

# Elizabeth Drinker: Quaker Values and Federalist Support in the 1790s

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At the conclusion of peace between the United States and Britain in 1783, Elizabeth Drinker made a prediction for the succeeding years: "this day was printed the King's speech to both Houses of Parliment Decr. 5<sup>th</sup> – bespeaking peace, and Independance; I fear they will not long agreed together with us."<sup>1</sup> Her prediction held true throughout the following decade and beyond. During the 1790s Drinker repeatedly expressed her desire for a "well-regulated government," with leaders who would bring peace and order to society. She was frequently disappointed.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Drinker was a woman deeply concerned about, and intimately involved with, the politics of her time. No significant event passed without comment in her diary. Through a combination of her observation, conversation, and reading, we can piece together the political ideology of this extraordinary woman. With the experiences of the Revolution fresh in her consciousness, Drinker articulated a Federalist interpretation of government and the construction of a civil society.

What Drinker sought, but never experienced, was a peaceful, well-regulated society devoid of contention, factions, and crowd actions. Instead, what she and other Americans witnessed in the 1790s was a period of turbulence both at home and abroad. They lived under a democratic government in its infancy, still undergoing change and development. This process was rarely a quiet one. And in Philadelphia, the capital city, the political contentiousness between Federalists and Democratic Republicans generated a great deal of public activity, accompanied in many instances by noise and occasional violence.

1. Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, 3 vols. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), Feb. 13, 1783, I:409. (Henceforth cited as *Drinker Diary*).

2. *Drinker Diary*, July 4, 1795, I:699. It would have been instructive to learn how Drinker responded to the events of the late 1780s, especially during the ratification period. Unfortunately her diaries for 1787 and 1788 are lost, and diary entries from 1789 until 1792 concern family matters rather than politics.

At the end of the eighteenth century Philadelphia was the "metropolis of America": the country's largest city and a major commercial center. As the nation's capital from 1791 until 1800, it was the political arena par excellence for experiencing the conflicts between Federalists and Democratic Republicans. Philadelphia's citizens witnessed firsthand the workings of government, the men involved with it, and the partisanship that drew upon the international events of the day. The city was a magnet for anyone interested in government and politics; American men and women of all political views, international representatives of the major combatants in Europe's conflicts, and a large group of European and Caribbean refugees all resided there in the two decades following the American Revolution. Hence, Elizabeth Drinker witnessed events at the center of national power.<sup>3</sup>

Drinker closely followed the political events that unfolded in the capital. Although she did not participate in public ceremonies or celebrations as other women in the capital chose to do during the 1790s, Drinker was politically aware. She heard of events from her friends and family members, and she avidly read the newspapers, books, and pamphlets. Sometimes she did witness events for herself. Close to the harbor, the Drinker house was in a busy part of the city, and travelers going in and out of the town generally passed by Drinkers' front door. So Drinker followed newspaper reports, listened to what friends and servants brought in from the streets, and saw with her own eyes bits and pieces of the parades, protests, and celebrations of the 1790s.

Because of Henry Drinker's prominence in the city, not only as a Quaker, but also as a merchant, men of political and financial importance spent time in the Drinkers' parlor. They included Aaron Burr, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering, Tench Cox, assistant Secretary of the Treasury, and even Great Britain's first minister to the United States, George Hammond. Others who called included Pennsylvania state legislator John Canan (who had financial ties to Henry Drinker). Federalists, like Judge Cooper from Ossego, former North Carolina Governor Alexander Martin, and John Allen, from Connecticut, visited the Drinkers. But so did Democratic Republican congressmen Anthony

3. Judith Sargent Murray, letter to her parents, June 12, 1790. *From Gloucester to Philadelphia in 1790, Observations, Anecdotes, and Thoughts from the Eighteenth Century Letters of Judith Sargent Murray*, ed. Bonnie Hurd Smith (Cambridge, Mass: Judith Sargent Murray Society, 1998), 106. The best account of popular political activities in the capital is Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

New, from Virginia, and Demsy Burges, from North Carolina. Thus for a woman with avid interests in the political world, and keen concerns about the order and structure of society, she was well-placed to observe, gather information, and comment.<sup>4</sup>

A more personal way of hearing of political controversies and activities came through Drinker's oldest son, William. He was a bachelor, of chronic ill-health, who lived with his parents throughout his adulthood. He spent much of his time visiting friends, observing activity in the city streets, and sitting for hours (sometimes missing his dinner) in the gallery of the House of Representatives. Though women attended the gallery, Elizabeth Drinker was frequently too infirm, by the 1790s, for extended forays out of the house. As his mother's eyes and ears, William witnessed the fight between Griswold and Lyon, he listened to arguments for and against appropriating funds for the Jay treaty, and he watched John Randolph's controversy. William reported to Drinker all these political events. Her accounts of William's descriptions were sometimes highly detailed. In 1799 he attended the Philadelphia courts to observe John Fries' treason trial. William described for his mother the prisoner's physical appearance, noting that Fries was "an elderly man."<sup>5</sup> Clearly this political information, including the smallest detail, was important to Drinker.

Much of her knowledge of events was gathered through her reading. This was wide and deep. She read the Federalist newspapers, the *Gazette of the United States*, *Porcupine's Gazette*, and *Dunlap and Claypool's American Daily Advertiser*. She did not read the Democratic Republican paper, Benjamin Franklin Bache's (and later William Duane's) often strident *Aurora*. But she knew of Bache and his politics indirectly through the Federalist press' attacks on him.<sup>6</sup> The pamphlet wars caught her attention as well. The writings of William Cobbett, editor of *Porcupine's Gazette*, and a vigorous opponent of the Democratic Republicans, frequently entertained Drinker. Though she commented that much of what he wrote was "scurrilous," she nonetheless read most of what he published in the United States. Though she objected to the tone of his

4. *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 18, 1794, I:619; March 2, Nov. 5, 1797, II:895, 977; Jan. 12, 13, 1800, II:1265, 1266; May 30, 1796, II:807; Feb. 28, 1795, I:654; March 13, 1792, I:477; Dec. 27, 1796, II:872; Jan. 19, 26, Feb. 23, March 18, April 6, 12, 1797, II:881, 883, 892, 899, 904, 906. Canan was Drinker's Huntingdon County land agent. *Drinker Diary*, Feb. 16, 1795, I:650; April 5, 1797, II:904; Jan. 2, March 28, March 31, July 16, 1798, II:992, 1017, 1054; May 21, 1798, June 18, 1797, II:1036, 932-33.

5. *Drinker Diary*, May 2, 1799, II:1164.

6. She also noted his passing in 1798. *Drinker Diary*, September 13, 14, 1798, II:1083.

writing, she frequently agreed with his sentiments. When Cobbett removed to England in 1800 the Drinkers ordered the complete set of "Peter Porcupine's" writings. Cobbett's enthusiastic pronouncements against the violence, barbarity, and atheism of the French, as well as his constant refrain about the threat of a French invasion of American shores in the late 1790s, dovetailed neatly with Drinker's opinions, as well as her fears.<sup>7</sup>

Drinker made clear her preference for the Federalists, both the men and their policies, in many ways. And she indicated her concerns in regard to many events and individuals in the political sphere. Upon learning the election results in the Pennsylvania governor's race in 1799, for example, Drinker was dismayed that the Democratic Republican candidate, Thomas McKean, had carried the day. As far as Drinker was concerned, "had the real worth and respectability of the voters carried the Election things would have been different."<sup>8</sup> This straightforward political comment was rare in Drinker's journal. She did not frequently write, in so many words, that she approved or disapproved of particular events or opinions. Her comments were usually more circumspect, but identifiable nonetheless. Often she relied on Cobbett, or other public writers to articulate her ideas. For instance when her acquaintance John Allen made a speech in Congress in which he advocated the arming of American ships to prevent French attacks on trading vessels, Drinker let the pundit speak for her: "as Cobbett calls it, an excellent anti-Jacobin speech."<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes she merely expressed what, to her mind, was a popular opinion. After reading Fisher Ames' speech to Congress in support of funding the Jay treaty, Drinker wrote, "This speech is thought by most people, to be excellent — and much to the purpose." Contrary to

7. *Drinker Diary*, March 20, 1795, I:660. William Cobbett, *A Kick for a Bite: or Review Upon Review: with a Critical Essay on the Works of Mrs. Rowson: in A Letter to the Editor, or Editors of the American Monthly Review* (Philadelphia, 1795); *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 27, 28 1801, II:1468. William Cobbett, *Porcupine's Works: Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America ... from the End of the War, in 1783, to the Election of the President, in March, 1801*, 12 vols. (London: Cobbett and Morgan, 1801). She refused to believe the slander hurled at the retreating Peter Porcupine. After reading William T. Palmer's *The Last Confession and Dying Speech of Peter Porcupine, with An Account of his Dissection* (Philadelphia: 1797), she pronounced it "a ridiculous, and scandalous fabrication." *Drinker Diary*, reading list entry for July 26, 1802, II:1608.

8. *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 1, 1799, II:1232.

9. *Drinker Diary*, May 2, 1798, II:1028. *Porcupine's Gazette*, May 2, 1798. See Manning J. Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1953), 141-42.

Drinker's assumption, many of her fellow Philadelphians did not share her opinion. On this occasion, as on many others, Drinker took the liberty of identifying "most people" with those individuals in her social circle who held the Federalist position on various political matters.<sup>10</sup>

Drinker agreed with the contents of particular speeches when they advocated a cause she supported, but she could also separate the message from the messenger. For example, although Edward Rushton published an expostulatory letter to George Washington criticizing him for his slave-ownership, Drinker judged it politically incorrect. Under different circumstances Drinker would have agreed with anti-slavery sentiments. But Rushton's promotion of the cause of abolition was overshadowed by his attack on the President. Drinker saw this as one more volley in the war between Federalists and Democratic Republicans. Rushton's piece was "calculated more for the promotion of Jacobinism than for the real good of G. Washington."<sup>11</sup>

Drinker took her politics seriously, but she was not without a sense of humor. Jefferson's election in 1801 coincided with a decrease in Federalist control of the Pennsylvania legislature. On this occasion Drinker noted that a large shad had been caught in the Delaware River. She mused that this possibly signified "a new order of things in the natural as well as the political world." When Charles Wilson Peale advertised his recently discovered mastodon as the "ninth wonder of the World," Drinker remarked, "I don't recollect hearing of the Eighth wonder, was it Gen. Washington, or Tom Paine."<sup>12</sup> Though she revered the former and laathed the latter, she kept a healthy perspective on the turbulent political atmosphere of her time.

But Drinker could be very somber as well. Because the need for the right kind of political leaders was critical to her, the process of their selection sometimes preoccupied her thoughts and her diary entries. Elections in the 1790s increasingly pitted the Federalists against the

10. *Drinker Diary*, May 22, 1796, II:805. Fisher Ames, *The Speech of Mr Ames, in the House of Representatives of the United States in Committee of the Whole ... in Support of the Following Motion: Resolved, That It Is Expedient to Pass the Laws Necessary to Carry into Effect the Treaty Lately Concluded...* (Philadelphia: John Fenno, 1796). See Samuel F. Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), and James R. Sharp, *American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

11. *Drinker Diary*, June 18, 1797, II:932-33. Edward Rushton, *An Expostulatory Letter to George Washington of Mount Vernon* (Lexington, Ky.: John Bradford, 1797).

12. *Drinker Diary*, Feb. 20, 1802, II:1495. Drinker goes on to say "There is an account in a paper since of a Shad caught in January 93." This suggests that shad were rare in the Delaware River. *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 30, 1801, II:1475. *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, December 30, 1801.

Democratic Republicans. These were clashing ideologies. The Federalists, on the one hand, promoted a limited view of democracy, and the desire for men from the upper classes of America to lead and determine the policies of the country. The Democratic Republicans, on the other hand, supported extensive suffrage, and a broader-based constituency. Hence, both federal and state elections were, for Drinker, "a matter of great moment."<sup>13</sup>

Drinker's primary concern throughout this decade was the increasing evidence of "party spirit" – something she considered to be a disruptive and corrupting influence on the social order. Moreover, Drinker identified leveling tendencies at work in the Democratic Republicans' activities and rhetoric. For example, when Judge Samuel Preston delivered an anti-French, pro-sedition law speech from his bench in 1798, Drinker approved of his sentiments. Yet, she would have "liked it better" if Preston had not aimed so much at "popularity" with his words. But keeping her sense of humor even when dissatisfied, Drinker added, "but I am no *Judge*."<sup>14</sup>

Drinker was also fearful of the increasing level of political violence that party spirit engendered. In 1799 she noted that the gubernatorial candidate's son, objecting to Federalist John Fenno's comments on his father, Thomas McKean, began a fight in the office of Fenno's *United States Gazette*. During Jefferson's presidential campaign, the printer Andrew Brown was, "very ill used and abused in the street, by two men, for something he published in his paper, relative to Jefferson." Drinker remarked, "There is always something in this world to make one uneasy."<sup>15</sup>

As concerned as she was with electing the right men, she did not approve of the methods used to do so by either party. Political elections took center stage in newspapers, pamphlets, speeches, in the streets, and even in Philadelphia's parlors. Drinker asked herself, "how often has the

13. *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 4, 1796, II:858.

14. *Drinker Diary*, June 11, 1800, II:1308. Samuel Preston, *A Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury of Wayne County* (Easton, Pa: Samuel Longcope, 1800).

15. *Drinker Diary*, May 23, 1799, II:1171. Thomas McKean, chief justice of Pennsylvania, was the Democratic Republican candidate for governor in October 1799. See J. Thomas Scharf, and Thompson Westcott, *The History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* 3 vols. (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1884) I: 497. *Drinker Diary*, May 5, 1800, II:1297-98. Brown, editor of the *Philadelphia Gazette and Universal Daily Advertiser*, was beaten by two men on Chestnut Street. An article in his newspaper charged Jefferson with favoring France over the United States, and of flattering criminals in order to get their votes in the presidential election. *Gazette of the United States*, May 6, 1800.

term election been mentioned within this week past in the State of Pennsylvania?" On one occasion she remarked on the "violent party work," going forward. And she wished, as always, that there would be no "mobbing." Elections always brought people out into the streets, and usually occasioned the kind of scene Drinker witnessed in 1798: "Drum and fife, a crowd with lighted candles, a little mob fashion."<sup>16</sup>

Nor was Drinker pleased with the celebrations for victorious candidates, especially if they were Democratic Republicans. When McKean won the governor's race, there were

guns fired, a whole beef roasted, great numbers of Men  
parading through the streets after night with lighted candles  
in their hands, and drums beating &c.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps because of these election activities, Drinker was not unequivocally pleased even when the Federalists won the day:

I do not feel so much delighted by this party getting the better, as I should have felt depress'd had the other side gained the victory. 'tis a favour I trust, that so many turned out.<sup>18</sup>

Drinker had an insider's view of the election process because her own family members were engaged in electioneering. Daughter Sally Downing's husband, Jacob, was especially active on behalf of the Federalists. Drinker also witnessed the Federalists' political maneuvering. When Israel Whelen, a wealthy Quaker merchant, tried for the post of collector of the port, he enlisted his fellow merchants, like Samuel Fisher, as well as family members such as Jacob Downing. These men, in turn, asked Henry Drinker to, "use his interest with Timothy Pickering," in order to procure Whelen the position.<sup>19</sup>

Drinker's husband was active in both state and city politics. Many of his activities concerned Quaker affairs, especially Pennsylvania's negotiations with various Indian representatives. But his other political activities centered on his business interests. In 1799 Henry Drinker helped

16. *Drinker Diary*, Oct. 5, 1799, II:1219. *Drinker Diary*, Feb. 21, 22, 1798, II:1006.

17. *Drinker Diary*, Oct. 28, 1799, II:1230. On October 24th the Democratic Republicans held a celebration in the Spring Garden area of the city. A steer was roasted on an altar to liberty. Scharf and Westcott, *The History of Philadelphia* I: 498.

18. *Drinker Diary*, Feb. 23, 1797, II:892.

19. *Drinker Diary*, June 6, 1798, II:1041. Pickering was Secretary of State in 1798. Richard G. Miller, *Philadelphia — The Federalist City: A Study of Urban Politics, 1789-1801* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1976), 167n.

persuade Governor McKean to sign a bill moving the seat of state government to Lancaster. Elizabeth Drinker noted that this particular piece of legislation had been "hard work to bring about."<sup>20</sup> Though she approved of Henry's efforts in a cause she understood and agreed with, Drinker disapproved of other instances of politicking, especially when Democratic Republicans were doing it. Drinker noted with sarcasm that an argument over the location of a courthouse at Bethany, Pennsylvania, was finally resolved by "our very *judicious* Legislators." A month later when there was news of this incident again, she remarked, "The affair of the Court house is at last concluded, removed from Bethany to Millford - fine Legislators!"<sup>21</sup>

She also believed in the importance of imposing order on those who chose to create disharmony. Hence when she followed the events surrounding the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, she wrote favorably of President Washington's policy. Drinker knew that the militia troops were sent to enforce the laws. She did not see any legitimacy in the back country farmers' protests. To her, they were "insurgents," who created the worst possible circumstances that any nation could undergo: "all wars are dreadful, but those called civil wars, more particularly so."<sup>22</sup>

A number of Quakers, several of them the sons of Drinker's acquaintances, joined McPherson's militia unit, which was organized to suppress the whiskey rioters. Drinker and others lamented the Quakers' involvement. The young men joined the militia despite, as Drinker put it, "the small grief of many of their well-wishers." She knew that "many wives mothers and sisters &c. are left with aching hearts."<sup>23</sup> Drinker's own son, William, had received a draft notice. She noted, perhaps gratefully, that "was he a fighting man, he is at present very unfit for the business." Though Drinker disapproved of Quaker involvement, upon the return of McPherson's company, she listened to a first-hand account of the experiences of one young Quaker who had participated.<sup>24</sup> Always eager for news, Drinker wanted to be kept informed.

Drinker displayed her political preferences through the terms she employed to describe popular political activities. Her revolutionary

20. *Drinker Diary*, April 1, 1799, II:1150-51.

21. *Drinker Diary*, March 9, 1802, II:1499; April 4 and 5, 1802, II:1504.

22. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 16, 1794, I:593-94. See Thomas Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Prologue to the American Revolution* (New York, 1986).

23. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 17, 1794, I:594-95; Sept. 23, 1794, I:597.

24. *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 20, 1794, I:630-31.



experiences taught her to fear the gathering of a crowd or the appearance of the militia. The distinctions Drinker made between acceptable and unacceptable popular political displays is clear in her use of terms such as "mob" or "riot." These words appeared in her writing whenever she did not favor an event (usually in addition to other disparaging terms). For example, when her brother-in-law, John Drinker, was arrested by militia men during the "Fort Wilson" incident in 1779, Drinker described his captors as a "mob."<sup>25</sup> The Jay treaty protests in the city made Drinker fearful that a "riot" might occur. She had good reason for her fears. The year before the treaty, Drinker had seen with her own eyes a "rumpus" at the wharf involving a small ship that the crowd believed was taking provisions to the English fleet:

they took out her Main-mast, and dragged it with ropes up the bank, a mob collected, when J Dallas and others appeared to put a stop to their proceedings.<sup>26</sup>

And it was a "mob" again, in 1795, that paraded an effigy of John Jay through Philadelphia's streets: "quietly up one street and down another, without making any noise, with the Cartwheels muffled, then went back to Kensington where they burnt the effigy after midnight." Drinker added, "Tis well twas no worse." Democratic Republican celebrations also drew Drinker's disparaging comments. It was "the Democratic clan" that celebrated French victories against Italy in 1797. For Drinker, of course, this meant immediate apprehension of "a mob gathering." When Jefferson was elected President in 1801, the celebrations were "a great fuss." A year later, celebration of his first anniversary in office elicited the same comment: more "fuss and noise."<sup>27</sup>

It is tempting to dismiss Drinker's comments against crowd actions and celebrations wholesale, with the suggestion that she disliked such display and activity of any kind. Yet there is evidence that this was not the case. For example, she made it clear on several occasions that she approved of certain types of celebration, such as President Adams' entry into the city after a long absence:

John Adams President of the United States return'd from a visit to his Native place Boston about 3 o'clock, went by our

25. *Drinker Diary*, Oct. 4, 1779, I:361.

26. *Drinker Diary*, May 5, 1794, I:555-56.

27. *Drinker Diary*, July 6, 1795, I:700-01; April 12, 1797, II:906-07; March 4, 1801, II:1390-91; March 4, 1802, II:1497.

door, attended by the light horse and a few others, 'tho I am not for parade of any sort, in the general way, yet on this occasion, every thing considered I should have been pleased to have seen a little more of it.<sup>28</sup>

Public gatherings of which she approved, such as Adams's entry, evoked comments with a much different tone. As the troops returned from the Western expedition in 1794 (to suppress the whiskey rebellion), "an unusual concourse of people," not a mob, assembled to see the troops enter the city. There was cannon firing, and bell ringing on this occasion, yet Drinker refused to criticize such "fuss" or "noise" as she had during partisan demonstrations with which she disagreed. Nor did she object to the cannon fire and other "demonstrations of joy," to commemorate Louis XVIth's birthday in 1778. In contrast to groups of Democratic Republicans who assembled themselves into "mobs," she wrote more neutrally of the Federalist "young men of this city," who assembled at the merchants coffee house and then presented Adams with their address during the crisis in 1798. When the first frigate built to defend America's shipping rights against the predatory French was exhibited at the city dock, it drew not a mob, but rather "20,000 persons."<sup>29</sup>

The abiding concern of Americans throughout the 1790s was the United States' relationship with France. The French Revolution flavored the politics and the outlooks of Americans, and especially contributed to the conflicts between Federalists and Democratic Republicans. The Philadelphia newspapers carried reports of events in France, and the battles fought between France, England, and the other European countries. Drinker read the newspapers daily and was consumed with foreign events. She also read the various memoirs and fiction engendered by the Revolution. In addition, she heard first-hand reports from refugees in the city. Drinker did not support the French Revolution any more than she had the American Revolution. But she sympathized with the French and St. Domingan refugees present all around her. She was especially touched by stories from these victims of what she termed "democratic fury." When two young Frenchmen came to Henry Drinker proposing

28. *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 10, 1797, II:978-79. The small size of the welcome was due to many people's belief that Adams had run away from the city when yellow fever broke out in the summer. See Scharf and Westcott, I:491.

29. *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 10, 1794, I:625; Aug. 25, 1778, I:322-23; May 13, 1797, II:917. *Merchant's Daily Advertiser*, May 13, 1797.

to buy land, he instead advised them to save their resources. The two related to Drinker and her husband their harrowing story of escape and near arrest, how their father had been guillotined, and how they themselves narrowly escaped capture.<sup>30</sup> Drinker allowed another refugee's child, "little Mary Marott," to play in the Drinker's garden. And the Philadelphia Quaker community was host to several French Quaker refugees, including John de Marsillac and Stephen Grellet, a "young french publick friend," both of whom visited the Drinkers regularly.<sup>31</sup>

The slave revolt in St. Domingue, one of the consequences of the French Revolution in the West Indies, did not escape her notice. Her initial reaction to this crisis was merely to note how the situation affected the price of sugar in Philadelphia. Later, she commented more directly on the incoming refugees from the island (and the rumor that it was these refugees who brought the yellow fever to the city in 1793). Some feared that the St. Domingans would be responsible for political, as well as physical, contagion in the United States. The Domingan rebellion, and various incendiary incidents in the United States, prompted some to fear that American slaves would follow suit. A series of arson cases were reported up and down the eastern seaboard in the summer of 1793. Depending on her mood, Drinker either feared that such things might come to pass, or she dismissed them out of hand as "flying reports, and most likely to be false." And though her daughter, Sally, employed a French black servant, Drinker did not express concern.<sup>32</sup>

The Drinkers befriended two white St. Domingan refugees, Gasper Malerive and his invalid sister. They lived in the alley behind the Drinker house on Front street. As she had done with little Mary Marott (who later died of yellow fever), Drinker invited Malerive and his sister to walk in her garden: one of the few in a part of the city that was crowded and devoid of greenery. Drinker pitied these "Strangers in a strange land, without money, and unacquainted with our language." Malerive had been a successful St Domingan. In Philadelphia he was reduced to earning a living for himself and his invalid sister by making and selling ice cream. Malerive frequently treated the Drinkers to his

30. *Drinker Diary*, Jan. 11, 1794, I:541; Nov. 24, 1794, I:620-21.

31. *Drinker Diary*, April 22, 1799, II:1159; Sept. 7, 1796, II:842; Feb. 25, 1797, II:893; July 11, 1797, II:940-41; Nov. 2, 1800, II:1352; Jan. 5, 1802, II:1484; July 9, 1805, II:1845-46.

32. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 21, 1791, I:471; Aug. 28, Nov. 9, 1793, I:497-98, 526; March 10, 1794, I:547; Aug. 15, 1794, I:582-83; Sept. 3, 1793, I:500; April 29, 1797, II:912.

wares.<sup>33</sup> In return, the Drinkers provided these refugees with invaluable political assistance. When Congress revised the Alien Friends Act in 1798 in hopes of deporting political troublemakers, the legislation required Malerive to have a citizen vouch for his good behavior. Henry Drinker and his son both signed the certificate to be presented to the French Consul. They verified that Malerive had "resided in this city and behaved inoffensively and industriously, as far as they have heard, seen or known."<sup>34</sup>

Drinker continued her close watch on events in France. The royal executions saddened her. She read both fact and fiction about the experiences of the royal family, and about various revolutionaries, like Madame Roland. Much of her reading was purportedly true tales of French atrocities. She also read William Cobbett's version of French horrors, *The Bloody Buoy*. Her Federalist position predisposed her to mistrust revolutionary France. Her readings confirmed her suspicions: "How many thousands, aye millions of murders have the French committed! 'tis Shocking to think of!"<sup>35</sup>

Upon learning that Adams' envoys had failed to meet with the French in 1798, she wished them all speedily out of such a country full of such "horrid cruelties."<sup>36</sup> And when envoy John Marshall returned to Philadelphia she was not annoyed or distressed at the ceremony displayed in his honor:

The light horse past our door this afternoon, upwards of an hundred of them, they were out to meet General Marshal the envoy from France, last from New York, a great company of others went to meet him, the Bells are now ringing on that occasion.<sup>37</sup>

33. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 4, 1795, I:724; Sept. 28, 1795, I:734-35; Jan. 31, 1797, II:885-86; June 16, 1798, II:1044-45; May 17, 1798, II:1035.

34. *Drinker Diary*, June 4, 1798, II:1040-41.

35. Drinker read Roland's *An Appeal to Impartial Posterity*. *Drinker Diary*, April 2, 1799, II:1255; for example, *Drinker Diary*, March 19, 1796, II:783; Baron Honore Rioffe, *Revolutionary Justice Displayed; or, An Inside View of Prisons of Paris, under the Government of Robespierre and the Jacobins* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Davies, 1796), and *Drinker Diary* reading list dated Oct. 18, 1802, II:1610; Sarah Sayward (Barrell) Keating, *Julia and the Illuminated Baron, a Novel: Founded on recent Facts, which have Transpired in the course of the late Revolution of Moral Principles in France* 2 Vols. (Portsmouth, NH: Charles Pierce, 1800); *Drinker Diary*, March 20, 1796, II:784; Peter Porcupine, *The Bloody Buoy, Thrown out as a warning to the political pilots of America. Or a faithful Relation of Multitude of Acts of Horrid Barbarity such as the eye never witnessed, the tongue never expressed, or the imagination conceived, until the commencement of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Davies, 1796); *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 23, 1802, II:1601.

36. *Drinker Diary*, June 19, 1798, II:1045-46.

37. *Drinker Diary*, June 19, 1798, II: 1045-46; *Gazette of the United States* June 20, 1798; *Porcupine's Gazette* June 19, 1798; *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser* June 20, 1798; Leonard Baker, *John Marshall: A Life in Law* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 283; Albert J. Beveridge, *The Life of John Marshall* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 2: 344-45.

A year later, after reading reports of the defeat of French shipping in the Atlantic, she noted the paper contained "what the federalists call good news, and that must be good which humbles the haughty pride of France."<sup>38</sup>

Drinker abhorred the French Revolution because it threatened what she most valued: order, harmony, and a recognition of hierarchy. But she needed to look no farther than her own doorstep to find instances of behavior that conflicted with her idea of a well-regulated society. Typically, celebration of the anniversary of American independence elicited her most caustic comments about the American system of government and the general population's ill-suitedness to participate in it. Although the Drinker's windows were no longer vulnerable to breakage, as they had been during the war, she was no more inclined to favor this anniversary in the 1790s. From Drinker's perspective, the principle characteristic of July Fourth was not as a remembrance of liberty so much as merely an occasion for "riot and Drunkenness." Drinker believed that "the most sensible part of the Community, have more reason to lament than rejoice — in my opinion." In 1795, she remarked that instead of the cannon fire, street celebrations, and general "fuss and to do," it would have been more appropriate that "orders for peace and quietness" be given. Such behavior, to her mind, was "more commendable and consistent in a well regulated government or State." Drinker believed that the men and women who took to the streets to celebrate July Fourth in the 1790s "pride themselves in their independence but know not how to prize it or use it."<sup>39</sup>

By 1798, conflicts between Democratic Republicans and Federalists were keenly evident. The XYZ affair stimulated Federalist anger and war-mongering among the population. Large parades were organized in the city. Federalist sympathizers, including Drinker's own daughters, were eager to observe the festivities. To Drinker this war-mongering and overt display of patriotism on the part of the Federalists was no more appealing than Democratic Republican displays. It was a "rarey shew," from which, in the heat of a Philadelphia summer, Drinker predicted, "many will be taken sick, over-heated, &c."<sup>40</sup>

38. *Drinker Diary*, Jan. 8, 1799, II:1128.

39. *Drinker Diary*, July 4, 1804, III:1753; July 4, 1801, II:1424; July 4, 1795, II:699-700. Drinker was especially concerned on this date because the Jay treaty protestors scheduled their demonstration for this day, as a reminder of the principles of the revolution, and the Democratic Republicans' perception of the conciliatory nature of the treaty; *Drinker Diary*, July 4, 1797, II:938.

40. *Drinker Diary*, July 4, 1798, II:1050-51.

Drinker believed that neither the Federalists, on the national level, nor the Philadelphia city government, on the local level, were doing enough to keep disorderly elements of society in check. Guns were still fired off on New Year's Eve (contrary to the law), yet there was "no order from the Mayor to stop it." A riot occurred in a house of prostitution in Southwark, which did not please Drinker. She wished "that a more justifiable power had taken them in hand long ago 'tis a shame to our police that any such houses is suffered." Drinker was sometimes cynical even of what seemed to be displays of social order. On a day of Thanksgiving, declared by President Washington in 1795, she noticed the Presbyterians going into their church. It "had the appearance at least, of their unity with good government, and I hope more."<sup>41</sup>

Her political ideology was most in evidence when Drinker mentioned two prominent figures of her day, William Cobbett and Thomas Paine. William Cobbett, the acerbic pamphleteer and newspaper editor, articulated many of Drinker's own political positions. She read him avidly, and frequently copied verbatim into her diary comments from Cobbett's *Porcupine's Gazette*. Thomas Paine, on the other hand, was a foil for Drinker's political and moral positions. She violently disagreed with everything Paine had to say, yet she could not ignore him. Just as Drinker sought news of dreaded crowd actions and the workings of the "mob," she also closely followed Paine's career and writings.

Like Cobbett, Drinker had no illusions about republican government. She shared his view of America, though not always his staunch defense of Britain. If Americans were indeed the "living embodiments of democratic ideals," then those ideals encompassed corruption, immorality and dishonesty. Drinker read many of Cobbett's Philadelphia pamphlets, like *A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats*, in which he expressed his fear of the power of democratic principles to eat away at political and social stability.<sup>42</sup> Cobbett believed that broad suffrage would only pro-

41. *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 31, 1801, II:1476; Aug. 25, 1800, II:1334; Feb. 19, 1795, I:651. Washington declared this Thanksgiving both as acknowledgment of peace after the Whiskey Rebellion and General Wayne's victory over the Indians.

42. David A. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 115. Drinker recorded reading the following of Cobbett's works:

*A Little Plain English, Addresses to the People of the United States, on the Treaty, Negotiated with His Britannic Majesty, and on the Conduct of the President Relative Thereto...* (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795)

*French Arrogance; or, "The Cat Let out of the Bag" ...* (Philadelphia: Peter Porcupine, 1798)

*Observations on the Emigration of Dr. Joseph Priestley, and on the Several Addresses Delivered to him, on his Arrival at New-York* (London and Philadelphia, 1794)

*A Kick for a Bite; or, Review upon Review; with a Critical Essay, on the Works of Mrs. S.*

duce demagogues who pandered to the electorate. Drinker, with her concerns for order, and her fear of the power of the people out of doors, shared these views. Like Cobbett, she was extremely cynical about the general populace, as she demonstrated in her comments about the mourning rituals for Washington in 1799. Many citizens chose to wear "a crape around their arms for six months." Drinker was as sorry to hear of his death as were "many others, who make no shew." But she commented: "many will join in the form that cared little about him."<sup>43</sup>

One of Cobbett's editorial targets was the hypocrisy of southern slaveowners. As a Quaker, the issue of slavery touched Drinker deeply. Taking a particular jab at Jefferson, Cobbett wrote of the slaveowners:

And these are the people, my God! who talk about the natural and unalienable rights of man – and who make such a boast of the purity of their principles.<sup>44</sup>

Cobbett was no abolitionist himself. He used this attack, along with among many other ploys, to undermine men like Jefferson. These southern Democratic Republicans wrote of liberty, yet held men and women in bondage. Cobbett believed they used the language of liberty as noth-

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*Rowson; in a Letter to the Editor, or Editors, of the American Monthly Review* (Philadelphia: T. Bradford, 1795)

*Porcupine vs. Randolph; or, A New Years Gift to the Democrats; or, Observations on a Pamphlet Entitled a Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation* (Philadelphia: Bradford, 1796)

*The Scarecrow: Being an Infamous Letter, Sent to Mr. John Olden, Threatening Destruction to His House, and Violence to the Person of His Tenant, William Cobbett, with Remarks on the Same* (Philadelphia: William Cobbett, 1796)

*History of the American Jacobins commonly denominated Democrats*. Peter Porcupine (Philadelphia: William Cobbett, 1796)

*Porcupine's Political Censor for November 1796. Containing Observations on the Insolent and Seditious Notes, Communicated to the People of the United States By the Late French Minister Adet*

*Porcupine's Political Censor for December 1796 Containing Remarks on the Debates of Congress, Particularly on the Timidity of the Language Held Towards France; Also, a Letter to the infamous Tom Paine, In Answer to His Brutal Attack on the Federal constitution, and on the Conduct and Character of George Washington*

*The Bloody Buoy Thrown Out as a Warning to the Political Pilots of America; or A Faithful Relation of a Multitude of Acts of Horrid Barbarity* (Philadelphia: Benjamin Davies, 1796).

43. Wilson, *Paine and Cobbett: The Transatlantic Connection*, 123; *Drinker Diary*, Dec. 25, 1799, II:1249-50.

44. William Cobbett, *A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats; or, Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled, "The Political Progress of Britain"* (Philadelphia: Thomas Bradford, 1795), 48; William Cobbett, *Porcupine's Works: Containing Various Writings and Selections, Exhibiting a Faithful Picture of the United States of America from the End of the War, in 1783, to the Election of the President, in March, 1801* 12 vols. (London: Cobbett and Morgan, 1801) 8:122-23.

ing more than a smokescreen concealing narrow self-interest.<sup>45</sup>

Another theme that ran through Cobbett's writings, and reflected Drinker's thoughts, was his dislike of the United Irishmen – their cause and its consequent violence. Cobbett warned his readers that there were factions in the United States that would perpetrate the same kind of destruction in America. Though Drinker on occasion termed Cobbett's words "nervous and sarcastic" or merely "middling," she agreed with his basic sentiments.<sup>46</sup> Drinker and Cobbett shared a fear of the influence of the Society of United Irishmen to foment uprisings in the United States. Several leaders of the Society, including Hamilton Rowan, had traveled to Philadelphia in 1795 to lend their voices to the Democratic Republican opposition to the Jay Treaty. At that time William Cobbett had vigorously criticized them in his newspaper. In 1797, when an American branch of the Society was founded in Philadelphia, Cobbett again wrote vehemently against the presence of, as he believed, such dangerous men, claiming that they intended to overthrow the United States and kill Philadelphia's leading citizens. When a visiting Irishman, Henry Cox, dined with the Drinkers in 1798, she commented that "some suspect him of being a Demo. Not a united irishman we hope."<sup>47</sup>

She read the pamphlets of several of Cobbett's detractors, but always found them "scurrilous" and "low," or "poor trash." Cobbett was a political companion who always brought Drinker the latest news, usually wrapped in splenetic commentary, yet his opinions were of a sort with which Drinker fundamentally agreed. When Drinker learned that Cobbett had departed America, she commented, "so there's an end of Peter Porcupine, in this country, perhaps toujours, I don't know that I ever saw him, tho' I seem to know him well."<sup>48</sup>

45. Wilson, 123.

46. Wilson, 122; William Cobbett, *Bloody Buoy* ix, 240-41; William Cobbett, *A Bone to Gnaw*, part 2, 42; *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 5, 1795, I:724; May 31, 1798, II:1039.

47. *Drinker Diary*, Nov. 19, 1798, II:1111-12. See Edward C. Carter II, "A 'Wild Irishman' under Every Federalist's Bed: Naturalization in Philadelphia, 1789-1806," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 94 (1970), 331-346.

48. *Drinker Diary*, Aug. 15, 1796, II:832: *A Roaster; or a check to the progress of political Blasphemy: intended as a brief reply to Peter Porcupine, alias Billy Cobar*. By Sim Sansculotte. (Philadelphia: J. Johnson, 1796); *Drinker Diary*, Aug. 29, 1796, II:838: *The Blue Shop or impartial and humorous observations on the Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine, with the Real motives which gave rise to his Abuse of our Distinguished Patriotic Characters; Together with a full and fair Review of his Late Scarecrow*. By James Quicksilver. [an alias for Santiago Felipe] (James Philip Puglia. Philadelphia: Moreau de Saint-Méry, 1796); Sept. 5, 1796, II:841-42: *A Pill for Porcupine...Containing a vindication of the American, French and Irish characters, against his scurrilities. By a friend to Political Equality*. James Carey. (Printed for the author, 1796); *Drinker Diary*, Sept 6, 1796, II:842; *Drinker Diary*, June 3, 1800, II:1305.



If Cobbett publicly articulated Drinker's politics, Thomas Paine represented all that Drinker feared and reviled. Her life-long fascination with, and aversion to, this radical revolutionary illuminates the foundations of her political and religious principles. The ideals that Paine argued for in three countries were anathema to Elizabeth Drinker. She was particularly offended by his deism. His *Age of Reason* was the only work that she recorded reading. She admitted that he had a "knack for writing," though this only made things worse, for it allowed "the ignorant, the weak, and the vicious [to] fall into his snare." Drinker read many of the critical works aimed at the *Age of Reason*. She praised a piece called *The Age of Reason Unreasonable*, which refuted Paine's efforts. But she lamented the misfortune that "all who read his poisoned discourses, do not take the pains [as she did] to look for the antidote." Drinker believed that Paine was one of the best agents that the devil, or "the old one" as she termed him, had in his service.<sup>49</sup> Though she agreed with Cobbett that *The Age of Reason* was a "manual of Jacobinism," she thought Paine merely a "time-serving fellow." She doubted the sincerity of Paine's commitment to the causes he claimed to espouse:

if Lewis ye 17th was set up as King of France, and a sufficient party in his favor, and T.P. highly bribed or flattered, he would write more for a monarchical government than he has ever wrote on the other side.<sup>50</sup>

She read Paine's open letters to George Washington, written in 1796. But she knew of Paine's other writings, such as his *Rights of Man*, only through the criticisms against it. She turned readily to Cobbett's bombastic account of Paine's life and political principles in the *Political Censor*. Regardless of her hostility, however, Drinker kept tabs on Paine nonetheless. When he arrived back in America in 1802 after his long sojourn in France, Drinker noted his return, as well as his continued

49. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 6, 1794, I:590; Dec. 16, 1796, II:867-68; July 3, 1798, II:1050. (Philadelphia: William Cobbett, 1798). She also read Richard Watson, *An Apology for the Bible, in a series of Letters addressed to Thomas Paine, author of a book entitled The Age of reason* (Albany: Barber and Southwick, 1796), and Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation: or The Age of Reason shewn to be An Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia: Hugh Maxwell for Asbury Dickens, 1801.)

50. Cobbett, *Political Censor*, March 1797, 95; *Porcupine's Gazette*, May 1796, 197; *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 6, 1794, I:590.

political publications: "so he has begun his business here."<sup>51</sup>

If William Cobbett was a familiar friend upon whom Drinker could always rely for like-minded political sentiments, then Thomas Paine was the enemy of all the political and moral principles which Drinker held dear. How many of her comments were directed merely at Paine's religious principles, and how much of her invective was infused with the vivid remembrance of how *Common Sense* had fueled the flames of the American Revolution, is hard to say. Paine was the specter of democratic principles; a man able to stir up the dangerous, unruly "mob," and force good government to go awry. In sum, he was "capable of much wickedness."<sup>52</sup>

Elaine Crane has called Drinker a "lukewarm Federalist." She claims that Drinker adhered to the Federalist ideology only insofar as it reflected and supported her individual beliefs.<sup>53</sup> Certainly Drinker's distaste for electioneering and the violence which ensued from political partisanship confirmed her limited identification with Federalism. But if the Federalists provided only partial satisfaction for Drinker, the Democratic Republicans, and radical spokesmen like Paine, were fearful spectacles. She saw the Democratic Republicans replaying on a smaller scale the usurpation of authority that the American revolutionaries had promoted.

What Drinker experienced during the 1790s was the infancy of the first party system. Her observations of the activities and ideas that propelled the Democratic Republicans into direct competition with the Federalists for political control were the basis for much of her commentary on the political scene. Her vivid writing reflects an individual concerned with the nature of government, and with the principles that structured social and political relations. Drinker saw her ideals challenged by the circumstances of the United States in the early republic. She could not control the direction of political life in a way that would have satisfied her, but she did strongly express her personal political convictions and her conception of good government and a just society.

51. *Drinker Diary*, Oct. 27, 1796, II:855. Henry Mackenzie, *An Answer to Paine's Rights of Man: To Which is Added a Letter from Peter Porcupine to Citizen John Swanwick, an Englishman, the Son of a British WaggonMaster, and Member of Congress for the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: William Cobbett, 1796); *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 27, 1796, II:846-47; Nov. 4, 18, 1802, II:1352, 1355. Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 253-257.

52. *Drinker Diary*, Sept. 6, 1794, I:590.

53. *Drinker Diary*, introduction, xxxxi.