it out until those formerly, or first worked out, naturally regain Vigor & Strength for fresh Cultivation. In some places indeed they are beginning to use Lime, but this & watering their Meadows regularly is little attended to.<sup>101</sup>

Saturday 18 Octr. Mr. Priestley engaged with a Mason to build the Stone Walls of their intended House at 3/ pr. Perch. The Stone will cost 3/6 pr. Perch, the Brick Work @ 11/3 pr. Mil. the Brick to cost 30/ the Lime 1/ pr. Bushel, all delivered on the Spot.

Sunday 19th It is remarkable that Flies are by far less abundant here than near the Sea. Dr. Priestley & his Wife think they have not had any more than in England. I have not felt one in this place. Butter made in this Country is very good, but Cheese is very bad. Powder'd Hair in the Country Towns would excite either contempt or ridicule, as would indeed anything like foppery or peculiarity in Dress.<sup>102</sup> Took leave of Dr. Priestley & Family in the Evening & went to Sunbury. Here stood an American Fort (just now leveled) which kept the English & Indians at Bay & many skirmishes took place in this vicinity.<sup>103</sup>

Monday 20th Went on to Titsworth, between that & Cherry's met Cooper,<sup>104</sup> Jardine, Porter & one other who are lately arrived & now proceeding to Northumberland.

Tuesday 21st Horn'd Cattle in this Country are very subject to have rotten Horns, always the cause of speedy decay & death unless soon healed. As a remedy they either cut them off, or bore a large hole & pour into it Brine, or Vinegar, with Pepper & Salt in it. This passes down through the Nostril & generally cures.<sup>105</sup> They now burn the sprouts of Calves horns when two Months old & then the Horns will not grow. They say to over feed a Horse when hot will inevitably founder him & that suddenly.

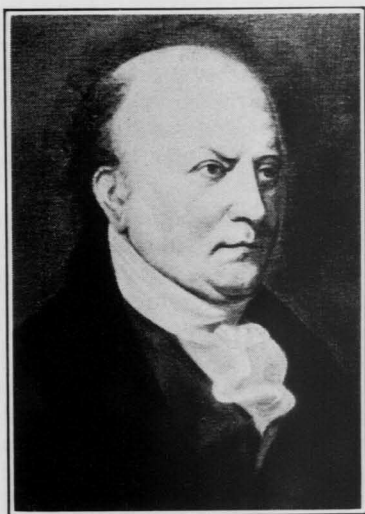
<sup>101</sup> See note 40, Part I.

<sup>102</sup> Dr. Priestley had bowed to democratic tastes by abandoning his wig.

<sup>103</sup> Fort Augusta, built in 1756, on the advice of the Six Nations, by Colonel William Clapham and Colonel James Burd as a stronghold guarding the Susquehanna Valley against the French and their Indians. A refuge for inhabitants of the upper Susquehanna region during the Tory and Indian raids of the Revolution.

<sup>104</sup> Thomas Cooper, lawyer, physician, scientist, and close friend of the Priestleys, wrote his own impressions of his adopted land in *Some Information Respecting America*, 1794.

<sup>105</sup> Hollow horn, the ailment mentioned by Davy, was more commonly treated by boring a hole in the horn and then wrapping a cloth soaked in turpentine around the horn.



THOMAS COOPER

Courtesy Dickinson College Collection

Mackensy tells me that the Indians cleared a Spot on the Island at Northumberland<sup>106</sup> thirty Years ago which has been till'd ever since is not worn out, but bears good Crops yet every Year. I spent the Evening with the high Sheriff of Bucks County, an intelligent Man (but no Schollar) & this Officer here executes his own Warrants Writs, etc.<sup>107</sup>

Wednesday 22d To Carters Town to Breakfast, Batalion Day, or meeting of Malitia. About 800 assemble, old & young, & as all are desired to bring what Arms they have it is a curious collection. Long rifles & short Hessian ones, long Duck fowling Pieces & short ones, French & English Muskets, some have a Pistol, others an old Sword, but as I could not stay to see them muster don't know how they were at last equip'd.<sup>108</sup> Almost every Man keeps a Rifle that will kill a Deer (or a Man) at half a Mile distance.<sup>109</sup> The Peasants will generally kill with certainty a Pheasant through the Head with a single Ball. Went on to Reading to

<sup>106</sup> Shamokin Island.

<sup>107</sup> As he was now traveling through Berks County, Davy's reference is undoubtedly to Peter Frailey, Sheriff of Berks County, 1793-1796.

<sup>108</sup> The motley array of militiamen on battalion day has evoked like comment from other travelers.

<sup>109</sup> This remark on the effectiveness of the rifle implies that Davy had taken too literally the tall claims of the Pennsylvania riflemen. About 300 yards was the maximum distance at which beast or man could be killed by a .45 ball.



Dinner. The Roads are very good now & the Country has a much better appearance than when I went forward. I find at Reading Wiskey is made, or distill'd from Peaches & is an excellent Cordial but none of this Year's is yet ready for Sale. Here is a very handsome Lutheran Church with a good Organ.<sup>110</sup> Every Person is very inquisitive abruptly asking who you are etc., etc.

Thursday 23 Octr Left Reading at 9 O'Clock. Breakfas'd at French Inn<sup>111</sup> & reach'd Norristown. Roads good, the Weather being dry. I here went to look at the Canal which is to go from hence to Philadelphia. It is an Herculean Work. They are now blowing Rocks & making double Walls against the River Schuylkyl more than two Miles in length.<sup>112</sup> 300 turbulent Irishmen are at work on it who are guilty of frequent outrage & violence. It is doing by Subscription. A Mr. Western, an Englishman, is the Engineer of the Canal.<sup>113</sup> On the farm of Nicholas Snyder I was told that he had but one Son who would not be a Farmer & that having no other Family & being obliged to pay for all his Labour he never got forward, & will now sell his Estate. I find all through this Country a Sandy Surface without any exceptions even though the Mass be Rocky or Clay, red or yellow Soil, Isinglass, or Granite, Coal, or Limestone, still the Surface is light Sand as much so nearly in the Valleys as on the Hills & Mountains, & the Roads are very bad with a very little rain, none of them being Stoned but mere inclosures of the original Soil. The prices of Articles at Northumberland are as follows in Currency Money: Potatoes 2/, Turnips 9/ pr Bushel, Pumpkins 8/ pr Hund<sup>d</sup> tale, Apples 2/6 Hoard, Apples 3/ pr Bus., Butter 1/, Beef 4½ to 5½, Pork 4½, Venison in the Season very fat at 4d & 5d pr lb, Geese full grown about 1/2 a Dollar, Roasting Pigs 2/6, Pigs half grown 12/ & 14/, Wheat 6/ pr Bus., Hay £4 per Ton, Wool 3/ in small quantities, Flax 9d pr lb swindled, Flax Seed 3/6 pr Busl., Hemp 5d pr lb, Indian Corn 4/, Barley 4/, Oats 2/6, Rhye 4 & 4/6, Buck Wheat 3/ pr Busl., There is a kind of strong bearded Wheat introduced & sells at 7/6 pr Busl., because it is said no Insect will ever touch it. Other Wheat is much injur'd & frequently whole Crops destroyed by the Hessian Fly. A good one year old sheep (bears about 4 to 5 Wool) 16/, a good Milch Cow, or a fat Cow £7/10, a yoke of working Oxen £30, a Heifer 2 years old £3.15 to £4, a Calf of a month old 16/

<sup>110</sup> Holy Trinity Church, erected at 6th and Washington Streets, 1792-1793.

<sup>111</sup> Unidentified, but possibly a hostelry kept by a French Huguenot, a number of whom had settled in lower Berks County.

<sup>112</sup> See note 12, Part I.

<sup>113</sup> William Weston, an English canal engineer, was engaged by Robert Morris to supervise the construction of both the Delaware and Schuylkill and the Schuylkill and Susquehanna Canal projects.

to 18/. Wood 1 Dollar pr Cord(at Philadelphia 7 & 8 Dollars), Cider Whisky 5/6. Rhye D<sup>o</sup> 6/6 pr Galln. Cyder at 1½ Dollar pr Barrl. of 32 Galln. new. Brandy 15/, Rum 10/, Jamaica Rum 12/6 pr Galln. Cheese 20d pr lb very bad, this is extraordinary. Horses are dear now from the demand for the Army, but are about English Prices. Wages to any Man you employ never less than 3/ pr Day, from that to 4/ & 4/6 & find Food. The Landlord with whom I resided while at Northumberland had this Year 45 Bush's of Indian Corn(in the clear Grain) of a Plott of less than an Acre which he inclosed from the Woods four Years ago, NB he has never paid or been asked for any Rent.

The Conclusions I draw from the Observations made in the Course of this Journey are, that for People accustomed to Society it will by no means do to begin new Settlements. This must be done by Persons enured to Fatigue & hard Labour & content with any humble Fare & Seclusion, that on the contrary it will be a very happy & profitable Situation to carry on Improvements on Estates of which enough is already clear'd for a Family to live on the Produce of, but it can only be made comfortable where a few Families unite in a neighbourhood so as to assist in supplying each others Wants. That the Situation of Northumberland (altho its access is through two Days of unpleasant Roads, but not difficult for a Horse & it is constantly improving) is as pleasant & well calculated for the taste of Englishmen as any Place I ever saw, but unless a good number of English Families unite in settling there so as to secure an Interest, & form a respectable Society, much pleasure cannot be expected, as the People now there (Americans) do not correspond with the wishes & disposition of Englishmen. But the Establishment of this Society at present depends almost entirely on Doctor Priestley's Residence there,<sup>114</sup> & that is now doubtful, he being chosen this day ( 5 Novr.1794) Professor of Chemistry in Philadelphia, a profitable & honourable Situation.<sup>115</sup> If, however, he removes I expect that Lands in that Neighbourhood may again fall in Price & be bought up great Bargains, which may tempt many Families to settle, where there Expenses will be so very limited & every necessary procured immediately with a certain Prospect of a very rapid Encrease on the Value of their Property.

<sup>114</sup> Apparently an allusion to Pantisocracy—the settlement contemplated by the “friends of liberty.”

<sup>115</sup> Priestley turned down the appointment to the faculty of the College of Philadelphia, though he did deliver several lectures. He preferred the quiet of rural Northumberland, and lived there until his death in 1804.

## POSTSCRIPT ON MR. DAVY

Since the publication of Part 1 of "Mr. Davy's Diary" in the April issue of *Pennsylvania History*, D. F. S. Filliter, our English correspondent, has been granted access to a collection of papers in the possession of Miss Constance Davy, Bournemouth, labelled "Interesting Letters and Documents Preserved by William Davy, American Consul at Leeds, 18[??]." Examination of the papers confirms our identification of the diarist (p. 126), and they also highlight the career of this enterprising Anglo-American merchant for the next thirty years.

Established as a merchant in Philadelphia, with residence in Germantown, Davy received the thanks of Secretary of State Timothy Pickering in 1797 for his advices on Europe-bound vessels that might carry public despatches. The preceding fall Pickering had offered to sell him North Carolina back lands, but Davy's caution is revealed in this comment on the colonel:

The writer, Mr. Timothy Pickering, is at this time Secretary of State of the United States, but cannot command, or finger much, if any more than his salary, of the public money.

Mr. Davy did not buy.

Dr. Benjamin Rush became a close friend who offered advice on modernizing the Davy stores and wharves in Water Street, but not "in the present temper of our citizens"—yellow fever was again harassing the capital city when this was written in September, 1798. During the undeclared naval war at the turn of the century Davy fitted out the privateer *Alexander*, captained by his son John Broom Davy. On March 5, 1800, President John Adams commissioned Davy to seize any armed French vessel found within United States jurisdictional limits. Privateering and overseas trade, despite English orders in council and Napoleonic decrees, proved lucrative to Davy and Son, for in 1806 he received an estimate of \$34,600 for a vessel of 375 tons from Samuel Bowers, Philadelphia ship builder. This may have been the *Active*, bearing the same name as the vessel in which he had come to America, a Davy vessel in the Mediterranean trade in 1809.

Davy's civic and social affiliations broadened in the years of prosperity. His concern for other Englishmen migrating to America led to his election to the "Society of the Sons of St. George at Philadelphia Established for the Advice and Assistance of Englishmen in Distress." The Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce enrolled him as a member. He received invitations in 1804 and 1805 to dine with President Jefferson in Washington, and Mr. and Mrs. Madison also entertained him in 1805. He and his son John were made members of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1807 "for transporting the Casts for the Academy from Bordeaux to Philadelphia, free of freight." The following year he was named a justice of the peace for Philadelphia County.

Revolutions in Spanish America opened wider trading opportunities for Davy and Son. The younger partner, William, junior, was located as agent in Cartagena on the Colombian coast. Late in 1810 a letter from Juan Vicente Bolivar at Caracas, brother of Simon Bolivar, *Libertador*, requested Davy to get 500 rifles for shipment to Venezuela. Davy supplied 200 and suggested that the balance might be obtained in New York. In this same year, son John, erstwhile privateer captain, was appointed United States consul at Rangoon. Some idea of the senior Davy's financial status is gleaned from his rating assessment (i.e., real property) which in 1815 was \$8,010, on which the tax was twenty cents per hundred dollars. Early in 1814 he had been one of the founders of the Germantown Trust Company.

Two responsibilities of guardianship, one against an enemy from without, and the other from within, befell Davy. With the United States again at war with England, in 1813 he was authorized by the United States Marshal at Philadelphia "To receive reports of alien enemies and to do such other acts as may be authorized by the Department of State." Post-war conditions in Germantown found Davy in a pastoral role as member of a sub-committee of the "Society for the Suppression of Vice and Immorality." His Sabbath duties were set forth in a Society minute:

The said sub-committee shall meet at the Market House on every Sabbath morning and afternoon, and then divide themselves in such manner as they may deem expedient, and proceed to the German Church in Beggars

Town and thence down the street to the lower end of the Village, to prevent the youth from disorderly conduct, and endeavour to persuade them to attend either the Sunday School or some place of worship, and, if need be, to employ the Constable of the Township to accompany them.

"This system was extensively established and vigorously acted on," commented Mr. Davy.

Davy's residence in America ended in 1817 with his appointment as United States consul at Hull, England. It was incorrectly stated in Part 1 (p. 126) that his son, Wm. Davy, junior, had been named to this post, but from the new sources now available it appears to have been the father. As far as is known, the son remained at Cartagena and died there sometime prior to 1824. What prompted the senior Davy, at the age of 60, to begin a new career, but one for which he was amply qualified, is nowhere made clear. Letters written shortly after he had arrived in Hull evince disappointment with the position. He solicited the aid of George W. Erving, United States Minister at Madrid, but Erving informed him there were no openings in Spain. Noting Davy's facility with the Spanish language and familiarity with the Spanish character, Erving advised him to give some thought to the Spanish colonies, and to the southern and western frontiers of the United States. Undoubtedly it was age that decided Davy to eschew the lure of journeying again to new frontiers and to remain at home in Albion. Another of his sons, Albert, succeeded the father to the Hull consulship in 1827, and became consul at Leeds in 1843.

Almost the last glimpse we have of our diarist comes thirty years after his recorded trip into Pennsylvania. Sadly, he noted the death of Mrs. Elizabeth Davy of Fordton, "my venerable mother," at the age of 90, in June, 1824. Only three years more were allotted to him beyond this, his sixty-seventh year, for he died on September 11, 1827, at the age of seventy.

An echo of the Pantisocracy on the upper Susquehanna dreamed of by the English Romantic Poets sounds from the garden of Hurworth House, Doncaster, the home of Mrs. Annie Thompson, daughter of Albert Davy. Here, sunning himself on a garden

bench beneath a peach tree, was wont to come the aging man of letters, Robert Southey. As a memorial to the friendly visits of this one-time disciple of Joseph Priestley, and possible friend of her grandfather, William Davy, Mrs. Thompson had placed a tablet in the garden wall close by the spot where the poet passed many pleasant hours.