

Pennsylvania Satire Before the Stamp Act

Alison Gilbert Olson
University of Maryland, College Park

Political satire is perhaps the hardest literary form to pin down. One of "satire's" original meanings is "medley" and, indeed, the genre is distinguished by the great variety of forms that it takes. Webster's definition of satire in general, "a poem or prose work holding up human vices to ridicule or scorn," opens up endless possibilities for mocking one's political opponents safely, particularly if they are so entrenched in power that one has few other legitimate ways of challenging their position. Since in the American colonies dominant majorities were frequently entrenched in their control of provincial legislatures, minority factions found in satire a useful weapon. As one beleaguered Pennsylvania satirist put it,

Tho otherwise feeble of no strength at all
We'll make use of our weapons ourselves to defend
For we have no others where on to depend.¹

Yet historians of American literature have commonly dismissed colonial satire as virtually non-existent, or at best inconsequential until the decade immediately before the Revolution. Bruce Granger's *Political Satire in the American Revolution* refers only to the scant records of a "handful of political satires published in pre-Revolutionary America."² Arthur Schlesinger looks at the very appearance of American humor after 1765 as constituting a revolution in itself.³ A more recent author states flatly that "there was no reason, legal or otherwise, for an earlier author to resort to the indirect approach of satire in his attacks on government and public figures."⁴ Even the late Stephen Botein, speaking about early American printers in general, commented that "unaccus-

1. *A True Copy of an Inimitable and Incomprehensible Doggrel Poem, sent by Parson Alesense alias Smallsense, alias Nonsense, to D.J. Dove at Germantown School.* Blackbeard (Philadelphia. 1763).

2. *Political Satire* (Ithaca, New York, 1960) p. 3.

3. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence; The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York, 1958) pp. vii-viii.

4. C.R. Kropf, "Colonial Satire and the Law" *Early American Literature* 12 (Winter, 1977-8), p. 235.

tomed to a politics in which partisan activity was fully legitimate, they [colonial printers] acted in such a way as to retard the development of a public forum where conflicts could be articulated."⁵

Thanks to the splendid work of David Shields, who admitted that satire had earlier been "consigned to the limbo of neglect," we are now at last beginning to recognize the importance of early colonial satire. The calendaring efforts of J.A. Leo Lemay and R. Wegelin, along with the massive Evans-Bristol bibliography and collections like Dunbar's *Paxton Papers*, also inform us that more than a "scant amount" of satire was published on provincial political issues. Before 1765 partisan ridicule appeared, disappeared, and then cropped up again from province to province, depending variously on local conditions—the people or issues that dominated politics at any one time; the politicians' vulnerability as satirical targets; the talents of the humorists; the vigor of the press and the distributors; and the size of the politically informed public and hence the market.

The belated recognition of the sporadic appearance of public, political humor in the colonies has, in turn, produced new questions or heated up old ones about the influence of such humor in early America: just who really was targeted, who was influenced, and how effectively? Before the outburst of printed imperial protest that began in 1765, did satire reach—was it ever intended for—an audience different from that of humorous manuscripts circulated in private? And how did provincial satire evolve—if it did evolve—in terms of style and language? Did early invective modeled on English Grub Street writings give way to moderation and restraint over the century, or did it work the opposite way—was the genteel writing based on Joseph Addison's *Spectator* style slowly replaced by biting invective? And anyway, did print humor ever actually influence anybody?

To answer these questions properly for mainland British America, of course, we should look at all the colonies: Pennsylvania is only one laboratory and ultimately we must compare it with the other provinces to discern any patterns. Taken by itself, the Pennsylvania evidence suggests that in one colony, at least, colonial political satire moved by stages from personal ribbing to partisan lashing, from the genteel to the popular,

5. "Printers and the American Revolution" in *The Press and the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and John Hench (Worcester, Mass., 1980) p. 22.

from the conventional to the experimental, from contests among equals to contests between men entrenched in office and those perpetually outside, looking for any legal, effective weapon of attack.

Phase I: 1724-1725

Nowhere else in the colonies did political humor emerge, vanish from print and then reemerge in two such distinct periods as in Pennsylvania. Satire first flowered in 1724-25 and only again a full generation later, in 1755-64. The first stage of satire came relatively late to the colony in part because the pre-conditions for satire had developed slowly; the second stage came much later, only after the regional and economic market had grown, new satirical approaches had been introduced from England, and a new balance of power had developed in the colony.

By the time political satire first appeared in print in 1724 the colony was already forty years old. Pennsylvanians had already been exposed to plenty of invective in the 1690s from George Keith's conflicts with the Quaker Meeting. They had twitted at the misbehavior of William Penn, Jr. and laughed openly and angrily at the political antics of Governor Evans in the first decade of the new century. Some of them had begun circulating a bit of handwritten satire among circles of friends. But the experience had somehow not all come together to produce a public print humor. Why?

Literary historians debate at length the conditions most likely to create political satire: we do not know for sure. The best we can do is look for conditions commonly associated with the appearance of political humor that did not exist earlier in the century, but had developed by the 1720s. Before then, Pennsylvania wits had no appropriate targets—people or issues—to satirize. They had virtually no censorship of the press, so there was no need to get around it by reverting to the indirection of political humor, and they had no acceptable literary models, especially from England, for doing so. Moreover, political humorists had no real need, before Governor Keith's populist proposals, for appealing to an audience beyond the manuscript circles.

By 1723 all this had changed. First came the gradual appearance of applicable satirical models from England. Provincial writers had certainly been aware of the proliferation of English satire in the Restoration and its spectacular maturation in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Many Philadelphians had been in England in 1679-80 and again during the Glorious Revolution, when satirical poems hitherto circu-

lated only in manuscript were allowed into print.⁶ Others had crossed and re-crossed the Atlantic on business after that or purchased English books, either directly or from dealers in the colonies. Earlier Restoration satire, raucous and risqué, addressed mainly to the debaucheries of the court, did not really apply to Pennsylvania and neither did the coarse Grub Street satire that followed it in the 1690's.⁷ By the first decade of the eighteenth century, however, the Earl of Shaftsbury had introduced the "Culture of Politeness" and Richard Steele's *Tatler* had developed it. Defoe, Pope, Swift and Arbuthnot were already applying the "satire of civility" to political questions discussed in print on both sides of the Atlantic. English belles lettres circulated in print on both sides of the Atlantic and they did become an inviting model, with style and subject matter relevant to Philadelphia writers.⁸

A second contributing factor was the brief but chilling threat of press censorship in Pennsylvania in 1722. Censorship, or the threat of prosecution, in fact, may actually have inspired the creation of political satire because satire attacked its subjects so obliquely that it was hard to prove its intent either to a censor or in a court of law. Before 1722 the Pennsylvania press was remarkably free from censorship. (Andrew Bradford's father, William, was briefly arrested in the 1690s for printing a pamphlet of George Keith's without permission and without acknowledging his own press on the title page, but the justices decided that since Keith's argument concerned religion the issue did not belong before government at all, and handed it back to the Quaker meeting.⁹ Bradford continued to publish, unpunished, without attribution.) In 1722 William's son Andrew, then the colony's only printer, was arrested and examined by the Council for publishing an editorial comment on the colony's economic situation; he was warned not to print comments on

6. On this see David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, 1997). Shields argues that in court literary culture "the manuscript was the privileged means of communication," and that printing did not become respectable until the end of Queen Anne's reign.

7. See John Harold Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, (Columbus, Ohio, 1976) esp. pp. xi-xx, and the seven volumes of *Poems on Affairs of State, Augustan Satirical Verse, 1660-1714*, ed. George def. Lord (New Haven, 1963-75).

8. Lawrence E. Klein, *Shafsbury and the Culture of Politeness* (Cambridge, Eng. 1994), esp. chs. 7, 10.

9. The issue did raise the question whether juries could decide matters of law (Keith's supporters argued they could not). Could the jury decide whether Keith's pamphlets were libelous or not, or only whether Bradford's press had printed them? The question was dropped when the issue was referred back to the Meeting. J. William Frost, *The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, Pa., 1980), pp. xvi-xvii, 30.

the politics of Pennsylvania or any other colony without prior approval. Bradford's ultimate response was to print a hilariously satirical comment on James Franklin's recent and similar encounter with censorship in Massachusetts. The printer got away with the second comment; thus, the lesson writers took from his escape was that disguising comment with satire was the best way to evade the censor's pen.¹⁰

The third essential change was the appearance of appropriate Pennsylvania targets for satire, and some irresistible ones had emerged by 1720. A good target was a person or issue well enough known or understood to be recognized even if it (or he) was disguised or distorted in print, and important (but not universally esteemed) so that the very act of belittling it (or him) was incongruous and hence funny. Where was the person or issue appropriate for satire before 1720? The political issues facing the colony, largely constitutional ones, did not lend themselves to humor. The drunken escapades of William Penn, Jr. in the colony and the misguided attempt of Governor Evans to fool the people by announcing a non-existent French attack were embarrassing, certainly worth a snicker, but not significant satire. The proprietor himself so embodied the spirit of early Pennsylvania Quakerism that it was hard to imagine laughing at him. The Quakers had not yet faced the full embarrassment of governing a colony they could not defend with arms. So what was there to satirize?

Then, in 1723 the political maneuvers of Governor William Keith and the efforts of James Logan, Penn's provincial secretary, to stop him introduced two new components to the Philadelphia scene: a simple issue (whether a governor had the right to defy the order of his proprietary employer on what he regarded as a popular issue) and two invitingly satirizable individuals. By that time Philadelphia was already acquiring an informed public – local news spread mostly by word of mouth, though the colony did have one newspaper after 1719.¹¹ Political writers had

10. Anna Jenney De Armond, *Andrew Bradford, Colonial Journalist* (New York, 1969) pp. 13-14. The comment ran, "By private letters from Boston we are informed, that the Baker's there are under great Apprehensions of being forbid baking any more Bread, unless they will submit to the Secretary, as Supervisor General and Weigher of the Dough, before it is baked into Bread and offer'd to Sale." Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints; The Newspaper in Anglo American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York, 1994), p. 172.

11. William F. Steirer, "Riding Everyman's Hobby Horse: Journalism in Philadelphia, 1764-1794" in Donovan H. Bond and W. Reynolds McLeod, *Newsletters to Newspapers: Eighteenth Century Journalism* (Morgantown, W. Va. 1977), p. 265. And note Charles Clark's comment that as colonial towns grew "there was an inevitable loss of intimacy in the conduct of daily business and official life and a corresponding increased reliance upon printed news and advertisements." (*The Public Prints*).

seen the public laugh enough collectively at the disorderliness of the proprietor's son and the silliness of Governor Evans that they tempered disgust with indulgence. Keith himself was ambitious, demagogic, and slippery; Logan was arrogant and pedantic. They were, indeed, a marvelous pair of targets.

In 1723 Keith and Logan quarreled over Logan's minutes of a Council meeting which both had attended. Logan would not change the minutes as Keith demanded, so Keith dismissed him from all but one of his provincial offices. Logan then went to London to complain to Hannah Penn, the proprietor's widow. Within a few months Logan was back in the colony, bringing with him Hannah Penn's new instructions to the governor. Logan was to get his offices back, Keith was to act only with the consent of the council (which Logan dominated) and to sign no more paper money acts (which Logan disapproved). Keith refused. He published the new instructions, despite injunctions to secrecy, and began speaking openly of Logan as having undermined popular rights by obtaining the new instructions in the first place. Accordingly, Hannah Penn sent a new governor to replace Keith.¹² It was in the interim between Logan's return with the instructions in late 1724 and the arrival of Keith's replacement in June, 1726 that Logan, Keith, and a few of their supporters introduced the colony to satirical exchange.

The Keith faction (including David Lloyd, Samuel Bulkeley, and Francis Rawle, who each contributed)¹³ produced more writings—eight—than the Logan faction (with Isaac Norris) which printed only five, but three of each set of efforts were direct attempts at humor. Logan came off a little better: while Keith was better at giving impassioned speeches on popular rights, satiric humor came more naturally to Logan, stuffed shirt though he was. Logan had the more vulnerable target, he had been a Grub Street frequenter in his 1723-24 visit to London (after Addison's *Spectator* had made Grub Street respectable), and one of his friends was Governor Robert Hunter of New York, whose hilariously satirical play *Androboros* (1714) had undermined his enemies in the eyes of the British government and had shown the power of satire over an English as well as a provincial audience.

12. Frederick B. Tolles, *James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America* (Boston, 1957), pp. 120-132, Thomas Wendel, "The Keith-Lloyd Alliance; Factional and Coalition Politics in Colonial Pennsylvania *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* [hereafter *PMHB*] 92 (1968), pp. 289-305.

13. Roy Lokken, *David Lloyd, Colonial Lawmaker* (Seattle, 1959) pp. 209, 211.

Keith and his friends began the series with three straightforwardly constitutional tracts. Then Keith's own satirical effort appeared, fairly early in the exchange.¹⁴ *The Observer's Trip to America* ridiculed "Men of Learning, but Not of Right English Sense, that has bred lately a deal of Mischief Among the People of this Place." Logan the pedant with a perpetual look of "wounded conceit" was "a certain Quaker in this place who had a huge Reputation for being a mighty Scholar." The "Scholar" insisted that his consent was necessary for laws and "as he had. . . more Learning than anybody Else, he was the most Proper Person to make Speeches, Frame Laws, and to Interpret them after they were Made."¹⁵ The Observer then told how he had conveyed a letter to the "Scholar" and was dismissed coldly after two short sentences' worth of conversation. *The Triumvirate of Pennsylvania*, a pamphlet written not by Keith, but by one of his supporters, featured a satirical narrative by someone who claimed to have hidden himself in the Council chambers where he overheard a discussion among three councillors, including "Pedagogus Mathematicus" (Logan) who complained that he had lost his veto over legislation because of a "Doge allied with Democracy."¹⁶

Logan began his own writing with *The Antidote*, an attack on the Keithian David Lloyd who had written a pamphlet himself "indulging his inclinations in a performance" in order to bring the dispute "on stage."¹⁷ (The satire is clear if we remember how strongly Quakers disapproved the theater.) Logan or one of his supporters had fun with the Keithian constitutional arguments drawn "from the following authors. . . Chevy Chase, Robin Hood, Vulcan and Venus, a Fable, Cruelty of the Dutch in Amboyna, Pandora, a Poem in High Dutch, Hymn to Bacchus, and the History of the Hotentots, besides many Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Chaldaic and Latin authors."¹⁸

Logan's own digs at Keith began with *A Dialogue Shewing What's Therein to be Found*, focusing on a story, close to a satiric parable, about a steward who "after he had made some rules concerning the Estate directly contrary to positive orders from his lord, he sofar forgot him-

14. After the first writings it is impossible to tell the order in which the pamphlets appeared unless they were replies to each other.

15. Charles Evans, *American Bibliography*, microfilm ed. Clifford K. Shipton (Worcester, Mass., 1959), #2791, pp. 11-12 [hereafter cited as Evans followed by number].

16. Evans, 2712, pp. 1.

17. Evans, 2560, pp. 1.

18. *A Modest Apology for the Eight Members* (Philadelphia, 1728) fn. 1. Evans, 3065.

self as to assert that he had a constant true regard to them and was never known to deviate from his instructions."¹⁹ Logan's most telling satire was *A More Just Vindication of Sir William Keith* written in response to Keith's rather lame *Vindication* of himself. Keith couldn't possibly have written the first *Vindication*, Logan teased, because the statements in it were so dishonest they could never have been made by an honorable man and (shades of Brutus) Sir William was an honorable man. "Such is the Malice of this degenerate age that somebody has been at great pains. . . to wound and gash his Honour under the vile Pretense of defending it. . . they have drawn it in such Language. . . that all the world that knows Sir William would readily believe it to be his." "Is it possible that a Man of Sir William's honor would . . .?" he asked again and again.²⁰

Logan's *More Just Vindication* was the most sophisticated of the satirical efforts that appeared between 1724 and 1726: better than most of the writers in the crisis, Logan was able to take up the satirist's favorite pose of "unmasking the imposter," holding a mirror up to his deceptions. Sir William was depicted as pretending to be an honorable man when in fact his remarks did not show themselves consistent with the community's standards of honor: there were, implied Logan, community standards, and Keith could be justifiably laughed at for not complying with them. English satirists delighted in holding up a mirror to expose the faults of the subject to himself as well as the world, but Logan was the only one of the early provincial writers to use this image: readers, he said, would find Keith's *Vindication* as recognizably his "as they would [find] their Own Image in a Glass to be theirs."²¹

With the possible exception of Logan, writers during the encounter were remarkably hesitant to take up approaches already common in England (though still rare in other colonies.) They did not versify in print, for example, or adapt their lines to popular tavern melodies (though writers like Isaac Norris and Henry Brooke did circulate verses in manuscript).²² They did not write dramas, parodies, mock procla-

19. Evans 2652, pp. 11-12.

20. Keith's *Just and Plain Vindication* is Evans 2753. Logan's *A More Just Vindication* (pp. 1-4). Evans 2759.

21. *A More Just Vindication*, p. 1.

22. Katherine D. Carter, "Isaac Norris II's Attack on Andrew Hamilton." *PMHB*, CIV (1980), pp. 139-61; David Shields, *Civil Tongues*, ch. 3; David S. Shields, "Henry Brooke and the Situation of the First Belletrists in British America," *Early American Literature*, 23 (1988) pp. 4-27.

mations, ridiculous political platforms, mock speeches distorted into senselessness, though one would have thought at least that some of Keith's orations invited parody. Nor did the authors narrate stories that put their targets in incongruous situations. One or two of the satires have narratives but the narrators, like the "Observer," or the spy who slipped behind the curtain in the council chamber, are not really given anything like an Addisonian "persona" through which they color the interpretation. The Pennsylvania humor is not very adaptive, or very bold.

The satire is also restrained, even gentle. The worst the "Observer" can say about Logan is that he is "fit to be at the head of a university" as opposed to the head of a civil society.²³ The worst that Logan's associate could say of Keithians was that they relied on silly sources for their speeches. Even the ribbing about Keith's honor was gentle.

The explanation for this relative reticence cannot lie with the Quakerism of most of the writers and readers: the controversy over George Keith in the 1690s had put quantities of vitrol and invective in print.²⁴ On the other hand, the explanation did have some link with the sophisticated civility of Addison, the "polite culture" of Shaftsbury, and the general movement for cleaning up both manners and literature in early eighteenth century England.²⁵ Certainly, too, the writers were restrained because they still, for all Keith's "popular" appeal, regarded satire as the preserve of the elite. In David Hall's words, it "lent itself to voicing (and enhancing) the cultural distance they wished to impose between the rabble and themselves."²⁶ Just as likely, the authors lived in a small world; they belonged to overlapping literary circles, and it is notable that many of the leading writers of the colony were friends of both rival leaders—and chose not to take part in the argument.²⁷ Logan and Keith knew each other well and recognized the necessity of work-

23. *Observer*, p. 10.

24. See, for example Keith's *An Account of the Quakers' Politicks* (London, 1700) p. 10; *A Paraphratical Exposition on a Letter from a Gentleman in Philadelphia to his Friend in Boston*. (? 1693/4. Evans, 680), or Francis Mackemie, *An Answer to George Keith's Libel*, (Boston, 1694, Evans 693). J. William Frost, *The Keithian Controversy in Early Pennsylvania* (Norwood, Pa., 1980). See esp. pp. 193-95; Ethyn Williams Kirby, *George Keith (1638-1716)* (New York, 1942), pp. 59, 75. The pamphlets Keith published after his return to London, some of which got back to the colony, are more vitriolic than those he produced in Pennsylvania.

25. See, for example, Klein, *Shaftsbury and the Culture of Politeness*, esp. pp. 3-8. ch. vii.

26. David Hall, *Cultures of Print, Essays in the History of the Book*. (Amherst, Mass., 1996) p. 153.

27. David S. Shields, "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania: New Light on the Rise of Belles Letters in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1720-40." *PMHB* 109 (1985), 99-104.

ing together in the future; for all their mutual annoyances, they genuinely respected each other. Finally, in terms of political resources they were evenly matched, so their situation did not produce the bitterness of an underdog/overdog conflict so often associated with real satiric venom.²⁸

One does not find a clear winner and loser in this first satirical encounter. It altered neither the outcome of the annual colony election or the attitudes of the proprietor in London. The engagement, nevertheless, was important in two ways. It demonstrated first that pamphlets disguised as satire could give the public information the government otherwise would have kept secret. People have to think they understand a person or an episode before they can laugh at it, so the satirist either has to pick a widely known target or has to explain his subject well enough that readers think they "get" the joke; one cannot satirize something readers have never heard of. Under the pretense of mocking them, the humorist can expose otherwise secret deliberations of the provincial council, unpublished speeches to the assembly, or private conversations between individuals.²⁹ Andrew Hamilton, one of Logan's allies, later speaker of the assembly, was revealed in one pamphlet to be a Scotsman of illegitimate birth who came to the colonies as an indentured servant and made his fortune by marrying and abandoning rich widows.³⁰ The printer Andrew Bradford later included in his newspaper a story purporting to be about the French court, but actually designed to detail the way Logan and Hamilton had tried to drive a wedge between the proprietor and the governor he appointed as Keith's successor.³¹ Both efforts passed on to the public very incriminating (though possibly half-slandorous) information readers would not have picked up any other way.

Even more important, the Keith-Logan standoff almost undoubtedly showed that printed satire was beginning to find a market. We have no

28. Carl Bridenbaugh's otherwise extremely useful book on Philadelphia, *Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York, 1962), got this one wrong. He argued (p. 118) the reverse of what actually happened over the century: "The . . . crudely composed briefs [were] characterized by much personal abuse and frequent scurrility. . . [in] humorless bludgeoning of opponents."

29. See Isaac Norris, *The Speech Delivered from the Bench . . . the 11th day of September, 1727* (Philadelphia, 1727) Evans, 2937.

30. *The Life and Character of a Strange He-Monster* [Philadelphia reprint of London publication? Not clear.] pp. 1-2, 9.

31. De Armond, *Andrew Bradford*, p. 100.

statistics on circulation, but the very appearance of thirteen pamphlets in one year, some of them rejoinders to other pamphlets which the authors had to assume had been read, suggests that printers found political humor profitable. Between 1713 and 1725 Bradford had averaged seven and a half items a year. By 1724 he had been joined by another printer. Between the two of them the number of pamphlets published increased to eighteen, and the following year to twenty-two, an almost three-fold increase over two years.³² Satire, it seemed, could popularize constitutional or economic issues so complicated that otherwise the public might have left them alone.

Phase II: Transition, 1725-1754 Even though the potential market and the potential uses of satire were clear by 1726, broad satirical combat (aside from limited exchanges in the colony's two newspapers) did not occur again for nearly three decades. By the time it did so, a shift in the colony's political alignments and balance of political power, an expansion of the regional and social market for satire, and the introduction of new satirical approaches from England had all taken place, suggesting to humorists new objectives and new techniques, new markets and new subjects, new vitrol and new whimsy.

The political alteration occurred in the ten years after Keith's dismissal. Keith was formally dismissed from the governorship in 1726 but the argument over his position took two or three more years to play out, since Keith then entered the Assembly, ran for Speaker, and left the colony for good only after he was defeated. By 1731 the controversy over Keith was over and with it the related pamphleteering. But the period from his dismissal until the last of the fallout from his departure set in train major changes which were to shape the new form of political satire after 1756.

In the years of change Pennsylvania politicians moved from a Keith (popular) versus Logan (Quaker elite) alignment into a Quaker versus Proprietary alignment. On long-running issues of proprietary authority and provincial defense, Quakers increasingly forced proprietary governors on the defensive and assumed a commanding dominance of the legislature. Pamphleteers, particularly on the shrinking proprietary side, noted that in England Sir Robert Walpole was being seriously

32. This is tabulated from titles given in Evans and Bristol.

embarrassed by satirical attacks despite his seemingly indomitable control of Parliament. Pennsylvania pamphlet satirists were inspired to experiment with new styles and new popular appeals, while the more cautious newspaper contributors and club savants stuck more to gentle Addisonian comment. But both gentle or acidic writers became aware of satire's political potential.

The conditions for renewed political satire were established through the beginning of a realignment in Pennsylvania politics.³³ Over several difficult years Andrew Hamilton, Logan, and the proprietary governor worked out a rather loose partnership while the younger Isaac Norris and his Quaker allies drifted into opposition. By 1739, when war broke out with Spain (in 1744 with France) and Pennsylvanians had both a harbor and a frontier to defend, two long-running rival political factions were coalescing around Proprietary and Quaker leadership.

Neither side looked very strong on provincial defense. Quaker pacifism prevented Quaker legislators from voting directly for any sort of military support. The proprietor and his governors, while arguing against allowing pacifists in government at all, themselves refused to let the proprietor's lands be taxed for defense.³⁴ For a few years both sides were equally vulnerable at the polls but early in the 1740s the proprietary party fell behind for good, thanks to some disastrous decisions on the part of the proprietary governor.³⁵ After that the "Quaker party" established an unshakable control of the Pennsylvania assembly, so unshakable, in fact, that for a number of years the proprietary party backed away from wholesale competition in elections. Dominance of the legislative branch of government encouraged Quakers to depict the assembly as the popularly elected part of government and themselves as the "popular" party resisting executive control, thereby putting the proprietary supporters in an even more hopeless position in elections, and

33. Within two or three years of Keith's dismissal, Logan's earlier ally, Isaac Norris, retired from politics and was succeeded by his son Isaac II who did not continue his father's alliance with Logan. On the other hand David Lloyd, Logan's old nemesis, also retired and was replaced as speaker by Logan's new ally, Andrew Hamilton.

34. On this see especially Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1994) esp. pp. 258-296, Tully's *William Penn's Legacy: Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726-55* (Baltimore, 1977), ch. I, and Charles P. Keith, *Chronicles of Pennsylvania*, II (Philadelphia, 1917) pp. 756-8.

35. First, he deprived servants' owners of what they believed to be their property rights, when he encouraged servants to enlist in the military. He followed this up by bringing in an unruly group of merchant seamen to intimidate Quaker voters at the polls in 1742.

therefore likely to try out satire as a last weapon of attack.

In the same years that Quakers were using their control of a realigned Pennsylvania assembly to call themselves the "popular" party, the popular market for political literature expanded significantly. This increased circulation made it less and less useful for political satirists to limit their intended readership, either by circulating copies only in manuscript or by using satire that appealed only to a well-informed elite. The rather sudden influx into Pennsylvania of new, largely literate Germans beginning in 1727³⁶ combined with a somewhat more gradual introduction of Scots Irish to expand Pennsylvania's population into the western parts of the colony. For the new migrants' defense against French and Indian raids was a particularly crucial issue during the mid-century wars. So was representation in the legislature as new immigrants who could purchase fifty acres of land became qualified to vote, only to find that Quaker legislation gerrymandered their districts so they were chronically under-represented in relation to the seaboard Quaker stronghold. The new population brought volatility to the frontier, intensified the differences over defense and representation, and produced two new groups whose non-English qualities made them eminently satirizable, especially to the Quakers who took Englishness to be one of the colony's identifying characteristics.³⁷

Over the same decades Pennsylvania's market for political humor expanded socially as well as geographically, as Philadelphia added new urban residents who could not vote (only 13-15 per cent of Philadelphians owned property enough to meet the £50 qualification) but could petition, or riot, or disrupt the polls.³⁸ Coffee shops, including Bradford's London Coffee House, a center for public affairs, print shops, and newspapers, introduced printed matter to the middling orders in town, as peddlers, ministers, post riders, wagoners, and the occasional book dealer carried printed matter to the newly settled western counties. Minstrels, balladeers, public readers, and cartoonists adapted printed

36. Samuel Edwin Weber, *The Charity School Movement in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1969) p. 14; Kenneth Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England; An Enquiry into the Social Context of Literacy in the Early Modern West*. (New York, 1983), p. 74.

37. Tully, *Forming American Politics*, pp. 29, 40, 110, 126, 146, 157. Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, (New York, 1964), pp. 14, 51, 87, 135-6, 231, 261-2.

38. Albert Edward McKinley, *The Suffrage Franchise in the Thirteen English Colonies in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 284-92. The disenfranchised formed "disorderly crowds" in Philadelphia, threatening voters.

thoughts to the oral and pictorial spheres, appealing to the colony's remaining illiterates. Philadelphia's fourteen taverns in 1726 (one for every seven hundred and thirteen inhabitants) grew to a hundred and twenty, or one for every two hundred inhabitants. Virtually every adult male, whatever his social rank, would visit a tavern at least once in his working day and could pick up papers or have them read to him.³⁹ At the height of the Keith-Logan controversy there had been at most two printers who produced twenty-two items, exclusive of newspapers. Over the next three decades the number of printers and sellers grew to eleven, producing a hundred and seventy items annually. Of the twelve most important printers throughout the colonies, five were located in Philadelphia.⁴⁰

At the time the Philadelphia print market was beginning to take off, the first copies of John Gay's *Beggar's Opera* and Alexander Pope's most popular satire, *The Dunciad*, arrived in the colonies, providing would-be satirists with fresh models of satirical style. Both works had proved enormous popular successes. English pamphlets about Pope increased five-fold from the late 1720's to the early 1730's and Pope's immense popularity peaked in the generation after 1730. Gay's *Beggar's Opera*, performed in the colonies within months of its appearance on the London stage, proved so disturbing to Sir Robert Walpole's ministry that the English government pushed legislation through Parliament requiring all plays to obtain government approval before being performed. Pope, Swift, Gay and their English contemporaries introduced a venomous bite, a punitive purpose to colonial satire; they brought a new relish for unmasking the hypocrite, a new emphasis on verse satire, even singable satire (Gay's opera identified satire with street and tavern songs), and a reputation of getting under the skin of otherwise invincible politicians.⁴¹

39. Six villages outside Philadelphia had subscription libraries, though it was normally only the wealthy who could afford to join. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, p. 181.

40. Lawrence C. Wroth, *An American Bookshelf* (New York, 1969) reminds us that this is almost certainly a low estimate. By Wroth's calculation 4.7 pieces were actually published for every one noted by Evans' Guide. Of the twelve most important publishers in the colonies in the decade before the Revolution, five were located in Philadelphia. G. Thomas Tanselle, "Some Statistics on American Printing, 1767-83 in Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench, eds. *The Press in the American Revolution*, Tables 3A, 3C. (Worcester, Mass., 1980.) Carl Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentleman*, noted that Philadelphia's eight print shops in 1740 had increased to twenty-three in 1775 (p. 72).

41. A good place to start on this subject is Bertrand Goldgar's *Walpole and the Wits* (Lincoln, Neb. 1976), *passim*.

As venom spread into pamphlet satire, the Addisonian gentility of the Keith-Logan controversy moved in printed form from the pamphlet to the newspaper, and in manuscript form continued to circulate in clubs and coffeehouses. In 1729 Benjamin Franklin bought out one of Philadelphia's two current newspaper publishers and set up the *Pennsylvania Gazette* as a rival to the town's other paper, Bradford's *American Mercury*. Franklin's Addisonian jabs at Bradford inspired Bradford to respond in kind: for nearly a generation the newspapers along with manuscripts replaced the pamphlets as sources of humor, especially in their satiric sparring.⁴² Again, we have no estimates of circulation, but over the period 1725-70 the average American paper's circulation grew from about 600 to nearly 1,500.⁴³ Franklin grew wealthy enough from his printing business to retire at age forty-two; Bradford made enough to establish the town's biggest coffee house, produce two magazines, and found an insurance company. Though Bradford's inclination was to the Proprietary party and Franklin's to the Quaker, the news items rarely covered local politics. Except for a few issues like the Assembly election of Andrew Hamilton, whom Bradford did not like, and the momentary estrangement of Logan and his proprietary governor, which Bradford blamed on Hamilton, the printers rarely disputed political issues. Political issues did not indeed explode in print again until the Seven Years' War at mid-century, and when they did, it was in pamphlet and broadside form, not in the newspapers.

Phase III: The Seven Years' War, 1754-1765

When war began, Pennsylvania writers in general were far more attracted to political satire than their predecessors had been. In the generation since the Keith-Logan dispute the westward push of the frontier

42. For a full discussion of this see De Armond, *Andrew Bradford*. In the period the papers began to take up the mask/mirror metaphor earlier used so much in English satire. Cf. October 18, 1733, *The Mercury*, p. 89:

No mask so dark but Janus must shine thro'.

Or 1734, #746, p. 100:

I no man call or ape or ass

Tis his own conscience holds the glass.

See also "The Philadelphia Press" in William David Sloan and Julie Hedgepeth Williams, *The Early American Press, 1690-1783* (Westport, Conn., 1954), pp. 58-9, an old but excellent study. Elizabeth Christine Cook, *Literacy Influences in Colonial Newspapers, 1704-1750* (Port Washington, New York, 1966 edn. of 1912 study), chs. iii and iv, and *Benjamin Franklin's Writings*, notes by J.A. Leo Lemay (New York, 1987) esp. pp. 92-110.

43. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence*, p. 303.

and the growth of population in the seaboard towns had created a market of readers whose frustrations with an unresponsive government led them to welcome political criticism disguised as humor. New printers were available to publish satire, and merchants and taverners to distribute it to the new market. And writers had an arsenal of new satirical tools with which to approach the new market; opposition politicians could take particular cheer from the English experience, where satire had proved an effective weapon against an otherwise invincible government. The readership, the techniques, the marketing, and the issues that we tentatively associate with the appearance of political satire were in place. And these associations certainly worked for Pennsylvania, which became the site of the most intensive and most effective satirical combat in pre-revolutionary America.

The satirical exchanges began slowly, opening in 1755 with disputes over the Quaker war effort, moving on to the Assembly's prosecution of a proprietary supporter, Dr. William Smith, for libel for helping get an anti-Quaker tract published, and escalating until the final stage when the "march of the Paxton Boys" to protest lack of frontier defense produced an unprecedented output of pamphlets in 1764.

Stage I began when Quakers in and out of the Assembly divided over whether they could accept even a voluntary militia, whether they could vote money for specific military uses, and whether they could actually declare war on Indian tribes. Even those Quakers who could support such measures refused to approve revenue bills that would exempt proprietary lands from taxation. Proprietary supporters in England pressed the Privy Council to disqualify Quakers from the Assembly. In a compromise, some Friends agreed not to run for office in 1756. Others did run, and the combination of these and non-Quakers who nevertheless supported the Quaker party, gave Quakers continued domination of the house, albeit one which now supported defense.⁴⁴

Half a dozen pamphlets appeared during these early years, one of which, *Kawania Che Keeteru* (I am Master wherever I am) by the proprietary assemblyman Nicholas Scull, was a hilarious attack on assembly Quakers who

44. See Tully, *Forming American Politics*, pp. 149-54, 182-96, 287-96, William S. Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, 1964) pp. 149-152-3, James Hutson, *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770*, (Princeton, 1972), pp. 109-12, 23-33, Robert L. D. Davidson, *War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania, 1682-1756* (New York, 1957), Ch. i, Joseph Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania, A History* (New York, 1976), ch. 9, and Tully, *William Penn's Legacy*, p. 43.

To secure themselves their Places
Began to put on martial faces.

It purported to tell the story of a fight between George (England) and Lewis (France). George came to Simon (any Quaker assemblyman) to borrow cash to buy a sword. Simon advised George not to fight:

But George, thy rash Design forbear
And trust to Heaven's paternal Call
Those who for self defense contend
Cannot on Providence depend.

But then went ahead and voted a little supply anyway.

But as thy Money is so Scant
A little Sum thou shalt not want.⁴⁵

Deservedly the best-remembered of all the satires the colony produced, *Kawania* is a milestone in the development of political humor in Pennsylvania in several ways. It is striking in its consistency of meter and rhyme. But beyond style, it is the colony's first published satire in verse, rollicking, if not really singable. It is satire that alludes to easily recognizable groups, rather than to obscure individuals identifiable only to a small, genteel group "in the know"; any reader or listener would know who George or Lewis or Simon stood for and could have the fun of "getting it." It has, in other words, expanded the satirists' "popular" readership. And finally, it is the first political satire fully to focus on exposing a political pose as a fraud, a political claim as a sham, a politician as a hypocrite.

Simon, he [George] saw us'd all his art
To hide the language of his Heart
That all he said on Self Defense
Was nothing more than mere Pretense.⁴⁶

At the same time *Kawania Che Keeteru* was being published in Pennsylvania, two non-satirical attacks on the Quakers appeared in London.

45. *Kawania Che Keeteru; A True Relation of a Bloody Battle Fought Between George and Lewis in the Year 1753*. Evans 7788; p. 5.

46. *Kawania*, p. 6.

The flare-up over them produced the next satirical stage in the colony. The London prints, *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania* and *A Brief View of the Conduct of Pennsylvania*, were probably the writings of William Smith, the young, arrogant, and anti-Quaker head of the College of Philadelphia.⁴⁷ The pamphlets were not humorous – far from it – but their attack on Quaker leadership and Smith's continued diatribes against the Quakers once he returned to the colony led to his arrest and imprisonment by the assembly on charges of libeling them. The attempt to muzzle a writer was extraordinarily rare in eighteenth-century Philadelphia and the charges were later thrown out by the Privy Council, but here again the threat of political censorship appeared that had often inspired a circuitous approach to resistance. Before this stage was over a half-dozen more pamphlets had appeared, one a satire on Smith himself and two humorous attacks on Smith's would-be judges in the Pennsylvania assembly.

The best known of the three was an acerbic critique of the judges, *A Fragment of the Chronicles of Nathan Ben Saddi*, equating the Quakers with an ancient tribe of Jews who feared being overrun by Gentiles. The first chapter of the satire was an attack that would have resonated with a popular audience since it was a parody of Old Testament writing which virtually everyone in the colony would have known. It mocked the Quaker reluctance to provide for defense. "We have neither helmets on our heads nor spears in our hands nor coats of mail. . . but as a fool fallen before wicked men so we fall." Chapter one went on to criticize the Quakers for blaming the colony's defenselessness on the proprietor. False prophets of the Jews grossly deceived the people when they cried, "the man that ruleth over you is a man of wicked heart, and seeketh to make you eaters of grass and drinkers of water." After chapter one however, the parody drifted into a fictional account of Smith's accusers, nicknaming the chief figures in a way that would have limited the audience and going on to an almost unintelligible dream allegory of one of the characters.⁴⁸

47. Lawrence C. Wroth, *An American Bookshelf*, 1755, (Philadelphia 1934), pp. 143-45; Horace Wemyss Smith, *Life and Correspondence of the Reverend William Smith*, (Philadelphia, 1879) I pp. 176-185, Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740-1776* (Philadelphia, 1953), pp. 30-31.

48. [David Dove] *A Fragment of the Chronicles of Nathan Ben Saddi, A Rabbi of the Jews* [Constantinople. . .] Philadelphia, 1758. See Isaac Sharpless, *Political Leaders of Provincial Pennsylvania* (Freeport, New York, 1971 reprint of 1919 edn.), pp. 193-4.

Far more effective to a popular audience would have been David Dove's *The Lottery*, a satire in verse against Smith ("Dr. Cant") and the college. *The Lottery* ended up with two ballads, one "The Academy Garland; to the tune of A Begging We Will Go":

But Neighbors! To convince you
We're easily content
We from each Prize that may arise
Take but fifteen percent

Some of the individual names are abbreviated but as a rule they are either well known ("wicked Will M— — —e; William Moore, Smith's associate) or they are described with clues ("Lest the Reader should be ignorant of the Person intended. . .").⁴⁹

Stage III produced by far the most substantial battle of the wits in the entire colonial period. The conflict was over the "March of the Paxton Boys" in 1764; like the earlier encounters of 1755/6 and 1758 it sprang from the Seven Year's War. After the war was over a loose alliance of Indian tribes continued to attack Western Pennsylvania communities. Volunteer groups of frontiersmen went after the hostile Indians, but they also attacked and killed friendly Indians, apparently thinking they were spies. By early February, 1764, they threatened to march on the Quaker government in Philadelphia that had denied them aid. Two hundred and fifty of them got as far as Germantown. More than two hundred Quakers, some of them armed, organized to defend Philadelphia against the marchers, but the Paxton Boys never reached the town. They disbanded after a negotiating committee sent out to talk with them promised that the government would consider their grievances.⁵⁰

The Paxton March brought into one focus all the issues that had been slowly intensifying for forty years. Quakers suspected that the frontier Scots-Irish, whose votes they had once courted, were actually lawless

49. *The Lottery, A Dialogue Between the Thomas Trueman and Mr. Humphrey Dupe*. (Germantown, 1758). Evans, 8114.

50. For the fullest narrative of events see Brooke Hindle, "The March of the Paxton Boys", *William and Mary Quarterly* 2 (1946) pp. 461-86, but see also James E. Crowley, "The Paxton Disturbance and Ideas of Order in Pennsylvania Politics." *Pennsylvania History*, 37 (1970) p. 317-339, the brief accounts in Alan Tully's article, "Ethnicity, Religion, Politics in Early America," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 107 (1983) pp. 512-521 and James Hutson's *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and its Consequences* (Princeton, 1971) ch. II. George W. Franz, *Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Back-country* (New York, 1989) discusses the "ad hoc" community that had developed in Paxton at the time of the march.

troublemakers, unwilling to recognize the government's authority in negotiating Indian treaties and hence a constant threat to frontier order. The frontier "rebels" in turn thought the Quaker legislators deceitful and duplicitous men who talked of themselves as the party of the people but were unresponsive in dealing with people who happened to live in the west. Quakers talked pacifism but were quick to arm against the Paxton marchers; they talked responsible government but used pacifism as an excuse for leaving their borders defenseless, they talked brotherhood but acted purely on self interest in their Indian alliances.

So while the Paxton disturbances died down quickly, the issues they inflamed did not. The Paxtonians were back in their homes by the end of February, 1764, but pro-and anti-Paxton pamphlets appeared from then until the October election, arousing potential voters and the voteless mobs alike. There were unprecedented numbers of these pamphlets, sixty-three in all, more than had appeared in any colonial conflict to that time and, even allowing for small printings, enough for every adult male to own a copy of at least one. A dozen or so were attempts at political humor; some included cartoons while other cartoons were published separately as broadsides. So the number of humorous pieces came to over fifteen, several times as many as in any previous controversy. Some of the pamphlets went through several editions (one went through four) and some were reprinted at several different shops. We have no way of knowing how many copies were actually printed; we do know that the number of different works was enough to push Philadelphia ahead of Boston in quantity of published output,⁵¹ and that the pamphlet controversy was common conversation in the taverns as well as the drawing rooms.

In the numerous productions that appeared in this pamphlet war we can see a strong suggestion that some of the satirists at least were beginning to pitch their appeals to the lower and middling ranks that previously would have eluded their genteel perspective.⁵² Five of the seven most important printers were located within a block or so of Market and Second Streets, where taverns catering to a variety of interests were cen-

51. G. Thomas Tanselle, "Some Statistics on American Printing, 1764-1783" in Bailyn and Hench, eds. *The Press and the American Revolution*, Tables 7A, 7B, 3A.

52. This was not, however, always the case. Carla Mulford, "Caritas and Capital: Franklin's Narrative of the Late Massacres." in J.A. Leo Lemay, ed. *Reappraising Benjamin Franklin: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Newark, Del. 1993), n. 16, p. 93, postulates a more well-to-do audience for Franklin's *Narrative*.

tered. Remarkably, nine of the productions were actually broadsides, cheap printings on one sheet of paper, meant to be passed quickly from hand to hand or even posted on walls. The broadside appeal was truly unprecedented: besides official proclamations meant to be posted on church and office doors, only a half-dozen broadsides at most had been printed in all the colonies up to this time, none in Philadelphia. Cartoons, as well, had almost never been printed before: now ten were designed at least in part for the illiterate workers, though a few contained written explanations or doggerel verse. Moreover, prices now appeared on the opening page of pamphlets; several informed their readers that they sold for two pence, affordable to almost anyone.

Along with the marketing appeal to lower ranks went stylistic innovation to touch a wider range of tastes. Parody, adventure tales, mock dialogues, farcial plays, "advice to a painter" writings, allegories, above all verse, and even some songs, appeared along with cartoons.⁵³ The experimentation, variety, and multi-level appeal of the Paxton pamphlets is every bit as impressive as their great number.

Possibly the least effective of the Paxton satires was the allegory, reflected in the anti-Paxton *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania*, telling the story of a Waymode (Proprietor) who made an alliance with a Turkish sect (the Presbyterians) who then made the Transylvania legislature so miserable they appealed for help to their Emperor (the King of England).⁵⁴ Far better was the parody: a parody of a Quaker prayer (*The Quakers' Grace*), parody of a Presbyterian one, parodies of letters, formal addresses, even a parodied epitaph of Benjamin Franklin.⁵⁵ Better yet were the songs, "*A Battle! A Battle! A Battle of Squirr! . . . to the Tune of Three Blue Beans*," "*A Touch on the Times, A New Song, To the Tune of Nancy Dawson*."⁵⁶

53. *The Squabble, A Pastoral Eclogue* (Philadelphia, 1764); *The Paxton Boys* (Philadelphia, 1764). See Gary H. Richardson, *American Drama from the Colonial Period through World War II: A Cultural History* (New York, 1993), pp. 12-13. *The Address of the People call'd Quakers, in the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764). Isaac Hunt, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764).

54. Hunt, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania*, p. 4.

55. For the epitaph see [Hugh Williamson] *What is Sauce for a Goose is also Sauce for a Gander* (Philadelphia, 1764), [Evans 9879], p. 8; *The Addition to the Epitaph* (Philadelphia 1764). *The Quakers' Address*, and *The School-Boy's Answer to an Insolent Fellow*. (Philadelphia, 1764).

56. *The Paxtoniade, A Poem by Christopher Gymnast* (Evans 9683), also had a singable meter. *A Battle! A Battle* was "*To the Tune Three Blue Beans, in a Blue Bladder; Rattle, Bladder Rattle*." (Philadelphia, 1764).

Even more suggestive than the various forms with which the satirists played in their popular appeal was the language some of them adopted along with nicknames, forms of address, and abbreviations. Compare Logan's mockery of Keith: "Is it possible a Man of Sir William's Honor should deny. . ."⁵⁷ with an attack on Franklin in 1764 ". . . tis certain you have from your youth a Natural Propensity to Lying . . . it would be acting contrary to your own Nature . . . if you had given us one word of Truth"⁵⁸ or a prayer to "Thow great Prince of Darkness," concluding "May I always be ready to blast Virtue when ever I meet her,"⁵⁹ or "Now, Fr— — — k [Franklin] however artfully you may carry on this infamous Practice for a while. . ."⁶⁰

Like other eighteenth-century humorists, the writers on the Paxton issue used nicknames or abbreviations to avoid giving away the names of their targets directly, but the abbreviations required far less detailed identification than earlier works had done.⁶¹ Abbreviations as obvious as Q— — — — rs for Quakers, Fr— — — k for Franklin, Pr — — — — ns for Presbyterians could be deciphered by almost anyone, so most of the public could be a part of the community in the know.⁶² Nicknames like "Hughy" for Hugh Williamson made their subjects familiar items to the public, Rollicking lines like

Battle, A Battle
A Battle of Squirt
Where no man is kill'd
And no man is hurt

though not songs, were almost singable, a delight to the less tutored audience.⁶³

In addition to the extensive popular appeal in the pamphlets of 1764 one can also see highlighted in the Paxton writings the growing

57. *A More Just Vindication*, p. 2.

58. "The Author of the Quaker Unmasked Stript Stark [sic] Naked." *Paxton Papers*, p. 261.

59. *The Addition to the Epitaph* (Philadelphia, 1764).

60. "Author of Quaker Unmasked," *Paxton Papers*, p. 263.

61. Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1987) p. 51.

62. "Remarks on the Quakers Unmask'd, or Plain Truth Found to be Plain Falsehood, Humbly Addressed to the Candid", (Philadelphia., 1764) in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, pp. 27; "The Author of Quaker Unmask'd Strip'd Start [sic] Naked, or the Delineated Presbyterian Play'd Hob With" (Philadelphia, 1764) in *Paxton Papers*, pp. 257-64.

63. Philadelphia, 1764. Reprinted in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, p. 174.

emphasis on satire as the exposure of fraud and hypocrisy. In part this reflected the satirical wit of Charles Churchill, crony of the opposition member of Parliament John Wilkes, whose writings had just reached Pennsylvania in 1764. Churchill had mocked a political enemy as a coward posing as a national hero:

Could he not, from the mystic school
Of art, produce some sacred rule
By which a knowledge might be got
Whether men valiant were, or not
So that he challenges, might write
Only to those who would not fight.⁶⁴

In poem after poem Churchill exposed his enemies as shams, men who pretended to be something they were not so other people would not catch on to their follies or sins. In the frontispieces to the various Pennsylvania satires Pope, Swift, Defoe, even Dryden were generally cited rather than Churchill but Churchill's ridicule of his rogue's gallery of Anti-Wilkites, his meteoric rise to fame in both Britain and the colonies, made him an obvious if belated model. Compare his criticism of a government hack:

He shifts his sails and catches every wind
His soul the shock of interest can't endure
Give him a pension, then and sin secure.⁶⁵

With Paxton's criticism of Franklin:

"For I can never be content
Till I have got the government"
"When dangers threaten tis mere nonsense
To talk of such a thing as conscience."⁶⁶

or

64. "The Ghost," lines 293-8, in *The Political Works of Charles Churchill*, ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford, 1956) pp. 72-3.

65. "The Author," lines 260-3 in *Political Works of Churchill*, ed. Grant p. 254. For an analysis of Churchill's poems see Wallace Cabel Brown *Charles Churchill, Poet, Rake, and Rebel* (Lawrence, Kansas, 1953), esp. pp. 104-116.

66. The cartoons are reproduced in William Murrell, *A History of American Graphic Humor I* (New York, 1933), #12, 14.

The Quakers

Have forever careful been
Not to be often caught in sin.⁶⁷

or

But now the case is alter'd quite
and what was wrong is chang'd to right.⁶⁸

But Churchill's individual inspiration to satirists, while apt, was at best supplemental to the broader attraction of using satirical exposure to embarrass, compromise, and if really successful to disgrace one's political opponents. In the Paxton episode Quakers could satirize Scots Irish hotheads more emboldened by whiskey than principle. But the Paxton side saw the more significant possibilities: doomed to ineffectiveness in a Quaker-dominated legislature they were the suffering minority with no legitimate political weapon other than humor. And what a pair of targets they had! On the one hand pacifist Quakers who would not defend the frontier against Indian attack but would defend themselves against the frontiersmen who suffered from their policies, and on the other hand an easily recognized, and to his opponents hypocritical politician, Benjamin Franklin.

Both sides in the contest claimed to be exposing the frauds, removing the masks of their rivals. At least seven of the pamphlets had "Unmasking" as their theme: "The Cheat Unmask'd," "The Quaker Unmask'd," and so on. But the Paxtonians did better, parodying a Quaker prayer thanking God for their "late Victory over the Rebels," or praising Quakers because,

Their Conduct was so very winning
They gain'd a Liberty of sinning,⁶⁹

mocking Franklin's inconsistent statements about Germans on the frontier, and forever mocking his dominating ambition,

67. "The Quaker's Address, and the School Boys' Answer to an Insolent Fellow" (Philadelphia 1764) in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, p. 180.

68. *A Battle, A Battle*, in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, p. 175.

69. *The Quaker's Address and the School Boys Answer to an Insolent Fellow*, in Dunbar *Paxton Papers*, p. 180.

Fight Dog, Fight Bear, You're all my Friends
By you I shall attain my ends.⁷⁰

It is impossible in this case to measure the effect of political literature, but it is worth noting that in 1764 for the first time, humor really did appear to influence voters' minds. Satirical forays in the past seem not to have changed voters' minds; in the 1764 elections, by contrast. Franklin and his allies, worsted in the pamphlet war, were also worsted at the polls. Since Franklin lost his Assembly seat by a mere eighteen votes, if the satires swayed a mere ten voters, they would have helped defeat Franklin.

While the Paxton pamphlets make clear just how far Pennsylvania's political humor had moved over the previous half century, they also make clear some features that had not yet developed by 1764, the same year that the Sugar Act initiated protests against imperial administration that were to escalate into revolution. Note first that all the humor on the occasion appeared in pamphlets and broadsides. Newspapers were silent. They had, by and large, stuck with Addisonian gentility in their prose columns and even in their poet's corners, while pamphlet humor had become more coarse, even brutal, as writers appealed for broader and broader popular support. Again, compare James Logan's gentle story of a steward who disregarded his master's instructions with Isaac Hunt's biting allegory about a Waymode's (Proprietor's) immoral alliance with "Piss-brutarians."⁷¹ Or re-read Logan's ridicule of Keith's effort at self-defense in 1726, "somebody has been at Great Pains most unmercifully to wound and gash his honor" with the 1764 description of the

. . . wretched Paxtons from their land
Whose hostile Cause with Sword in Hand
These Beasts of prey and Murd'ring Fellows. . .⁷²

In the years immediately before the Revolution, newspapers and pamphlets reversed themselves, newspapers often taking up shorter, more acerbic notices, while pamphlets (though not broadsides) were available for longer, more intellectual appeals. But as late as 1764 Philadelphia

70. Murrell, *American Graphic Humor*, #14.

71. *What's There in to be Found*, p. 10-11; Isaac Hunt, *A Letter from a Gentleman in Transylvania* (Philadelphia, 1764) p. 4.

72. *A More Just Vindication*, p. 1; "A Touch on the Times," in Dunbar, *Paxton Papers*, p. 219.

publications unlike those of, say, Massachusetts and New York, had moved in the opposite direction.

Second, and far more disturbing to later pre-revolutionary writers, Pennsylvania satire by 1764 was still a long way from creating a "community of letters" that would define imperial officials as outsiders. Elsewhere political humorists had commonly directed their jabs at governors and their provincial allies: Cosby of New York, Shute and Bernard of Massachusetts, Dinwiddie of Virginia were exposed to the humiliation of public laughter. The technique of the political humorists was to assume that a community shared common values and standards of behavior and would laugh collectively at someone who wittingly or unwittingly violated its norms. If the violation was done wittingly then it followed that the violator was hostile to the community's values; if unknowingly, then his very lack of understanding placed him outside of the group. One way or another, in the act of laughing the community solidified against the outsider. Over seven decades the slow accretion of humor sporadically directed against them had begun to isolate imperial officials. So in other colonies than Pennsylvania the cumulative effect of the continued ridicule threatened the respect for British office holders in general. Were they hypocrites? The empire itself a sham?

These questions were hard to apply to Pennsylvania political humor. Who exactly were the imperial representatives whose vulnerability to humor undermined respect for the empire they represented? The proprietor certainly derived his legal standing from the King, and much of his political clout in the colony came from his influence with the Privy Council. But he also served as a buffer between Pennsylvanians and direct imperial rule. Quaker leaders, on the other hand, wanted to replace proprietary with royal government, in 1764 petitioning the king to remove the colony from proprietary authority and institute royal rule. Political humor, therefore, had never worked in Pennsylvania as it had worked in other colonies, to highlight the differences between imperial and provincial values.

Pennsylvania, then, is a reminder that political humor by the 1760s had broadened its appeal beyond the urban elite by altering its marketing strategies, varying its forms and formats, opening up its language, and claiming to expose fraud until it had become an effective weapon against entrenched political power. But it also reminds us that humor did not develop evenly in the colonies over the eighteenth century. We need next to study Pennsylvania in comparison with its neighbors; then we can begin to understand the impact of political humor on the first British Empire.