Weld liked to sketch the countryside as he travelled, and this picture shows the kind of vehicle used in 1794. The background includes an inn, fields with decaying stumps, and zigzag fences. Architects have pointed out that most Pennsylvania inns at the time were built, not of frame, but of stone and, although Weld placed this picture in the part of his book which described the Middle Atlantic states, it belongs architecturally to Virginia. However, a
THE RAGE FOR GOING TO AMERICA

By CAROLINE ROBBINS*

A VERY clever Englishwoman writing in 1794 to an equally clever friend spoke of “the rage for going to America” which she thought was almost as strong as the storm over revolutionary France. Traditional incentives towards emigration were heavily reenforced by tumultuous circumstances; Frenchmen fled from the guillotine; Englishmen from those bitter, violent controversies about events in France equalled only by those over Communist Russia today. They sought, as Mrs. Lindsay wrote, “a freedom which exists nowhere else to live without trouble or disappointment.” Some still crossed the Atlantic merely to explore the prospects of the new world and observe manners and morals in the new republic; others driven by greater urgency, took their possessions with them and prepared to settle. Two young poets adventurously thought of a Pantisocracy on the Susquehanna. “My mother thinks I am mad!” wrote Southey to Coleridge, but continued that she was “as crazy” as he to emigrate “next March.” He enquired the price of common blue trousers suited to nautical pursuits on the river, and Coleridge, in his Cambridge college, read about agriculture and tried to tune up muscles more used to a sedentary than a pioneering life. The poets never sailed. Some of the sojourners who had expected to settle decided, when politics under Adams became stormy, to return. Others merged into the growing nation. Many left records of their impressions and adventures, and these manuscripts and books together with contemporary guides and maps enable us to form a vivid picture of

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231
life during the administrations of Washington and Adams—while America's society was young.

Travellers seldom failed to pay homage to George Washington and to admire the integrity and simplicity of the general turned president. They drank tea with him, ate breakfast, attended levees. Conversation ran on agricultural matters, and advice on technical problems was exchanged. The tall, upright, and venerable figure looked both great and good, and was universally regarded as one of the world's great men even by those who revered him for his service as soldier rather than as head of government. Washington was known to be on the Federalist side of the now opposing parties, and these also provoked comment. French affairs divided American opinion; agreements and treaties with England no less. Ambassadorial expenses, a tariff, security regulations, the balance of commercial and agricultural interests, all stirred considerable controversies during these troubled years and the pattern of American parties began to form. Dread disease ravaged Philadelphia and environs. Reports of travellers on health and population were often in sharp contrast to those of earlier visitor's. War in Europe was far away but its repercussions were felt and men argued over the necessity for both military and naval armed forces. The end of the eighteenth century was eventful and important, but we shall see happenings and persons only as they are mirrored in our travellers' tales, and shall make no attempt to estimate their verisimilitude.

Guide books were available for the curious traveller and the serious immigrant. Henry Wansey, writing a prefatory note to a delightful account of his excursion in the summer of 1794, averred that his story would be without prejudice, whereas those of most of his immediate precursors were not. Gilbert Imley, husband of the unfortunate Mary Wollstonecraft, wrote the "puff direct"; Thomas Cooper's Information written particularly for
intending settlers was "the puff oblique." On the other hand, a recent volume was disillusioned and jaundiced; another (by Brisso
t) in less than five years had become outmoded. Nearly all the visitors, who also read each other and commented on mistakes, discrepancies, and opinions, read a useful compendium, a geography by Jedidiah Morse. At that time the relative advantages to would-be settlers of the areas of the Shenandoah, Kentucky, and the upper Susquehanna were hotly debated.4

The favoured "asylum" for both French and English in this decade was in the middle Atlantic states, that is in Pennsylvania on the lands embraced by the east and west arms of the Susquehanna and watered by the Tyoga, Lycoming, and Loyalsock creeks which flowed into the greater streams. Speculators, among them William Bingham, Robert Morris, and John Vaughan, were prepared to sell large tracts of land there for development. As prices rose and circumstances changed they often took back lands they had sold. This was where the French settlement of Azilum was established and this too where Dr. Priestley and his family bought property. Cooper highly recommended it and it made briefly a focus for an interesting and articulate number of travellers.5

Until 1799 Philadelphia was a capital city, the seat of Congress, and the second commercial center of the States. Our travellers usually started from that city even if they had landed elsewhere; they rode or drove north of the Schuylkill to Norristown, Trappe, Pottsgrove, Reading, and Hamburg, relatively cultivated country, and then traversed the mountains to Sunbury which lay across the river from Northumberland. Some ventured farther north along the creeks. Others went, instead, to Bethlehem, the Moravian


settlements, and thence to Wilkes-Barre. Tracks past two famous farms left Northumberland for Harrisburg and Middletown thence to Lancaster, where the new turnpike opened in 1792, made their way more easily back through Downingtown to Philadelphia. Southwards, the road was bad and waterways hazardous. After Wilmington and Havre de Grace the passage of the Chesapeake led to Baltimore and Washington. Northwards, roads through Bristol, Trenton, Princeton, Newark, and Port Amboy led to New York and New England. Though swampy in parts, these were better and were travelled by regular stages. Ninety miles could be covered in a single day on this route, but the 131 miles to Northumberland took five and the journey to Baltimore three or four.

Perhaps the most famous Frenchman to record impressions was Chateaubriand who came in 1791. Another was the ornithologist Audubon. But for present purposes these are not so important as half a dozen less well known. A Portuguese naturalist, Costa, left an interesting account of Philadelphia in 1799. The Chevalier de Pontgibaud made a third visit and again commented shrewdly but unkindly on what he saw. Moreau de St. Méry, a colonial civil servant with an immense interest in history, fell out with Robespierre and fled to America, spending the greater part of five years in Philadelphia. His bookshop at 84 Front Street became a meeting place for French refugees. Anti-French sentiment caused him to return to Europe in 1798, and there he published a most interesting *Voyage*. A noble royalist Colbert, Comte de Maulevrier, spent two years, 1797-99, in the States and left a suave, amusing account of adventures. Volney, the famous atheistical philosopher, spent 1795-98 in America, engaged in controversy with Priestley, and produced *A View* of the soil and climate which was translated in 1804. Theodore de Cazenove, a Swiss of French descent, arrived in 1794, engaged in work for the Holland Land Company and kept a journal of his doings. Scarcely as shrewd as Moreau's *Voyage*, nor as attractive in literary presentation, the *Travels* of the duc de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt filled two weighty volumes. Liancourt spent a fair proportion of his time in Pennsylvania, and, like his distinguished successor, Tocqueville, published on the prisons as well as on his general impressions. An aristocrat, pre-
pared to support Mirabeau and a moderate measure of change, he was unwilling to endorse Jacobin policies.6

Many of the English immigrants were Unitarian or connected in some way with the most famous of that group, Joseph Priestley, chemist, divine, educational reformer. His house and laboratory at Birmingham had been wrecked by a mob convinced that his liberal political and theological views and support of the Revolution in France menaced the peace and constitutional security of England. Priestley arrived with his family in 1794, and died at Northumberland, Pennsylvania, 1804. Cooper, whose work has been mentioned already, came over with the chemist’s son and Henry Toulmin, the latter to become a citizen of some importance in Kentucky. After an extended tour Cooper went back to England to settle his affairs and to publish his book. He then returned, lived with Priestley, was imprisoned under the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, and eventually pursued an honourable and lengthy career in South Carolina. Both his Information and Wansey’s Excursion draw on the diaries of the younger Priestley and Toulmin. Wansey, cultivated descendant of a Quaker family connected since the seventeenth century with the cloth industry of Wiltshire, arrived in the spring of 1794 and produced an informative book, though whether it was as unprejudiced as he claimed may be questioned. His politics were liberal, he had supported the Revolution, and all his instincts responded to the fraternity of the new world and the simplicity of its great men.5


7Priestley, Works II, contains much about Priestley’s ten years in America both in his letters, memoirs, and in the illustrative notes to these, which often cite unpublished material. MS letters may be found in many collections; cited here are some from the MSS at Warrington in England and in The Amer. Philos. Soc. Wansey contains a good deal about Priestley; on
On the other hand, two others of the Unitarian persuasion, Isaac Weld and William Russell, were unfavourably impressed. Weld was a Dubliner, named for the great Newton who had been intimate with his ancestors. Two volumes of Travels are as much or more about Canada (which he infinitely preferred) as about the United States. A keen sportsman, he also had some talent as draughtsman and illustrated his book. Russell, a wealthy Birmingham businessman and a great friend of the Priestleys, was attacked by the same rioters in 1792 and, bringing his family with him, he intended to stay. He hoped to collect American debts and improve his American acquaintance. Several of the family kept diaries and wrote letters, though only extracts of these have been printed. None of them liked America or Americans, and they returned to Europe in 1801.

After Priestley's death in 1804, William Bakewell, who had lived with the family in Northumberland after a term as indentured servant to their Quaker landlord, Haines, sent his recollections of the good doctor and his surroundings to the Monthly Repository, a periodical devoted to the history and theology of the dissenters. "Some particulars of Dr. Priestley's residence" throws light on social problems of the times. Priestley's own voluminous correspondence to English and American friends also provides us with another commentary all the more interesting as illustrating the experience of an immigrant of the professional class. The travellers met each other at parties or in homes and taverns. Thomas Twinning, a young English tea merchant, decided to return from India to England via the United States and spent a couple of months in 1796 visiting the country. He met Priestley in Philadelphia, leaving a record, printed long afterwards, of impressions of America which are in the main favourable. Finally, William Priest, self-styled musician, about whom we have few details, spent the years


1 Isaac Weld, Travels through the States of North America through the Years 1795, 1796, 1797, 2 vols. illustrated (London, 1799). There are at least two other editions. Quotations here from the second. See DNB, LX, 158; Gentleman's Magazine (London, 1855), LXIII, i, 610; Sam. Henry Jeyes, The Russells of Birmingham (London, 1911), 167-276, and passim: Raymond Stearns, "William Russell," PMHB, LXII (1938), 207-210, analysis of manuscripts now in the possession of HSP. I have examined the MSS but have not read the tiny shorthand diary.
1793 to 1797 in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, and Lancaster, among other places, and published, soon after his return, *Travels* in which can be detected a keen ear and an amusing frankness.9

The voyage need not be described in detail. One must have been very like another. But during the wars from 1792 on, the Atlantic presented other hazards than storms. The Russells were seized and spent some time in France before being allowed to proceed to New York in 1796. Priestley had asked Lord Grenville for protection when he left in the April of 1794. When he planned a trip home in 1797, he hoped to obtain the help of Robert Liston, then English minister in Philadelphia. Even without enemy action the voyage took from thirty to sixty days. Passengers of the well-to-do classes paid about thirty guineas but provided their own bedding and, of course, supplemented their food. Games, reading, and writing might pass the time, if sickness allowed. But the less than a dozen cabin occupants were bored enough with the trip and each other before they saw the wooded shores of the Delaware, the harbor at Boston, or Sandy Hook off New York. Liancourt, Weld, and Moreau all describe the health regulations necessitated by yellow fever enforced at Fort Mifflin. James Skey, one of the Russell party, came in at Newcastle because of the same disease, and William Priest at Woodbury from Gloucester Point. Wansey landed at Boston, Priestley at New York. All were delighted to be once more on land.10

Most travellers first found lodging and then looked up friends or persons to whom they had letters of introduction. Costa went to City Tavern on the west side of Second Street between Chestnut and Walnut. Twining was met by a business connection, offered a bed and was surprised when he entered the curtained enclosure to find he had as companion one of the officers from his boat. The Priestleys were famous. After settling with the port authorities and reaching Mrs. Loring’s boarding house on the Battery with its delightful views of New York waterways, they


10 Voyage and entry, examples only—Wansey, 1-37, 249-254; Weld, I, 1-20; Twining, 22-29; Priestley, *Works II*, 244-245, 279, 375; Wansey, 91 on Priestley and protection: see Jeyes, *The Russells*, 221-222.
found themselves the centre of admiring attentions. Manhattan remained a very pleasant memory with the doctor. This too was the town Weld preferred above all the rest, and a number of others agreed with him.11

Only the worst of sea voyages can have seemed less comfortable to travellers as they made their way over the highways of America. Priestley wrote his friends that outside of the turnpike and the road in from New York, there were no made roads in Pennsylvania. Weld found those of Maryland appalling, and he had his adventures even travelling on the main route between Baltimore and Philadelphia. It was not always easy to tell where the path lay when it wound through the trees. Ruts were so deep that they were dangerous. Holes were mended, if at all, with branches. Near Elkton, Weld discovered that the stage driver began to call out to the passengers to lean out of the vehicle first on one and then on the other side to prevent upsets. "Now Gentlemen to the right," he would cry upon which they all stretched their bodies out to balance on their side; "Now Gentlemen to the left" and so on. Weld provided a picture of a stagecoach or wagon drawn by four horses with benches inside to accommodate twelve passengers who faced each other. No seat was comfortable, but Costa remarked that the worst was that by the driver. Loose leather curtains did little to keep out the elements. Experienced Americans, when travelling, wrapped themselves up elaborately against the weather.12

In some parts of the country horseback riding or walking was obligatory since there were no stages. Liancourt and his friend Guillemand rode with a mounted servant and a fourth nag to carry their baggage. Judge Hill, an American who went on a trip in 1799 from New Jersey to Northumberland, took his gear in two saddle-bags: two silk neckties, three pocket handkerchiefs, two shirts, two nankeen waistcoats, two coats, three trousers and two pairs of shoes, two razors, a watch, and a chip hat for the summer sunshine. Weld, who was perhaps the most adventurous traveller, tried stage, horseback, walking, and canoe but he felt that the company of two Englishmen he met with during his stay

11 Wansey, 261-283; Priestley, Works II, 234-246, 263; Weld, II, 375.
12 Wansey lists stages, 176-167; Priestley, Works II, 269, 332; Weld I. picture facing 27 shows wagon, 31-33, roads and bridges, 38, quotations: Twining, 96; Costa, 106; Cooper, 39-47, plans for roads—a rather optimistic account.
was very welcome; going alone was both unpleasant and unwise. He found too little water when he tried to canoe down the Susquehanna from Tyoga Creek near Bath, lost his baggage, and had real difficulty in finishing his trip southwards. Ice in winter also impeded the use of that river for passengers or freight. If the use of waterways was often difficult the crossing of large and small rivers alike often proved perilous. The Priestleys narrowly escaped a serious ducking when summer rains flooded the waters of creeks between Hamburg and Sunbury. When the Chesapeake was frozen, passage was easy, and when free of ice, the ferry was adequate, but when ice was partial and great lumps of it strewed the water, the ferrymen and their charges suffered cold, delay, and constant danger of drowning. Experienced Baltimoreans, it was remarked, fortified themselves at breakfast on chilly mornings before the crossing with a concoction of hot rum, milk, sugar, and eggs. Sleds drawn by two horses were used in winter but more for pleasure in and near the towns than for longer journeys. Sledding was a favorite sport with Philadelphians who streamed out to take advantage of suitable weather. The ladies in particular were said to be mad about the fun.15

With few exceptions, accommodations were bad. Two farmers, White and McAlister, whose lands lay between Northumberland and Harrisburg, evidently gave the passersby good food and kind treatment. Bethlehem had one of the best hotels in the country. It was run by Germans. At Lancaster, which had two inns, the Swan was praised. In Philadelphia, the Francis Hotel, the rendezvous of southern congressmen, was good, and Oellers Hotel, near the State House, was noted for well run assemblies and for the company who enjoyed its conveniences. The City Tavern was a noted drinking place, and, for a different kind of entertainment, there was a house near Grey’s ferry where sweets and syllabubs were offered for a reasonable price. On the whole there was little to praise. The London Hotel on Dock Street was bug-infested as too was Wansey’s first accommodation in Boston where he landed.

15 Thomas Hill, “A Journey on Horseback in 1799,” PMHB, XIV (1890), 189-198; Weld, I, 256-257, on advantages of companions; II, 338-340, on canoeing; Priest, 20-21, 46-48; Costa, 76; Cooper, 108-109, on alternates to roads; MS letters from Mary Priestley to her brother (Warrington MS, No. 40), and from Joseph to John Vaughan, in Dreer Collection, HSP, describe their adventures on the roads.
Few inns changed linen with any frequency. Tavern and whiskey houses in country districts were filthy and deficient in even elementary comforts for man and beast. Horses seem to have been neglected and the wayside taverns seldom stabled them or provided for rubbing down. Market or High Street in Philadelphia stank because of the habit of frugal Pennsylvanians in tethering their animals at the side to save the expense of stabling elsewhere.

Mine host was as often as not a colonel or captain whose title came from the Revolutionary wars, but the titled seem to have been but little more agreeable than untitled landlords. Manners and courtesy were lacking. Bills were presented in simple total with no possibility of bargaining. Money could buy neither cleanliness nor privacy. Even in larger hotels there was no sitting accommodation but the dining room. Bedrooms could but seldom be secured without strange bedfellows—almost literally bedfellows indeed, since the beds were so close together there was scarcely room to walk between them, and as many were crowded in as the room would hold. You were fortunate if you and a chosen companion could be alone at night. William Bakewell, travelling to Philadelphia via Middletown and Lancaster, got into a violent argument with a Calvinist from Carlisle over the character of his friend and master, Dr. Priestley. At night in the inn at Lancaster, the contenders found themselves bedded side by side and altercations continued to prevent their rest.

Food was sometimes scarce in the backcountry and even bread was hard to obtain. Often the only vegetable was turnip, and fruit, like peaches, if available, was unripe. Normal fare was salt meat and fish with coarse bread, whiskey, coffee, or tea. Meals were more varied at one or two exceptional farms. In the city guests were certainly much more plentifully served. Breakfast in Philadelphia, from eight to nine in the morning, consisted of broiled fowls, bacon, ham, salt shad, eggs, bread, tea, and coffee. Dinner at two consisted of boiled vegetables, prodigious quantities of

Cooper, 119, 122; Weld, I, 28, 41-42; II, 359; Cazenove, 23, 72; Wansky, 110-111, 131-134; Twining, 31-35.
Weld, I, 115-116; Brissot, 315; Liancourt, II, 387.
Cooper, 111; Weld, I, 28, 102; Bakewell, 564-565; Russell, 196; MS letter from Priestley to Vaughan, Amer. Philos. Soc., MSS P. B. 931, 7, 21. July, 1794, on the advantages of even a wagon over accommodations in the country.
meat, game, fowl, and fish, with pudding and perhaps fruit to follow. Besides meats common in Europe, venison, raccoon, possum, and squirrel were eaten. Coleslaw was common and Philadelphians were crazy about oysters, often eating them as they walked about the streets. Tea at six or seven in the evening was served in inns by the landlady and in private houses by the hostess. Besides the hot beverages, meats, relishes, cheese, crackers, and hung beef might appear. Priest commented that Americans ate meat three times a day and in greater quantity than even those famous carnivores, the English. The Priestleys complained that little fresh food was eaten and they made every effort to obtain it for themselves. French food was available in certain taverns in Philadelphia. At parties in the homes of the wealthy, ice and other delicacies were served, silver and good china displayed, and the amenities observed. Elsewhere food was eaten quickly and with little pretense to delicacy.\textsuperscript{17}

In some places wine was available but whiskey and porter were the ordinary drinks, as well as tea and coffee. Drunkenness was common though its extent was disputed. The building of a log cabin might occasion a bibulous "frolic" among the neighbors who had helped. The liquor, for which a recipe was given by Cooper, cost less than a dollar a gallon. Indians took hard liquor with disastrous results and probably too much for their own good was taken with the heavy afternoon meal by white Americans.\textsuperscript{18}

If landlords were rude, servants were impossible. Only in the South, where Negro slaves commonly performed all menial duties, was anything like service obtainable. White servants were scarce and not very good when secured. Immigrants might start to earn a living in service but were determined to show their independence. Bakewell superintended the Dutch and Irish servants in the Priestley's house at Northumberland, and found the stiffness of one as difficult to moderate as the violence of the other. Even with them, Mrs. Priestley was obliged to do much more than she had done in England. Pretty well all the visitors complain of the

\textsuperscript{17} Priest, 32-34, comprehensive account of food, and Moreau, 286-288; Priestley, \textit{Works II}, 308-309; Liancourt, I, 62-63; Wansey, 40, 154, 200; Twining who seems to have liked buckwheat cakes made by Mrs. Francis, 35, but see his story about pork, 124.

\textsuperscript{18} Cooper, 120-123, a recipe for whiskey; Liancourt, I, 67; Weld, II, 323. Moreau and Priest both suggest rather copious drinking at the noon meal.
lack of manners among the lower classes. Some of the trouble was no doubt due to the absence of that respectful behavior which the Europeans expected, some to the conviction of workers that in America it was unnecessary to kowtow to anyone. A few of our reporters enjoyed the easy ways of the road when driver and passengers ate and talked together. They detected the many means of bettering himself open to the artisan and manual laborer. Those who "lived on the labor of others," like Dr. Priestley, found life without cheap and plentiful service more difficult in the new than the old world. 19

The age of the great naturalists was immensely interested in American flora, fauna, and scenery. Even the non-scientific traveller noticed novelties along the way. Beavers attracted fascinated attention and Wansey carried home with him (with unfortunate fatalities on the voyage) a flying squirrel, a tortoise, and partridges which he hoped to breed. Of course, as a good clothier he observed sheep and found them less numerous as well as smaller than he had expected. Americans ate more pork than mutton, indeed served pork three times in one meal as an angry Frenchman discovered. Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth of Hartford, Connecticut (1743-1804), whose acquaintance Wansey made, in turn introduced the Wiltshire man to President Washington. Both gentlemen were given literature on sheepbreeding by the clothier. Priest and Weld were sportsmen. They naturally observed fish like the catfish, and the fact that the Quakers would not allow Sunday sports. They described bears, deer, squirrels and coon, and Weld notes, with almost lyrical pleasure, the canvas-back duck. 20

Insects were the subject of many commentaries. Wansey was frightened by fireflies, expecting them to ignite nearby inflammables. The hessian fly was a pest and mosquitoes in size and frequency were not popular novelties. Priest, the musician, was most eloquent on the summer symphony so familiar to Americans, though the rest also remark on the deep-voiced old frogs and shriller youngsters, and toads who drowned out all other sounds with their noises. "I confess," wrote Priest, "the first frog concert I heard

19 Bakewell, 622; Weld, I, 29-31, and 206, where he has a good word for Virginians: Liancourt, II, 393; Russell, 186, 212; Priestley, Works II, 431, but cf. 301, 356, 496; Priest, 22-24; Cooper, 66-67.

in America was so much beyond anything I could conceive of the
powers of these musicians that I was truly astonished. This per-
formance was al fresco and took place the night of the 18th instant
in a large swamp where there were at least ten thousand per-
formers; and I really believe no two exactly in the same pitch,
if the octave can possibly admit of so many divisions or shades
of semitones. . . . They stay out of tune to a nicety. The tree-frogs
or toads were most beautiful, the bull-frogs large a foot and as
sonorous as sows.”

By 1794 the flowering trees were famous. Wansey took home
with him seeds of accacia, magnolia, and tulip. Sugar maples, chest-
nuts, gums, mulberries, hickories, and oaks were noticed. Cooper
thought the trees surprisingly small in the Susquehanna area. 
Priest told of the rapid growth of gum trees. This fertility may
in part account for the reckless deforestation. Priest believed “the
Americans conceive their forests to be inexhaustible. My landlord
this day cut down thirty-two young cedars to make a pig pen.”
DeNoailles commented that Americans seemed to have “an inborn
aversion to trees.” Weld reported felling of every tree near
Wadsworth’s house and deduced that Americans were “totally
death to the beauties of nature”; since there were so many trees,
“the eyes of the people is become satiated with them. . . . They
are looked on as a nuisance.”

Flowers of the field attracted almost no attention at all from
the travellers noted here. The Russell daughters remarked a few
flowering plants but the wealth of spring beauty, summer magnif-
icence, and fall meadowlands, seems to have escaped notice alto-
gether. The neglect of garden flowers was reported frequently.
The grounds of the Chews, Nicholsons, Hamiltons were admired
around the villas for which the Schuylkill was famous, but culti-
vated lands were in general less attractive than the scenery. Once
past the swamps of Philadelphia (where the croaking gentlemen
held undisputed sway almost in the city itself), the country be-
came lovely. West and north enchanting landscapes delighted the
traveller, and the Priestleys never tired of the views on the Susque-

[21] Wansey, 98, 103, 155; Weld, I, 197; Moreau, 349; Priest, 49-50.
[22] Wansey, 64, 250; Cooper, 112; Priest, 11; de Noailles quoted in Murray
(n. 5), 30; Weld, I, 39-40; II, 328.
[23] Cazenove on lack of flowers, 83. 96; Russell, 169-170.
hanna. The Genesee valley and the mountainous country of Maryland and Virginia drew excited appreciation.24

Farmers neither planted flowers near their houses nor tidied their holdings. Fields came right up to the small farmhouses and even orchards were few and far between. Vegetables and small fruits were not much grown. Grain was the chief agricultural commodity. So soon as the land was cleared of trees, corn, wheat, or rye was sown and reaped that same autumn. Four days of work provided a living but no elegance. Clearing meant only cutting the trees off to within a few feet of the ground wherever most convenient for the woodman’s axe. Labor was too valuable to spare and the stumps took from seven to ten years to rot in some places, less in others. Maize or corn stalks were left in the winter fields. The general effect of stubble and stump, and the bizarre zigzag fences was unsightly and disorderly to European eyes. Weld felt the American farmer was too fond of money even to provide himself with a more agreeable way of life and thought the English tenant farmers of East Anglia better off.25

The settlers were mobile and this partly accounts for careless farming. The English and Irish came, cleared some fields, built a cabin and reaped a few crops, only to move in a few years to fresh forest and new efforts. The Germans and Dutch stayed in the same place and farmed more neatly and industriously. Round Lancaster, Reading, and Hamburg their farms were highly praised. McAlister’s hospitable behaviour has been noticed, his excellent agricultural skill was also highly esteemed. Icehouse, smoke-house, fish pond, mill, distillery, and a delightful garden formed part of his estate. Fertilizer and rotation of crops were utilized and Cooper, who described the place in great detail, perhaps misled some readers into believing the Scots’ exceptional achievement could be theirs. In 1788, Brissot praised a French viticulturalist near Philadelphia. Ten years later Liancourt found deGaux bankrupt and thought he never had been as good as described, but reserved his commendations for the Chew holdings. The French

24 Twining, 62-64, 76; Wansey, 156; Costa, 75-74; Liancourt, I, 69-73; Priest, 52-57; Weld, I, 3, 127; II, 327-328, 447-449 for 347-349; Cooper, 103, 105; Villas, Russell, 195; Weld, II, 370-371; Twining, 62, 164.

25 Cooper, 51, 117-118, 123, 138; Priest, 34-42, 44-46; Liancourt, I, 19; Weld, I, 232; Brissot, 330-334; Twining, 75.
of Lycoming County suffered from poor information available to them. Milliners found the wilderness heartbreaking and Azilum was never a success. Yet for the European farmhands, hired men, being hard to find, wages were good, and whiskey and victuals were added to them. Industrious settlers for the most part worked by themselves with occasional neighborly assistance and could become property owners instead of wage earners. Production per acre was less than the European best, but more per man, and though conditions varied greatly it was still easier to sustain life by the labor of one's hands.26

The log cabin must be mentioned but needs no elaboration. The voyagers admired the speed of its construction, the neatness and economy of the arrangements. Some had stone foundations, others beaten floors, from one to four rooms separated by passages and often with separate entrances from the outside. Harry Priestley, the youngest of the family, lived in one and he found it snug and weather proof. On the other hand, farmhouses were not only poorly furnished but not, it was thought, very comfortable.27

The climate, as always, was a controversial topic. Priestley loved the mountain brightness of the Susquehanna, found the cold less trying, the heat seldom excessive, even if summer rains could be disconcertingly violent. But the good doctor came to dread the winter, as town-dwellers like Moreau feared the four months of city heat in Philadelphia, and its accompaniment of frequent thunder and lightning. Already those who could, moved out of town during the hot weather. Brissot and Cooper reported optimistically about health in the new world, but by the time the yellow fever had taken its toll, observers began to blame the weather for the poor health and early senility of Americans. Water pollution and heat were both blamed for the spread of infections. The habit of drinking hot beverages was thought to be responsible for the appallingly bad teeth of the women who seldom kept teeth or looks after twenty, though at twelve they were said to be charming. In this decade, at least, it is almost impossible to say

26 Brissot, 249-252; Liancourt, I, 109; II, 29-35, 166; Weld, I, 123, 126; Cazenove, 29-39, 81; Russell, 196-197.
27 Liancourt, I, 107; II, 23; Wansey, 171-172, 257; Cooper, 113; Priestley in Warrington MSS.
if Americans lived as long or longer than Europeans. The fever confuses the issue.28

Wansey commented on the fecundity of American women, but what is certain is that in the middle states the newcomers equalled if they did not outnumber the native Americans. In Philadelphia, one in ten was said to be French. Shops in the city had signs in both German script and English. Round Hamburg and Reading, the traveller Russell noted, he needed some German to make himself understood. The Holland Land Company was active and Dutchmen were developing farm lands near Lancaster. The melting pot had not completed its work. Scots, Irish, and English mingled freely, with the last the least popular. In the country they were restless, in the city from their ranks came many of the school masters and clergy. Germans kept to themselves, not much interested in politics nor in others of their new countrymen.29

Slavery was said to be dying out in Pennsylvania and the Negro population was small. Yet segregation was practised; white and black servants could not eat together. Nor did white and black worship together, and there was a colored church in Philadelphia. As Priest came north from the Chesapeake he met a melancholy procession of Negroes following a coffin, and reflected that they might find comfort in the thought that Heaven made no such distinctions as they bore here. Moreau devoted a whole section of his notes to slavery and Negroes, and asserted that promise of liberty had not been kept. This statement seems to rest on a fairly common misunderstanding of a clause in the constitution about 1808, a date before which no change could be made in the voting laws of certain states.20

Indians seemed both romantic and savage. Chateaubriand’s vivid and not always accurate impressions pervaded his work and those of his admirers. Liancourt sympathized with them. Weld found them helpful. Drunkenness among them caused comment. Volney in A View suggested that scholars should study Indian dialects

28 Priestley, Works II, 267, 289, 447, 499; Weld, I, 96-97, 255-257; Wansey, 83, 79; Priest, 136-141; Liancourt, II, 651; Cooper, 16-17; Moreau, 287-288; 352. On population and health inter alia, see Liancourt, I, 384, 645: Brissot, 350-357; Cooper, 177; More, 127; Moreau, 286-288, 302-312; Costa, 98; Volney, 223; Weld, I, 22.

29 Wansey, 184-185, 186, 201; Russell, 196-197.

30 Moreau, 324-326, 326-334; Liancourt, II, 644; Priest, 19; Wansey, 52. 56-57, 100-101; Brissot, 262-300; Priestley, Works II, 315.
and was scoffed at for the idea by his translator, C. B. Brown, who said the idea was as anachronistic as the suggestion to hold Parliament at Stonehenge, fabled early seat of the ancient Moot. Priest, as he traversed the battlefields near Paoli and the Brandywine, thought that the English could well have followed Indian methods of warfare, particularly their slow deliberate firing. He was much interested in the Cherokee. Both he and Priestley were told stories of white Americans whose ventures had failed, and who had taken to the woods where they lived like savages in wigwams of boughs and snuggled for warmth in the still-warm and bloody skins of the animals they had hunted. Wansey's Indian experience is wistful. He saw a mission of the Cherokee lodged at the west end of High Street in Philadelphia, not far from the presidential mansion. Their leaders were Flamingo and Double Head. "I intended," he wrote, "to have got acquainted with them, and informed them I was a subject of the great King George, on the other side of the great waters, and that I wished to smoke a calumet with them, and to have procured a belt of wampum," but when he heard, he continued, "that Flamingo (the tall stout fellow I saw) had boasted publicly that he had in his time shed enough human blood to swim in, I was so much shocked, that I never wished to see them any more."

Sights and sound included country towns and the bright colors of houses in some areas. In Pennsylvania, Lancaster was a thriving settlement, and the rifle made there was enthusiastically described by Isaac Weld. Priest tells some tall stories about marksmanship and also about the summer audiences of the theater there who removed all but loose trousers as they watched the show. Reading was a town of churches, one or two as fine as any in the land, and round it were excellent farms both German and English-American. Downingtown on the route to Lancaster was as yet but a tiny cluster of houses. Ephrata, between Reading and Lancaster, already was famous for its cloisters. Below Bethlehem, the Moravian settlement never failed to interest. Colbert left sketches (of Sunbury and Northumberland. The latter, which he preferred, developed a postal service, a stage, and built an assembly hall and market during the ten years Priestley lived there. To the south,

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[31] Translator's preface to Volney's *View*; Priest, 42-43; 97-127; Priestley, *Works II*, 301; Liancourt, 1, 44; Weld, II, 224-296, 323; Wansey, 167.
Wilmington provided Costa with an amusing story about the use of its female academy as a refuge for girls whose situation forced them to leave home. Travellers visited nearby mills on the Brandywine, now memorialized at Hagley, and admired the scenery at Havre de Grace. Newcastle, a lively port on the Delaware, and Bristol, a long straggling village to the north of Philadelphia on the route towards Trenton, Princeton, and Newark, both drew comment. Liancourt highly praised Norristown for low taxes, neatness, and agreeable surroundings. Low or nonexistent taxes were impressive to all visitors; so was the speed with which settlements grew from clearings to centers of urban life.\(^2\)

For most of these years Philadelphia was the most important city with more to interest than Baltimore and as much as Boston. New York, as noticed, was ahead of it both commercially and in the favor of the travellers. These nevertheless seemed to have spent more time in the Quaker city, according to the Russells a "vortex of luxury and dissipation," even compared with some European cities. Costs were high, sometimes ten times those of the surrounding country. Bankruptcies were frequent, speculation rife. Immorality, if Moreau is to be believed, was enormous and houses of prostitution numerous. The citizens were not only wicked but cruel, and capable of watching a skater drown and continuing their pleasure without sympathy. Weld thought them inhospitable and reserved, conceited, and unmannering. In spite of the liberality of Quakers and Episcopalians, intolerance amongst the now more numerous Presbyterians was very great. Moreover the fever gave the city a bad name for unhealthiness to which the marshes nearby may have contributed.

Instead of spreading between the rivers, Philadelphia had run up and down the Delaware and there were many vacant lots everywhere. Opinion differed about its appearance as well as its character. Townhouses were now being constructed of the famous local brick. Public buildings included a museum, a library, the State House (Independence Hall) with surrounding erections for

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various purposes, and the charming gardens laid out by Samuel Vaughan. Most houses were two storied, had benches in front of them, and fences between these and the street. Pumps were at frequent intervals. Everyone visited the hospital, the bettering house, and the Walnut Street prison, and described them in tiresome detail. A real attempt had been made to combine Quaker ideas on penology with those of the great Italian, Beccaria. Capital punishment had been greatly reduced. Remedial treatment or rehabilitation of prisoners was tried. Criminals were separated from each other and were made to labor usefully to support themselves.

The old wooden theater was abandoned but the new Chestnut Street House gave farces and plays. Wansey read the line painted on the wall, "the eagle suffers little birds to sing," a joking reference to the lifting of the old Quaker ban on such performances. The scenery he recognized as coming from Lord Barrymore's house at Wargrave. Peale's museum of stuffed animals and portraits, the latter deservedly more popular, was always visited. Shops were plentiful. Anything could be bought at a price. Famous booksellers—Richard Bache (Franklin's son-in-law), Mathew Carey from Dublin, and Thomas Dobson—provided meeting places for the literati and a good many useful services with respect to baggage and mail. Priestley's black trunk, for example, was expected at Carey's. Moreau's shop did for the French what these did for the English. Music was neither plentiful nor good, but dancing at the assemblies and in private houses was much enjoyed and cards were popular. Across the river Bartram's gardens provided a mecca for naturalists, though more than one found the farmer lacking in grace and showmanship.

Great luxury and imported furniture, glass, and silver could be found within some of the more pretentious dwellings. The Binghams had lyre-backed chairs from London, yellow damask curtains, and an enclosed garden courtyard where lemons and oranges grew. But on the whole, housefurnishing was plain without rugs, cur-

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[Footnotes]


34 Liancourt on the prison is standard, and see Travels, II, 337. Weld, I, 13-19; Costa, 99-104. Also Wansey, Twining and others.

35 Wansey, 42, 127, 134; Weld, I, 23-24; Costa, 81, 94.
tains, or decoration. The rich had servants and observed some ceremony, but generally manners were simple. Clothes could be gay. Vehicles of all sorts crowded the streets and the ladies, Priest noticed, preferred driving to walking. By the river there was dirt and confusion, but there were paved streets and pleasant views around the State House. Everywhere were churches, though it has been said that the proportion to population was not high. Costa said godlessness was apparent and Priestley denounced widespread infidelity. Quakers were "gay," or "hickory" and strict. Meetinghouse was less important now than Episcopalian and Presbyterian churches. The Swedish church was on the river. A Catholic church was on Willing's alley where services were occasionally held in German. Two kinds of Lutherans and Baptists had chapels and there was a synagogue on Cherry Street. The Negro chapel has been mentioned. All were free to worship as they pleased and enjoyed full civil rights, but there was some anti-Catholic feeling. The Unitarians were denounced as atheists by Calvinist preachers. In spite of abuse, a small group of newcomers, among whom John Vaughan was the most famous, was beginning to gather regularly, at length becoming the first Unitarian church in the city.

Different social groups intermingled, though the French had their coteries, and the English and Scots theirs. The well-to-do and the prominent dined together and met at the taverns and amusement places. Willings, Morrices, and Bingham entertained the visiting French and English. The Russells, Volneys, Noailles, Wansey, Twining, Cazenove all met at social gatherings. Liancourt saw most of the Chews and would, had he stayed, have settled in Germantown, briefly considered also by the Priestleys. Moreau discovered a certain amount of snobbism and disliked evening teas, the popular form of entertainment. John Vaughan, himself a member of the American Philosophical Society, explained to the bookseller that a shopkeeper could not attend the public assembly on Washington's birthday. Weld intensely disliked Philadelphia and found its society tedious. "It is no unusual thing, in the genteel...
sembled and seated round a room, without partaking of any other amusement than what arises from conversation, most frequently in whispers, that passes between the two persons who are seated next to each other. The party meets between six and seven in the evening; tea is served with much form; and at ten, by which time most of the company are wearied with having remained so long stationary, they return to their own homes.” Twining’s impression sharply contrasts with this. Americans had more spirits and vivacity than the English, and spoke “with the volubility of a Frenchman.” According to Wansey, they also used many words unfamiliar to England—lengthy for long, extinguished, for extinction, and so on.38

Intellectual life was active. Adams and Jefferson, important in the government, encouraged scholarship. The American Philosophical Society, of which Rittenhouse was president in 1794 and Jefferson in 1797, as well as the recently reconstituted University, provided conversational pleasures for the intelligentsia. The Society feted Priestley on his seventieth birthday. Benjamin Rush, Caspar Wistar, John Ewing, and John Andrew entertained the chemist on his visits from Northumberland. Volney formed a wide acquaintance in the city. While Paris before the Revolution, London, and other capitals might perhaps boast more philosophers, Philadelphia had a good claim to be the Athens of the West, and could offer much to those with the entrée to its society.39

Political life provided a diversification of interest, especially while Congress still met in the State House. Wansey attended a debate and was much gratified to hear Lee of Virginia defend England against the strictures of Madison. Moreau also described sessions, and Twining heard Gallatin, an anti-federalist, on the budget in the spring of 1796. Visitors mingled with congressmen in the City Tavern or at nearby dining rooms, over one of which John Adams presided, and soon distinguished between federalist and anti-federalist. Wansey thought that the two parties “as there ever will be and ever should be, in a free state” would be the foundation of greatness and keep alive a degree of public spirit. Congressmen could be questioned and access to Washington himself, and

38 Weld, I, 22, on “Tristesse”; Moreau, 277-288; Twining, 117; Wansey, 214.
after him Adams, was not difficult either at the levees or on a private call. Travellers seem to have taken full advantage of this freedom and carefully reported their impressions. Priestley bade the great president farewell in 1797 and noticed a certain sadness. This jibes with the report of a modern scholar that Washington, in spite of an announced preference for private life, always enjoyed good health in active service and only faded in retirement.40

Among the poorer classes, the aggressiveness already remarked among the servants was often amusing in its manifestations. Russell saw a near accident caused by the refusal of a group out for a drive to give way to another on a narrow causeway. Priest told about a blacksmith who set up his coach with a coat of arms on a panel—an anvil with two naked arms raised in the act of striking and the motto “By this I got ye.” This, he reflected, was the inevitable consequence of liberty and equality: government forms manners. Priestley discovered the American poor laws resembled those of England and imposed a similar burden, but he also remarked on the absence of beggars and the small proportion of the destitute. Criminals were rare; the streets were safe; the inhabitants of the famous prison mainly immigrants and prostitutes. Even these last, Priest said, were neat, clean, and modest, having by no means given over the idea of a respectable husband, and often eventually making excellent wives. There were opportunities opening up all the time. The community was often ruthless and uncouth but cheerful, bustling, and confident.41

Were the visitors anxious to settle, or if they had already come prepared for that, to stay once the land was explored? There were disappointments. In spite of the friends they made, including Washington himself, the Russells were eager to leave. Weld urged would-be immigrants to try Canada, and he never wished to return to the States. Liancourt thought he would find city life dull and lacking in amenities, but that life near his beloved Chews with his family about him would offer prospects of happiness. Priestley died in Northumberland, happy, he said, to have lived under the administration of Jefferson, and enormously confident of the future of the country and the virtues of its constitution. He was homesick,

41 Priest, 23-24, 28; Russell, 211-212; Priestley MS letter Warrington.
he missed the Lunar society of Birmingham and the conversation of the Honest Whigs in London, but he, like Brissot earlier, saw in the agrarian republic, a security which the urban communities of Europe did not offer. He fought commercial expansion in the brief political tracts which rose out of his American experience. The lexicographer, Noah Webster, rebuked him for this and said, more accurately than the chemist, that Americans liked commerce and would increasingly pursue it. The thoughtful and perceptive Twining ended his diaries with judicious reflections on America, defending the nation against some of the critics like Volney whose irascibility he thought ungrateful and unprovoked.

This was a great and fertile country with resources being developed with startling rapidity. The leisured and professional classes might encounter some deficiencies and difficulties, but opportunities were opening up. These for the artisan and working man were literally endless in extent, and they were able to "enjoy a life of happy mediocrity, between riches and poverty, perhaps the most enviable of all situations." Never before had a life of comfort and plenty seemed more possible for classes who had formerly no hope of a brighter future without riot, revolution, and strife, themselves productive sometimes of even worse conditions. What is more, the nation had already produced great men and abounded in genius, energy, and enterprise. A Washington, a Franklin, a Jefferson produced in the country's infant years led sensible persons to ignore poor roads, rough wagons, and rude ill-spoken shopkeepers and landlords. Imperfections would disappear and models commanding imitation would replace them. Posterity will be grateful, wrote Wansey, to mark the beginning of an Empire, not founded on conquest but on the sober profession and dictates of reason, totally "disencumbered of the feudal system, which has cramped the genius of mankind for more than seven hundred years past."42

42 Wansey, 10, 12-13; Liancourt, I, 76-77; II, 679; Weld, II, 376; Russell, 267, 204-205; Twining, 166-167; Brissot, 482; Priestley in Maxims (1798) answered by Noah Webster in Ten Letters to Doctor Priestley (New Haven, 1800), 21; Priest, 45.