


FROM ORDERED BUCKETS TO HONORED  
FELONS: FIRE COMPANIES AND  
CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION IN  
PHILADELPHIA, 1785-1850

*Ric N. Caric*  
*Morehead State University*

n February 24, 1845, the United States Hose Company, a volunteer fire company in Philadelphia, held a meeting to decide how to respond to an attack on their hose house by Moyamensing Hose.<sup>1</sup> Seeking to avoid more conflict with the “Moyas,” the membership of U.S. Hose voted to stop taking their carriage outside their immediate neighborhoods of Northern Liberties and Kensington. Such humiliation must have been shocking to the high-flying “Blue-Dick Boys” of U.S. Hose. From 1838 to 1845, the era in which fire companies emerged as the most important institutional alternative to Victorian propriety, U.S. Hose became one of the city’s most prominent fire companies. With a rapidly growing membership, U.S. Hose pulled one of the best-known hose carriages in the city, won a highly publicized charity fund-raising contest, and gave as good as they got with rivals like Northern Liberties Hose. Neighborhood boys gathered around the U.S. Hose hose house, eager to run with the “Blue Dick” and join in the next company “spree.” However, the masculine aura surrounding U.S. Hose was

dispelled by the attack on their home base. Unable to defend themselves or exact revenge, U.S. Hose rapidly lost standing as they stopped battling other fire companies and sold their hose carriage. Although "respectable opinion" might have applauded the retreat from violence, the company lost most of its membership and fell into near inactivity within four years.<sup>2</sup>

In *Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850*, Bruce Laurie argued that the fire company violence of the 1840s was associated with "traditional" or "pre-industrial culture." Following E. P. Thompson's analysis in "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," Laurie defined traditional culture as a casual approach toward work in which artisans integrated various forms of leisure into the work day and exercised enough control over their work to take time off when they wished. Antebellum firemen would have been "traditionalists" because they left work to answer fire alarms just as readily as they dropped their tools for impromptu vacations, street carnivals, and trips to the tavern. For Laurie, the traditionalism of the volunteer fire companies contrasted sharply with the "revivalist" or "industrial" culture of evangelicals and temperance activists. Having undergone protracted conversion experiences, evangelical and temperance workmen were committed to the greater self-discipline required by the new forms of machinery. From Laurie's perspective, the cultural changes associated with industrialization involved a fundamental re-orientation of men toward "hearth, home, and church" and away from traditional pastimes.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research on popular culture, however, raises many doubts about Laurie's broad concept of traditional culture and his sharp contrast between the violent fire companies and industrial culture. Current studies treat popular culture between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries as specifically "early modern" rather than broadly traditional. Ronald Hutton and David Cressy argue that much of what is thought of as traditional culture in England—mumming, church ales, morris dancing, Robin Hood plays, St. George ridings, and ascension days—was inaugurated during and after the Renaissance. Like Renaissance fairs and carnivals, English popular culture was characterized by mutually reinforcing displays of individuality and affirmations of collective solidarity. According to Mikhail Bakhtin, Renaissance festivity created wide latitude for participants to display their individual selves as they exchanged insults, carried out prodigious feats of eating and drinking, put on theatrical presentations, and engaged in other kinds of public performances. The focus on performance also created a dimension of freedom that was crucial to the crowd's understanding of themselves as a

"people" asserting collective liberty, local solidarities, and national pride. Early modern popular culture was a flexible set of practices and symbols that could be employed both to popularize the reigning powers and rebel against them. Monarchies successfully popularized themselves through celebrations of royal birthdays, ascension days, and military victories, but popular festivity was also a readily available resource for the Wilkesites and other dissidents. Because of its connection to dissent, popular festivity was also subject to on-going official supervision, criticism, and restriction.<sup>4</sup>

Early modern popular culture also flourished in the English colonies. Local governments in Boston and Philadelphia initially sought to limit taverns and suppress popular celebrations. David Conroy argues, however, that early modern popular culture was reestablished in early eighteenth-century Boston as popular festivals sprang up around training days and court days, and shared drinks once again became a token of hospitality, friendship, and trust. The ban on taverns was never enforced in Philadelphia, and Peter Thompson's history of taverns indicates that tavern leisure in Philadelphia involved the same emphasis on individual display and group solidarity that Bakhtin saw in the popular culture of the Renaissance. Because most eighteenth-century Philadelphia taverns catered to crowds of mixed social standing, even the haughtiest of elites felt pressed to participate in drinking and singing rituals with lower-class tavern goers. Elites gradually enforced a more exclusive sense of gentility, but artisans and laborers continued to participate in early modern leisure into the nineteenth century. Work breaks, street encounters, tavern socializing, and holiday celebrations were organized as situations of performance in which participants displayed their wit, craft knowledge, or character before companies of other men. Those who participated in popular culture sought to be acclaimed in terms of an expansive interpretation of republican independence, but gained such recognition through leisure mechanisms that had been handed down from the Renaissance.<sup>5</sup>

Certainly, some elements of the violent fire companies were rooted in early modern popular culture. The enthusiasm with which violent firemen in Philadelphia left their workplaces to fight fires was consistent with the early modern integration of festivity into the work day. Contrary to the focus on individual performance in early modern culture, however, the fire companies of the 1840s organized their activities in terms of collective performance and representation. Companies raced to fires, fought rivals for access to plugs, and attacked rival companies on the streets as groups rather than individuals.

They also staged a variety of ceremonies designed to celebrate the value and prestige of the company as a collective, including balls, the triennial firemen's parade, escorts for new engines and hose carriages, and visits by companies from other cities. This emphasis on collective identity represented an important shift away from the organizational and symbolic modes of early modern popular culture in Philadelphia. Indeed, there was considerable overlap between the violent fire companies and the Washingtonian temperance movement in Philadelphia. Laurie himself points out that violent companies like Weccacoe Fire Company were temperance companies. Likewise famous rioting companies like Northern Liberties Hose and Fairmount Fire Company were closely identified with the Washingtonian movement.<sup>6</sup>

The violent fire companies also broke with early modern culture through their representations of gender. In early modern popular culture, masculinity was posed in terms of an opposition between an independent, improvisational "self" and a person, set of persons, forces, or objects that threatened the self's independence. Africans, Jews, the sea, cats, pigs, and various kinds of physical deformities could be portrayed as the "other" against which independent masculinity defined itself. However, the most prevalent vehicle for portraying otherness was the feminine. Defining masculinity in opposition to stereotypically feminine qualities, early modern men viewed themselves as "unmanned" when they saw their behavior as passive, cowardly, excessively passionate, and sensual. They also were highly ambivalent about imputing to women any masculine qualities or independent standing. Female control over their sexuality, involvement in childbirth, education, property holding, and presence in public space all raised intense anxieties among early modern men.<sup>7</sup>

By contrast, Philadelphia fire companies viewed rival fire companies as the "other" against which they defined themselves. A company like the Good Will Engine Company defined itself primarily against long-standing enemies like Fairmount Fire Company rather than women. In this context, the fire companies used masculine and feminine imagery together in a manner that would not have been tolerated in early modern popular culture. The fire companies gave their engines and hose carriages names like "Yellow Hickory" and "Towboat" to represent traditionally masculine qualities of power, strength, speed, and courage. However, volunteer fire companies also represented engines and hose carriages in terms of beauty, virginity, chastity, and vulnerability to "molestation." Engines and hose carriages were also the most important objects through which fire companies like Good Will Engine, U.S. Hose, and Lafayette Hose represented themselves as collectives. Instead

of viewing themselves as "unmanned" by any association with the feminine in the manner of early modern popular culture, the rioting companies of the 1840s carried the feminine qualities associated with engines and fire companies into the symbolic display of the company as a whole in fire company parades and public balls.<sup>8</sup>

Philadelphia's volunteer fire companies underwent a two-step transition from early modern culture to industrial modernity. The first step in this transformation was the transition from buckets to hose. When buckets were the primary means for conveying water to fires, the volunteer fire companies provided few opportunities for men to display their individuality and sense of duty other than fighting fires. Clerks performed most company responsibilities in the name of the company as a whole, meetings were poorly attended, and the activities of members were limited to keeping their buckets in order and paying fines for not attending meetings. The switch from buckets to hose, however, made it possible for the fire companies to integrate early modern festivity more thoroughly into their proceedings. The advent of hose made it imperative for the fire companies to arrive early if they wanted to be of service in fighting fires; they recruited large numbers of young men to pull their engines and hose carriages. Maintaining engines, hose carriages, fire houses and other equipment, racing to arrive first at fires, and jostling with other companies for eligible positions all created opportunities for fire company members to be acclaimed for their speed, strength, and civic-mindedness, and to celebrate their accomplishments with their companies and the public at large. At the same time, fire company membership became significantly younger and more artisanal in character, giving the fire companies an even more egalitarian significance than they had in Franklin's time.

Beginning with the Washington Centennial of 1832, the fire companies also turned away from early modern culture to an emphasis on violent, collective rituals. Where early modern popular culture was organized around individual performance, Philadelphia fire companies focused on representing the company as a collective, specifically on creating prestige for the company and developing strategies for representing that prestige to the public. In this context, rioting became the primary means for creating and enhancing the reputation of the companies, as battles with other companies proved to be a more effective way for the companies to demonstrate their "character" than fighting fires. In the fire rioting of the late 1830s and 1840s, firemen viewed exposing themselves to the pistols, knives, brickbats, and clubs of rival companies as the most important way to demonstrate the value of the

company. By their willingness to be injured, maimed, or killed by their rivals, members of companies like the Good Will Engine Company viewed themselves as demonstrating the courage and steadfastness of the company as a whole and guaranteeing reputation-enhancing victories over cowardly rivals. Philadelphia fire companies represented this prestige to the public by arranging ritual occasions like parades, balls, and ceremonial presentations, and managing symbolic objects like uniforms, color schemes for engines and hose carriages, mottoes, banners, and silver horns.

A final characteristic of the rioting companies was the mutually reinforcing character of the masculine and feminine imagery used to represent themselves and their symbolic objects. Employing feminine imagery to depict the virtue of exposing oneself to danger, Philadelphia firemen conceived traditionally feminine virtues of chastity, helplessness, and self-sacrifice as a significant component of a company's masculine identity. Far from viewing femininity as "the other," Philadelphia firemen represented traditionally female qualities as necessarily linked to the traditionally masculine virtues of strength and power in the representation of company effectiveness and prestige. Complex combinations of traditionally masculine and feminine imagery were especially significant in fire company songs and the representation of fire-company houses, banners, engines, and hose carriages.

### Early Modern Culture and Post-revolutionary Fire Companies

The first volunteer fire company in Philadelphia was the Union Fire Company, which was formed by Benjamin Franklin and his friends in 1736. Rapid population growth, the potentially disastrous consequences of unchecked fires, and republican aspirations for community service combined to increase the number of volunteer companies to eighteen by the end of the Revolution and thirty-four by the time the first hose company was formed in 1803. Post-revolutionary fire companies were one of the several dimensions of popular culture where elites participated enthusiastically along with the other sectors of the population. Gentlemen, merchants, shopkeepers, lawyers, doctors, and artisans all served as volunteer firemen, with the different companies combining occupation groups in a variety of ways. The Hibernia Fire Company, for example, was almost exclusively a gentlemen's and merchants' company whose membership included Robert Morris, John Nixon, and other directors of the Bank of North America. In 1797, the

Hibernia Company had nineteen merchants, two government officials, one grocer, and only one artisan among its members. The Delaware Fire Company, on the other hand, had a fairly balanced membership with twenty-eight artisans along with thirty-nine merchants, seventeen grocers, eleven ship's captains, doctors, and lawyers, and two laborers and seamen among its ninety-seven identifiable members between 1785 and 1805. At the same time, the membership of the Diligent Fire Company was predominately artisan when it was founded in 1791, with ten craftsmen, six merchants, two grocers, and four other non-manual businessmen among the founding members. According to Peter Thompson and Richard Bushman, many elites attempted to separate their economic activities, leisure, and general style of living from the other orders of society. Despite such efforts, there was still a strong dimension of mutual cooperation among merchants, professionals, and artisans in the volunteer fire companies.<sup>9</sup>

Bruce Laurie was accurate in characterizing post-revolutionary fire companies as little more than supper clubs that took on few firefighting-related activities. The volunteer companies engaged in no collective care of equipment and no training in using their equipment, entering burning buildings, saving property, or rescuing fire victims. Every company scheduled a monthly meeting, but little business was conducted at the meetings, which were so poorly attended that fines for non-attendance were a major financial resource for the companies. Nevertheless, volunteer firemen played crucial roles in times of fire. The arrival of volunteer firemen with their buckets and engines made it possible to form lines of citizens to pass water by bucket from wells, creeks, and the Delaware River. The water was then poured into the engines and played in a concentrated manner onto the fire. Thus, it was primarily the buckets (as well as fire hooks and ladders) provided by the volunteer firemen that allowed members of the community to organize themselves for the collective effort of putting out fires. Their provision of buckets and control over the engine allowed volunteer firemen to assume leadership in a crucially important community function.<sup>10</sup>

Like other early modern cultural practices in post-revolutionary Philadelphia, participation in fire companies involved a mutual articulation of independent individuality and group solidarity. As was the case with work breaks, tavern contests, and holiday celebrations, volunteer firemen sought to distinguish themselves through rule-governed performances before their peers. Participants in leisure accepted a set of rules that ethically bound them to a "company" of spectators. When they emerged victorious from competitive performances, men

could be recognized simultaneously for their individual qualities of knowledge, talent, resourcefulness, and skill, and for their adherence to the group. In the early modern culture of post-revolutionary Philadelphia, men both identified themselves with the traits that were mirrored back to them by companies of their peers and experienced that identification as real. This process of identifying with ideal characteristics enabled artisans and merchants to overcome the threats to their bodily integrity that they associated with their everyday difficulties and function without undue anxiety.<sup>11</sup>

This was also the case with the volunteer firemen who accepted the articles of the fire company as the conditions for their performance as firemen. On signing the company articles, members were obligated to perform many duties, including attending meetings, serving as clerk, purchasing and maintaining fire equipment, paying fines, and firefighting. It was only by acting individually to carry out duties (serving as clerk, maintaining equipment, paying fines) that members of the fire companies could seek recognition while engaged in fighting fires and other collective activities. Volunteer firemen displayed their character, energy, and courage as individuals, but could only do so within the fellowship or harmony of the company. A good example of the reinforcement between individual qualities and the solidarity of the group can be seen in the retirement letter of Samuel Coates from the Fellowship Fire Company in 1816:

That you can get a more active and useful member to serve in my place I will know; but I doubt if you can find one who feels more interest than I do in the welfare of our Society or one who has a higher respect for the Characters of its worthy members. For all the kindness and attentions toward me[, ] I thank you individually and collectively and in the Spirit of true harmony which brought and cemented us together in the bands of Friendship for the Good of the Community.<sup>12</sup>

Post-revolutionary fire companies were characterized by mutually-supporting rhythms of individual and collective activity. The most important individual activities were keeping buckets "in order" and serving as clerk, both of which served to maintain the companies in a functional solidarity. Before 1803, all fire companies required their members to purchase and keep fire buckets and fire bags in their homes, while some companies also obligated members to keep membership lists and copies of the company's constitution or articles. The most important of these items was the fire



bucket. Made of leather and labeled with the name of the owner and/or his company, fire buckets were the means through which the fire companies made it possible for the community to bring water to the site of the fire. When the State House alarm rang, most members of the company retrieved their buckets and brought them to the site of the fire. They then distributed the buckets to citizens (men, women, and children) who formed lines to pass them from a water source to the fire and then pass the empty buckets back to be refilled.

Until leather hose was introduced in the late 1790s, buckets were the only means by which water was conveyed to fires and were thus indispensable. As a result, the ability of the volunteer companies to render "service" depended on their keeping a large supply of serviceable buckets on hand. Upon signing the constitution or articles of the Company, the first obligation of the members was to purchase between two and six buckets, keep them in their homes, repair the buckets when damaged, and replace them if lost or stolen. To ensure that each member kept his buckets repaired, the companies assigned clerks to inspect buckets as part of their monthly inspection of equipment. When fire buckets and other items were "in order," the members had achieved both the solidarity of being in conformity with company rules and the usefulness of being prepared to fight fires. If buckets were missing or out of order, the member was fined and reported to the company as a whole at the next meeting. When there were no fires, maintaining buckets from month to month required little or no effort. After a fire, however, volunteers either had to remain at the site or return to pick up their buckets from the mass of buckets scattered around the streets.<sup>13</sup>

It was the duty of the clerk to perform the other functions needed to keep the volunteer companies ready to fight fires. When the fire companies were not holding meetings or fighting fires, the clerks were the only men responsible for company business. The whole range of clerk activities is outlined in the seventh article of the 1809 Fellowship Fire Company constitution:

Each of the members . . . shall serve the company as clerk for the space of one month, who is hereby required to inspect the order of our fire engine, hose, ladders, hooks, bags, buckets, printed articles, and lists of names, and make report at each monthly meeting of their condition: to collect all fines and forfeitures occurring by virtue hereof, and to notify every member . . . of the time and place of Meeting . . . and if any person proposed to be admitted a member, or any alterations of,

or additions to these articles be thought necessary to be made, he shall inform every member thereof by a written printed notice . . .; and Shall enter minutes of the proceedings of the Company in a Book provided for that purpose . . .; and the Clerk shall be accountable to the rest of the Company for, and pay to the Treasurer within one month after the expiration of his clerkship, all the money accruing to the Company by virtue of these articles—<sup>14</sup>

In many ways, the clerk's job was to act for the company as a whole when the company was not gathered as a collective. For instance, by delivering notices to members' homes, the clerk performed the company's obligation to notify members of upcoming meetings, which, in turn, created an obligation on the part of the member to attend. If the clerk failed to deliver notices, the members were not responsible for attending even if they knew a meeting was scheduled for that date. The same was the case with inspecting the buckets, bags, articles, and lists of names of the members. The clerk represented the company as a whole when he judged the extent to which a member's equipment was "in order" and assessed fines. If members did not have their buckets and other equipment in order, they were not performing their "duties" as members of the company and when a clerk assessed fines, he was identifying those who were no longer in "harmony" or solidarity with the rest of the company. Conversely, when the clerk accepted the payment of fines, he acted in lieu of the company as a whole in accepting members back into the "bands of friendship for the good of the community." The clerk was also responsible for the lesser job of caring for all of the equipment owned by the company, including the engine, hose, ladders, and hooks. Thus, although clerks acted individually to perform company business, their function was to represent the entire company in maintaining company preparedness.<sup>15</sup>

The Hibernia, Fellowship, Reliance, and Harmony fire companies all required the clerk to perform most company business. The Delaware Fire Company was an exception, allowing clerk inspections to lapse in 1790 as part of a general decline in company activity. It then appointed *ad hoc* committees to carry out company business. All the companies appointed clerks for one month and rotated clerk duties among all their members. For instance, Samuel Caldwell, James Crawford, Robert Morris, John Nesbitt, George Haynes, and Thomas Fitzsimmons served as clerks for the Hibernia Fire Company during the first six months of 1785. As a result, all members of the companies were responsible for taking the time to deliver notices to

each member's home, inspecting members' equipment, collecting fines, and checking on ladders and hooks in turn. Between walking to each house, being "treated" by fellow members, stopping to talk with friends on the street, and ducking into taverns, serving as clerk could take up much of a business day. Service as clerk was an act through which each member of the fire companies could demonstrate his "character," that is, his willingness to sacrifice his time to perform his duty to the company and the community. In 1814, an anonymous note on a membership list of the Reliance Fire Company emphasized the manly character of Philip Bunting in fulfilling his obligations. On the day that he resigned from the company, Bunting served "this day as Clerk [first] and then like a Man resigned."<sup>16</sup> Conversely, because the functioning of the clerk was so important to the fire companies, they assessed their largest fines to members who failed to perform their duties as clerks. In the 1780s, the Hibernia Company fined negligent clerks sixty shillings and duly expelled Tench Francis when he refused to pay his fine for not turning over his books to the next clerk on time. In the 1790s and early 1800s, Fellowship Fire Company fined negligent clerks two dollars.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike fire company preparation, meetings and firefighting were collective activities that gave members an opportunity to seek recognition for themselves. Most of the fire companies held their meetings in taverns. Fire company meetings were similar to drinking contests, political debates, and various tavern games in giving their members a chance to display individual qualities such as oratorical skills, intelligence, wit, and dutifulness before a company of their peers. In post-revolutionary fire companies, the person who had the most opportunity to display himself was the clerk. Although the clerk did not have formal authority in the company and did not preside over meetings, his report was generally the most important item on the agenda. The clerk reports were formulaic, beginning with a statement that he had delivered notices, looked after the company's equipment, inspected buckets and bags, and found all to be "in order" or "good order," thus emphasizing the dutiful character of the members and preparation of the company in the event of fires. Then the clerk began to detail the exceptions. Naming each member who did not possess equipment or keep his equipment in repair, the clerk exposed that person as "delinquent" in performing his duties. The clerk's report also created an opportunity for those members who were fined to perform their duties. Citing a number of possible reasons, members could appeal to the company as a whole to excuse their fines. In 1786, for example, Jacob Baker appealed a fine on the grounds that he had been in Virginia

during a meeting and the fine was abated as a result. By appealing their fines, members could reestablish their good standing with the company without paying a fine. Thus, what was at stake in both the clerk's report and the appeals was the solidarity of the company.<sup>18</sup>

The most important function of meetings, however, was to give the companies an excuse to fine their members. Although volunteer firefighters obligated themselves to attend meetings or be subject to fines of 8 1/3 cents to 25 cents, fire company meetings were poorly attended. In the Hibernia Fire Company attendance was below 50 percent for every meeting except two between 1785 and 1794. At six meetings during these ten years, the clerk was the only member attending. Attendance was also low for the Fellowship and Delaware companies. At the Fellowship Fire Company, attendance averaged 38 percent of membership between 1800 and 1805, that is, during the months when members came at all. The Delaware Fire Company went from May 1794 to July 1795 without attracting the quorum needed to conduct business. Of course, low attendance could threaten the viability of a company; thus the Delaware Company developed rejuvenation strategies such as recruiting new members and appointing engineers. In 1800, the clerk of the Fellowship Fire Company, Benjamin Morris, viewed the declining attendance of that company as evidence of a general moral decay among Philadelphia fire companies.<sup>19</sup>

The shameful Relaxation (of later Time too generally evident) from that Energy which formerly distinguished the Citizens of Philadelphia on Occasion, of Danger from Fire, impressing the Members present as a very serious Evil, & being desired that, conforming to our Articles, the Members may more generally attend our monthly meetings than they latterly have done, & otherwise by Example and Precept endeavor to recover the Reputation which Philadelphians have reproachfully forfeited.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, low attendance at meetings was a benefit to a fire company because the fines for absence provided the company's most important source of revenue. Like the few who failed to keep their buckets in order, the many who did not attend meetings were considered out of harmony with the company and could be expelled for non-payment of fines. The money paid into the company treasury by those not attending provided the resources for purchasing new buckets, engines, ropes, and ladders. In this way, the fire companies found a way to take advantage of the "vice" of non-attendance at

meetings where there was often little business performed. The treasurer of the Fellowship Fire Company warned that the "increasing remission of fines" led him to the opinion that:

the amounts of receipts in future be so much reduced as possibly to be insufficient to meet the ordinary and indispensable expenditures of the Company to be prepared against any accident by which the Apparatus may be injured as to require expensive repairs as any other extraordinary occasion call for a considerable appropriation.<sup>21</sup>

Like meetings, firefighting was a collective activity that created opportunities for the volunteers to display their individuality and have it recognized by the company and the community. When the State House bell sounded an alarm for their vicinity, most members of fire companies returned to their homes to retrieve their fire buckets and bags before proceeding to the fire. Others brought out the engine from the company engine house and pulled it to the site of the fire. The object for the companies was to have enough men to ensure a proper supply of water, work the pump, and operate the pipe (through which water was pumped onto the fire). Finding it difficult to coordinate the distribution of members between the engine and the bucket lines, the Hibernia Fire Company sought to divide members according to their geographical relation to the fire.

It is therefore recommended that when a fire shall happen to the Southward of the Engine house to the members living to the northward to repair immediately on the first alarm to the Engine house & have her conducted to the fire or follow and Join the Company. And those members who live to the Southward to repair immediately to the fire & Join the Company as soon as they shall arrive with the Engine when a fire shall happen to the Northward of the Engine house.—It is further recommended to the Members to attach themselves to the Company Engine at a fire & endeavor by their influence and example to form lines & have a constant supply of Water.<sup>22</sup>

By gathering at the engine on their arrival at fires, the members of companies like the Hibernia distinguished themselves as a group from the members of other companies and gathered citizens. Belonging to a company gave members opportunities to start lines for passing buckets, rescue property,

guard buildings from thieves, and direct water onto the fire that were either not enjoyed or were enjoyed to a much lesser extent by non-firemen. This, in turn, made it possible for individual members of the companies to distinguish themselves in serving the community. The work of the firemen was an important part of a larger cooperative firefighting effort involving the fire companies, the city watch, men passing buckets to the fire, and women and children passing empty buckets from the fire. When members of the fire companies performed their tasks as firemen, they put their energy, courage, skill, and virtue on display before the community and were gratefully recognized for their deeds. In May 1793, the minutes of the Hibernia Fire Company specifically singled out one member, resolving "that the thanks of the Company shall be presented to John Vaughan on his spirited exertions at the Fire which took place on board the ship *Mary* on Sunday the 20th of April last." More generally, expressions of gratitude from the victims and acclaim for the courage, nobility, and self-sacrificing heroism of the firefighters created an atmosphere within which firemen could be affirmed as virtuous members of the community.<sup>23</sup>

### Early Modern Culture and the Introduction of Hose

Volunteer fire companies underwent a complex transformation between the formation of the first hose company in 1803 and the final abandonment of buckets in the early 1820s. With the gradual displacing of buckets, fire companies began both to organize their activities on a collective basis and represent themselves in terms of collective symbolism. Where the members of post-revolutionary companies had run separately to fires, the members of the new hose and engine companies pulled their apparatus as groups in competition with other companies to arrive first. These competitions often resulted in "disturbances" and the fire companies began a tradition of violence that would extend through the 1850s. The new companies also organized preparation for fires on a collective basis by turning over the care of their engines, hose carriages, and hose apparatus to committees of engineers and directors rather than a clerk. Integrating early modern "processes of recognition" further into fire company preparation for firefighting, this collectivization of a large part of fire company activity reinforced the early modern character of Philadelphia fire companies.

Three interrelated factors pushing the fire companies toward change were the ascendance of new generations of firemen, the changing class composition

of the volunteer companies, and the replacement of buckets by hose. In the first years of the nineteenth century, the building of hydrants and fire plugs encouraged the gradual replacement of buckets by hose as the primary means for conveying water to fires. The first company specializing in hose was Philadelphia Hose which was formed in 1803 by a group of eight Quaker apprentices. Other hose companies such as Resolution Hose, Good Intent Hose, Perseverance Hose, and Neptune Hose soon followed, with the rapid formation of hose companies making it possible for companies with engines to specialize as engine companies. Many of the new companies were formed by young men and did not employ buckets at all. This was the case with Perseverance Hose, which was formed almost entirely by apprentice carpenters in 1805, and Pennsylvania Fire Company (founded in 1806), which was so committed to recruiting young men that it passed a resolution capping the oldest age of new members at twenty-two. Neither of these companies appointed clerks or inspected buckets. A number of the older companies were taken over by young men between 1805 and the 1820s as well. When the Delaware Company ended eighteen years of periodic crisis in 1811 by electing large numbers of young men, they were careful "to enquire if the parents or masters of the young men elected . . . consented to their being members." A similar kind of transition can be seen in the Fellowship (1806), Diligent (1813), and Reliance (1819) companies, all of which ended periods of declining activity and preparation by taking on many young members.<sup>24</sup>

The ability of apprentices to join fire companies in large numbers was linked to the changing character of apprenticeship during the 1790s and early 1800s. Urban craftsmen took on higher numbers of apprentices during the prosperous years of the 1790s, but many apprentices had little stomach for the strict authority characteristic of colonial apprenticeship. E. Anthony Rotundo argued that young men abandoned the traditional concept of masculinity as fulfilling the duties of one's station. Instead, they constructed masculine independence in terms of resisting arbitrary authority. As a result, apprentices developed a keen desire to stand up for their "liberties" against the efforts of masters to restrict their knowledge of the craft, limit food consumption, and control religious beliefs. Resisting the efforts of masters to control their "free" time as well, Philadelphia apprentices joined debating societies, theatrical societies, evangelical churches, and fire companies, and gathered on street corners to criticize their masters and insult passing women.<sup>25</sup>

Despite their more expansive definition of liberty, apprentices maintained an attachment to a vision of society as a body linked together by mutual

service. Although they may have “disdained the very notion of subservience” inherent in apprenticeship, those who joined fire companies like Perseverance Hose or the Pennsylvania Fire Company united in a single company and committed themselves to perform a variety of duties in the interest of serving the public by fighting fires. Instead of serving their hierarchical superiors, the young men in the fire companies were performing duties to their equals within the company and serving their fellow citizens in the community. In this sense, membership in the volunteer fire companies reframed “duty” and “service” as egalitarian rather than hierarchical values.<sup>26</sup>

As a new generation of young men came to dominate the volunteer fire companies, the class composition of the companies began to favor artisans more heavily. As can be seen from the table below, the Delaware, Hibernia, and Diligent fire companies all had higher proportions of artisan members after generational transitions. Dominated by apprentice carpenters, Perseverance Hose had so much trouble raising money in their neighborhood of the Northern Liberties that they initially could not afford a hose carriage and were forced to carry their hose on their backs to at least one fire. Reliance Hose was another carpenter’s fire company. Pennsylvania Fire Company, a new company formed in the city proper in 1806, also had a preponderance of artisan members.<sup>27</sup>

Occupational Distribution of Selected Philadelphia Fire Companies, 1785–1820

	Artisan	Merchant	Grocer	Other non-manual	Other Manual	Unknown
<b>Delaware</b>	28	39	17	11	2	14
(1785–1810)	44	23	9	20	7	97
(1811–1820)						
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	21	14	4	6	0	49
(1806–1814)						
<b>Hibernia</b>	1	19	1	2	0	0
(1797)	7	15	2	8	5	46
(1820–1825)						
<b>Diligent</b>	10	6	2	4	0	4
(1791)	39	5	2	4	6	63
(1810–1820)						

Sources: Compiled from Philadelphia city directories, 1785–1820, and the minute books of the Delaware Fire Company, Pennsylvania Fire Company, Hibernia Fire Company and Diligent Fire Company.



The predominance of artisans in fire companies was part of the enhanced presence of artisans in the civic and political institutions of Jeffersonian Philadelphia. Newspaper editor and "Old Democrat" political leader William Duane organized volunteer militia companies into a republican legion as an alternative to traditionally elite dominated companies like the First City Troop. There was also a strong artisan presence on the Philadelphia city councils by 1807. In the case of the firemen, a combination of republican values and rapid population expansion toward the Schuylkill River and in the working class suburbs of the Northern Liberties and Southwark created opportunities for artisans both to form new hose and engine companies and join established groups. Firefighting was an extremely important civic function; young apprentices and journeymen eagerly embraced the opportunity to show themselves as independent men ready and willing to serve the community even though they did not own houses, were not independently employed in businesses, and did not have any of the other traditional signs of personal independence. At the same time, the transition of the fire companies into artisan institutions was also a result of diminishing interest in firefighting among merchants and gentlemen. The attempts of elites to withdraw from mutual participation with artisans in tavern activities during the revolutionary period have already been noted. Richard Bushman observed that elites, merchants, and the prosperous middle class developed a stronger attachment to gentility in the decades after the Revolution and adapted modes of dress and home furnishing that differentiated themselves decisively from the lower classes. Given the increased presence of artisans and other lower-class men in the fire companies, many elite young men began to avoid firefighting as a lower-class activity. In *The Hermit in America*, Robert Waln, who portrayed elite young men as drinking, gambling, and socializing exclusively within elite circles, sneered at the clerks who served as fire company directors. Merchants like Samuel V. Anderson energetically recruited members for the Delaware Fire Company after the generational transition of 1811, but most of the men they proposed for membership were shoemakers, silversmiths, and tavernkeepers rather than fellow merchants.<sup>28</sup>

As the use of buckets decreased, fire company preparation came to be organized around the collective activity of committees rather than the actions of individuals. Instead of assigning one clerk to perform fire company business, companies assigned a number of committees both to perform routine business and solve special problems. Committees were appointed to care for engines and hose carriages, procure lots for new engine and hose houses,

inspect the treasurer's accounts, collect overdue fines, obtain new fire equipment, and change constitutions. If one committee failed to perform its duty, another committee might be appointed to wait on the first committee to determine the cause of its failure. Committees were especially prolific in Perseverance Hose. A year after its formation, Perseverance Hose had a standing committee to tend the hose house, an engineers committee to supervise the hose and hose carriage, and *ad hoc* committees to wait on delinquent members or determine if a member would accept appointment as a director. Perseverance Hose also had committees to wait on its committee of directors and committees to replace a committee that had not contacted a liquor seller who was demanding payment. Where post-revolutionary fire companies relied on individuals for almost all preparation for firefighting, Perseverance Hose relied entirely on committees.<sup>29</sup>

The most important committees were the committees of engineers or directors. The Delaware, Hibernia, and Fellowship companies had engineering committees before the introduction of hose, but none of these committees functioned on a regular basis. To the contrary, Neptune Hose, Perseverance Hose, and the Pennsylvania Fire Company all had committees of engineers or directors instead of clerks when they were formed in 1805 and 1806. It was only after a takeover by younger members in 1805 that the Fellowship Fire Company formed a standing engineering committee that endured for at least ten years. The same was the case with the Delaware Company, which formed its first functioning engineering committee when it was taken over by new members in 1811. The engineers or directors held monthly meetings with minutes, reports, and resolutions to be conveyed to the company as a whole. In most companies, the engineers were responsible for taking care of the company engine or hose house, maintaining the engine or hose carriage, and commanding the engine or hose carriage during fires. They procured keys for the engine or hose house, painted doors, sewed and dubbed hose, discharged water from engines after fires, and sent the engine or hose carriage to the shops of fire engine specialists like Patrick Lyon for more serious repairs. Engineering committees either reported every meeting (Perseverance Hose) or regularly (Fellowship Fire) and their activities were a focus for the fire companies because the de-emphasis on buckets meant that their engines and hose were the only means through which a fire company could make a contribution to fight fires. Thus, the diffuse activity of individual members ordering their buckets was replaced by the concentrated work of engineering committees on engines and hose carriages.<sup>30</sup>

The introduction of hose and abandonment of buckets also resulted in a collectivization of firefighting. With buckets, firemen ran by themselves to the sites of fires and then began to distribute their buckets to bystanders as part of the community effort to fight fires. With the employment of hose, the companies focused their energies on collectively pulling their engines and hose carriages to fires. The use of hose meant that hose companies could only render service at fires if they arrived early enough to hook up to one of the few plugs near a fire. Likewise, engines were useful only if the companies had their engines at the site of the fire prepared to attach hose to their apparatus when the hose companies were ready. Thus, getting to fires early became indispensable to a company's efforts to distinguish themselves through firefighting. After the sounding of a fire alarm, members of Philadelphia Hose, Perseverance Hose, Delaware Fire and other companies went to their hose or engine houses instead of to their individual homes. With the first man arriving at the company house in command, the members of the company collectively pulled their apparatus through the streets with ropes. While running to a fire, a company might be joined or assisted by boys from the immediate neighborhood. A company's engine or hose carriage also might be "molested" by individuals or by members of other companies either as they were running to a fire or setting up for service at the site. The bucket companies had not been competitive with each other because the bucket method was flexible enough to allow all companies to share the honor of contributing to firefighting efforts. With the adoption of hose however, the companies struggled with each other to obtain the "eligible" positions. The directors of the Delaware Fire Company provide a skeptical perspective on the competitive efforts of their own company:

The directors of your honourable body having frequently observed with regret, too much irregularity and misbehaviour . . . beg leave to solicit their attention to & conform more strictly to their duties . . . . Aware of the ill consequences attending much conduct and the impropriety of proceeding too rashly to, whilst at, and coming from fires, making a hideous noise through the streets, and running the engine over hoses, which however well it may answer the purpose for the present, in procuring an eligible situation, can not fail to be of material disadvantage on future occasion, such as gaining the ill will of the members of the different Hose Company's, who tis probable (should be the case) will at all times refuse that supply of water without which

but trifling service could be rendered, and the notice taken of such things, by the inhabitants, may in a great measure prove fatal to the (well deserved) character of the Company.<sup>31</sup>

Fire companies also changed the dynamic through which individual firemen sought recognition. Where post-revolutionary firemen gained praise for individual performances (rescuing property, guarding houses, contributing buckets), recognition relied on collective performance after the introduction of hose. Successful runs allowed companies to arrive early at the fire and made it possible for the man commanding the apparatus (the first man at the engine or hose house) and those running with him to take credit for their success. Obtaining an eligible position allowed the members of the companies to contribute to stopping the fire through their individual performances. This was especially the case with engine companies that gave authority over company efforts to the fireman in control of the "pipe" spraying water onto the fire and rotated control of the pipe among the members. Such a reliance on collective performance was not unknown in the early modern popular culture in Philadelphia and can be seen in theatrical performances and militia drills. However, the fire companies were unusual in the extent to which competitive collective action was involved in the struggle for individual recognition. Contests between fire companies followed an early modern logic of recognition in the sense that the members of the companies that were successful in arriving at fires early and contributing to the firefighting effort would experience themselves as overcoming their competitors and seeing their "character," "worth," and "usefulness" mirrored back to them in the approval of the community.<sup>32</sup>

Reinforcing the collective character of fire company performances was the introduction of collective symbolisms by the fire companies. The adoption of group symbolism was part of the competition between the fire companies, which, in turn, allowed individual members to seek distinction by identifying with company symbolism. The leader in company symbolism was the first hose company, Philadelphia Hose. Formed in 1803, Philadelphia Hose went far beyond the symbolic efforts of the other companies by adapting a uniform made up of a coat, a cape, and painted hats and putting a bell on their hose carriage. The company attached the bell to their carriage specifically to distinguish themselves from the other companies and asserted an exclusive right to the use of bells in court after Neptune Hose used a bell of its own. Other companies followed suit, putting lamps, torches, and "masterly carved

Head[s]" on their engines, painting the company symbol on the engine and engine house, adopting a company motto, painting the company name on ladders, and requiring a coat, cape, and hat in the company colors. Dressing up in, and surrounding themselves with, company symbolism made individual members identify themselves more closely with the company as they ran with the company and arrived at the fire.<sup>33</sup>

The advent of hose also created secondary opportunities for the small individual performances characteristic of early modern culture. Where all fire company members could be employed in passing buckets back and forth throughout the course of the fire, the use of hose reduced the ability of firefighters to contribute once firefighting efforts were under way. Once a plug was taken and water was pumping to the fire engines, there was little that "hose men" could do other than watch the hose. This also was the case with the engine companies where there was often little employment for men other than holding the pipe and manning one of the pumps. True, firemen could still rescue property and people, guard buildings, and protect the engine, but these activities could not have occupied the forty or fifty men a hose company or engine company might bring to a fire. What most firemen apparently did was drink. Soon after the introduction of hose, the fire companies started paying bills for the gin and whiskey used at fires. Perseverance Hose reported bills for liquor and gin almost as soon as their recorded minutes begin, paying, for example, a \$3.00 bill for 1 1/2 gallons of gin in November 1807. Pennsylvania Fire Company averaged three payments for gin, brandy, and grog per year between 1808 and 1813. The Delaware Fire Company recorded its first payment of a liquor bill in 1806 and made regular note of payments for refreshments after a takeover by younger members in 1811. Either purchasing their own alcohol or receiving treats from others, volunteer firemen turned the scene of fires into minor carnivals where they no doubt boasted of their company's prowess, ridiculed the efforts of other companies, told stories, and traded gossip about the origin of the fire and extent of damage.<sup>34</sup>

The introduction of hose reinforced the early modern character of the fire companies because it resulted in a more thorough organization of fire company activities as processes of recognition. Serving on committees, running to fires, putting out the fires themselves, and mingling with the crowds all allowed volunteers to perform before the community, be recognized for their character, energy, and public-spiritedness, and identify themselves with these individual qualities. For working people in Philadelphia, participating in fire companies was one of the strategies through which they sustained their

identification with republican values of independence, respectability, and community during the early republic.

### The Transition to Industrial Modernism

Like other popular institutions, volunteer fire companies underwent a profound transformation during the early years of industrialization. After the Washington Procession in 1832, the main priority for antebellum fire companies became the assertion of group identity. For most companies, the focus on group identity meant a concurrent shift from fighting fires to fire company rioting and company ritual as the most important fire company activities. Beginning in earnest during the 1830s, rioting among fire companies became progressively more violent as they began using deadly weapons, mounting ambushes, and engaging in larger-scale actions to defeat their opponents. According to fire company songs, the most important aspect of rioting was the exposure of members to the guns, knives, and other deadly weapons of the rival companies. This willingness to expose themselves to harm embodied the collective courage of each fire company and enabled the companies to disgrace their rivals. At the same time, the fire companies developed an extensive set of public rituals—including processions, balls, award ceremonies, lectures, and concerts—for representing the group prestige that had been created primarily through rioting and secondarily through firefighting.

The Washington Centennial Procession in 1832 was the first major event to disconnect fire company symbolism from the struggle for distinction among the companies at fires. Before then, fire companies had used hats, horns, coats, capes, engine panels, and bells to represent group identity in competition with other fire companies. However, group identity was only significant in the firefighting arena. Philadelphia volunteer companies had no role in holiday celebrations, political events, or charitable activities and participated in no ritual other than their annual dinners. Consequently, marching in the Washington procession represented a radical departure for the firemen. U.S. Hose had devoted almost no attention to symbolic matters in the previous six years of its existence before 1832. To prepare for the Washington procession, however, they held four special meetings, deciding to give the honor of superintending the company to the president and secretary, wear badges with “Washington” painted on them, and erect a

forty-foot pole with an American flag over their hose house. The fire company display during the Washington procession was very different from the traditional craft processions in the Federal Procession of 1787 and the Lafayette procession of 1824. Where craft processions portrayed membership in a craft body as making artisans individually "independent" and "respectable," the fire company procession represented individual firemen as parts of a functioning group devoted to serving the public. In this context, all the acclaim went to the company as a group and to individuals only as members of the companies.<sup>35</sup>

After the Washington Centennial Procession, the fire companies developed their own ways of representing themselves as a group before the public. Most importantly, the Fire Association started its own Fireman's Parade in 1833 and held increasingly elaborate parades on a roughly triennial basis through 1846. In the 1843 parade for example, fifty-eight companies (including four visiting companies) and more than four thousand volunteer firemen marched through Philadelphia's principal streets, passing each company's fire house. The parade was more than two miles long and lasted from nine in the morning until dark. All of the fire companies displayed banners and men wore shirts and pants of uniform color and cut purchased for the occasion. Most companies also hired brass bands and a few had new engines or hose carriages built specifically to be unveiled at the parade. The triennial Fireman's Parade was also the occasion for a number of subordinate rituals. Before the parade began, almost all of the companies participated in ceremonies in which they received banners from women in their neighborhood. Some of the companies entertained fire companies from other cities as well. In the 1843 parade, participants included visiting companies from New York, Baltimore, and Wilmington. As part of their parade activities, the host companies would have organized escorts to greet the visitors as they disembarked from their steamboats and held banquets in their honor featuring "a flow of uplifting beverages, with speeches, wit, humor, songs, and story telling—winding up with pledges of undying friendship."<sup>36</sup>

Some of the companies also started holding benefit balls while others exchanged visits with fire companies from other cities. In 1837, U.S. Hose held its first "Grand Fancy Firemen's, Military, and Citizens Ball" and by 1840 was holding two balls a year. In 1840, twenty volunteer fire companies announced balls in the *Public Ledger*. The balls were organized in such a way that both the host companies and the guest volunteer fire companies were able to display themselves as groups. At the balls, the members of the host

companies wore their company "equipment" (coat, hat, cape, horns, and wrenches for engineers) and the companies displayed their engines and hose carriages, banners, silver horns, and other awards. At their ball in 1846, the Humane Fire Company displayed their engine, "a beautiful apparatus" according to the *Public Ledger*, at the east end of the Museum's Upper Saloon and a model of the "Hope No. 31, of New York" engine at the other end. They also displayed banners from the other Philadelphia fire companies. The honored guests from New York, the model of the New York engine, and the banners from the other Philadelphia companies all served to magnify the prestige that was embodied in the Humane Fire Company's own equipment, banner, and engine. By holding the ball, the Humane Fire Company provided a way for other fire companies to display themselves in the form of their company banners and equipment as well. In this sense, the annual succession of fire company balls at the Museum, Walnut Street Theater, and Chestnut Street Theater provided all of the fire companies with many opportunities to display themselves as groups before the public.<sup>37</sup>

The fire companies organized a variety of other ritual events that specifically honored one company while allowing others to display themselves. This was especially the case when Philadelphia fire companies entertained out-of-town companies and visited brother companies in cities like New York, Baltimore, and Wilmington. In October 1840, for example, the Water Witch Fire Company of Wilmington visited Philadelphia. After the Wilmington men disembarked from their train, they marched in procession with their engine ("a very beautiful affair") through the "principal streets" of Philadelphia before proceeding to an entertainment staged by Hope Hose. Like the company balls, these kinds of processions involved more than one company. The Water Witch Fire Company was escorted by six Philadelphia fire companies, a number that would have been higher if the Philadelphia companies had not mistaken the time of the Water Witch Company's arrival. In 1843, the Fairmount Fire Company was met by fifteen companies when they returned from a visit to Baltimore and were escorted through the principal streets as they returned to their engine house in the Spring Garden district. The procession was organized by the other companies with the president of Hope Hose, Dr. Alexander Henry, appointed as marshal. For Fairmount Fire Company, the procession meant that they were able to display the trophies from their Baltimore visit—a large painting of a fire, artificial flowers covering their engine, and hats from their hosts—in a way that enhanced their public standing as a fire company.



At the same time, providing the escort gave the other companies an opportunity to display their company "equipments," bands of music, pioneers, and new styles of hats. Fairmount Fire Company had pride of place as the company being honored by the escort, but the other companies also had ample opportunity to represent themselves as a group and enhance their own prestige as Philadelphia firemen.<sup>38</sup>

Firemen in company equipments participated in other kinds of ceremonial events as well. Companies sponsored charity fundraising contests and invited all of the companies to ceremonies where prizes were awarded to the winners. U.S. Hose won such a contest in 1842 and received as a prize the first silver horn made in Philadelphia. On other occasions, neighborhoods put on ceremonies to reward fire companies for services at fires or companies presented awards to other companies. In 1841, for example, the American Fire Engine Company presented a trumpet to Northern Liberty Hose. Philadelphia firemen also attended public lectures organized for their benefit. David Paul Brown, a prominent attorney and public speaker, lectured before a large group of uniformed Kensington firemen in April 1842 as part of a temperance campaign among firemen. Indeed, the most prominent lecture events featuring firemen were organized by Washingtonian temperance activists. The Good Will Engine Company, Vigilant Engine Company, Fairmount Engine Company, and Northern Liberty Hose Company had been associated with the Washingtonian movement in Philadelphia almost from its beginning in March 1841. In 1841 and 1842, many of the fire companies enhanced the public character of their commitments by allowing Washingtonian organizers to make them the main attraction at a number of public temperance meetings, including an October 1842 event where William K. Mitchell, the original president of the Washington Temperance Society in Baltimore, spoke. Dressed in company equipments and displaying their banners around the lecture room, the firemen served to represent the collective power and spirit of the Washingtonian movement.<sup>39</sup>

This proliferation of fire company ritual was matched by the escalation of rioting. In 1839, the *Public Ledger* used the occasion of an incident between Fairmount Fire Company and Good Will Engine to suggest that the volunteer companies in general were "improving every occasion which calls them together to indulge in violent animosities against each other." Reports of violent incidents piled up in the U.S. Hose minute book as the company reported conflicts with Humane Hose, Northern Liberties Hoses, and Pennsylvania Hose at the same time that they were cited for attacking the

engines and hose carriages of other companies. Delaware Fire Company was obliged to deny participation in violent incidents in 1839 and only persuaded Perseverance Hose to drop a complaint to the Fire Association by promising not to "molest" their carriage further. Just as decorating engines and hose carriages had become a focus of fire company preparation for public ritual, attacking and defending the company apparatus was the focus of fire company violence. Many volunteer fire companies ambushed rivals on their way to fires, seeking to overturn the other company's apparatus, destroy it, or throw it into the Delaware River without having any intention of going to the fire themselves. On August 28, 1842, for instance, members of the Franklin Engine Company assaulted the apparatus of Niagara Hose of Southwark on the way to a fire. Several companies became associated with neighborhood toughs and gangs. Their hose houses and engine houses became gathering points for youths, loungers, idle firemen, and others that "respectable" firemen and civic authorities thought of as undesirable. Some of the companies became associated with gangs with Weccacoe Hose running with the "Bouncers" while Moyamensing Hose was taken over by the "Killers."<sup>40</sup>

The intensity of the violence increased as well as the frequency. Bruce Laurie details the ways in which Moyamensing Hose and Franklin Engine set fires as a way to facilitate ambushes. Likewise, as early as 1843, companies like Moyamensing Hose, Franklin Engine, Fairmount Engine, Washington Engine, Marion Hose, and Western Hose all used deadly weapons including knives, guns, bricks, and stones to attack their enemies in their engine houses and hose houses. As stated in the minutes of Niagara Hose, "these riots have at periods assumed a bold and fearful aspect[.] Engine and Hose Houses have been attacked and Apparatus demolished[.] Implements of death have been freely used by contending parties." In 1849, Moyamensing Hose, a Catholic Irish company, launched a full scale attack on a hotel frequented by African Americans and used pistols to hold off efforts by other fire companies to control the resulting blaze. The "Moyas" did not retreat until a militia company had begun to set up artillery for an assault on their position.<sup>41</sup>

The companies improved "every occasion" to indulge in violent animosities because rioting had become the primary source for the collective prestige being represented on ritual occasions. The enhancement of the fire companies' symbolic value through rioting can be seen in *The Fireman's Songster*, a collection of professionally written songs that testified to the exploits of the violent companies. These songs identified the exposure of fire company members to danger and death as the most significant elements in

the firemen's identification with the company, and as the strongest point of reference for the veneration of objects like the engine or hose carriage. "The Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory," a song of the Lafayette Hose Company, was a particularly interesting example of this genre.

**"The Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory"**

One night when I was homeward bound,  
I heard a fearful cry,  
The sky lit up with a fiery glare,  
Told of destruction nigh;  
The people ran and I ran too,  
T'was always my desire,  
Whenever I hear the alarming sound  
Of Fire-fire-fire!

Fire-fire-fire!  
Hark! tis the dreadful cry  
The Lafe boys are on the ground  
To conquer or to die

The Liberty boys they worked right hard,  
To get first on the ground,  
Their bellowing noise could plain be heard,  
For many squares around:  
The Lafe boys they followed close,  
Though the Liberty did conspire,  
To beat them when they heard the cry  
Of fire-fire-fire!                      Chorus

At length the Liberty grew quite bold,  
They thought they'd have a fight,  
They fell on Bunty, who stood by,  
To see if all was right;  
They fell on him both right and left,  
He braved their fearful ire,  
He stood his ground, for he is one  
Who has no fear of fire                      Chorus<sup>42</sup>

The songs in *The Fireman's Songster* represent "standing" against rival companies as the basis for company identity. The chorus of "The Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory," a song of Lafayette Hose, proclaimed "Fire-fire-fire/ Hark! tis the dreadful cry/ The Lafe boys are on the ground/ To conquer or to die." There was a circular relationship between the willingness to die and the identification with the name "Lafe boys." The "Lafe boys" were willing to expose themselves to death in the hand-to-hand combat of fists, knives, spanners, or wrenches, and the showers of bricks, rocks, and bullets that characterized fire company riots. At the same time, it was because they were willing to brave such mayhem that they could be symbolically identified as the "Lafe boys" whose primary quality was their lack of fear. "The Lafe they will never fear/ Though the Liberty may conspire." It was not so much that the "Lafe boys" had no fear but that they were willing to suffer the things they feared that enabled the members of Lafayette Hose to identify themselves as "Lafe boys."

One of the most interesting dimensions of "The Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory" was the priority of rioting over firefighting in the creation and reinforcement of collective identity. When the "Lafe Boys" heard the "fearful cry" of "fire, fire, fire," they viewed the prospect of a riot as much more of a test of their collective courage and daring than combating the fire. For most Philadelphia hose companies, the main test of their collective prowess in relation to firefighting was in arriving at a fire before other hose companies could hook up to the available fire plugs. Once a hose company was on the scene, the hosemen had little to do except tend their hose to make sure it did not get tangled or run over. This is why "Buntz" of Lafayette Hose could "stand by" at a fire to "see if all was right." As a result, fire companies derived relatively little symbolic value from fighting fires because firefighting did not provide enough opportunities for members to assert their company's identity by exposing themselves to danger. Participating in riots enhanced the symbolic value of the fire company because it forced all those participating to expose themselves to injury or death at the hands of rival companies and thus demonstrated the company's character as a courageous body. That is why Lafayette Hose viewed the cry of fire primarily as an opportunity "to conquer or to die" rather than an opportunity to serve the community by fighting fires.

The same combination of willing exposure to danger and identification with the collective can be found in other songs. This was especially the case with "The Independence Hose" song where the second verse reads: "While our name, 'Independence,' we cherish/ No master we'll own like a slave/ By

the side of our carriage we'll perish/ Our name, and our honour to save." Once again, there was a circular relationship between the willingness to die and the identification with the name "Independence." It was their readiness to perish for the honor of the company that made them deserve the name "Independence." At the same time, it was rioting rather than firefighting that provided the opportunity for the members of Independence Hose to demonstrate their willingness to expose themselves and thus create new symbolic value for the company. The willingness to perish underlay the gushing homage to the name "Independence": "The Independence, the pride of our district;/ The Hose of the brave and free,/ The shrine of each member's devotion,/ The district offers homage to thee." The language of "the brave and free" might be considered just a patriotic play on the name independence, but the force of the patriotic reference depended on the behavior of the company in the face of its enemies. Five lines later, the poem continued: "When our foes threatened wide desolation,/And threatened our carriage to deform,/ The ark then of freedom's foundation,/ Independence rode safe through the storm."<sup>43</sup>

Other songs were less pointed in expressing the readiness of volunteers to suffer injury or death in fire company riots. Nevertheless, most of the songs guaranteed that the members of the honored company would always stand their ground, making the same point because standing before the company's enemies meant exposing oneself to deadly weapons. By being "willing to stand their ground" while rioting, the members of the company also created more value for the company that could then be represented in songs, parades, and other symbolic activities. Referring to their rivals, the "gassy cowards" of Fairmount Engine Company, "The Good Will Engine Song" boldly exclaimed that even three hundred Fairmount men were no match for a small group of the Good Will's bravest. "For not a single coward heart among us could be found." At the same time, "Fairy-Boys" bragged on behalf of Fairmount Engine that "we never fear our enemies, wherever we should go,/ for we're the gallus Fairy Boys, the city well does know." Once again, the willingness to face the violence of other fire companies was assumed in the name "Fairy Boys" while that bravery justified the reputation associated with the name Fairmount Engine and Good Will Engine.<sup>44</sup>

It is because rioting created and added to the symbolic value of the fire companies that fire company rioting and public ritual were so closely associated. As the fire companies became more inventive and violent in their attacks on other companies' engines, hose carriages, fire houses, symbolic objects, and members, they became more elaborate in their public rituals. For

example, in November 1843, the Fairmount Engine Company hosted the New Market Fire Company of Baltimore on a visit to Philadelphia and organized an innovative torchlight parade for them on their arrival at night. However, the Goodwill Hose Company (a separate company from Good Will Engine, also a rival of Fairmount Engine) improved on the occasion by launching an attack while the New Market Company was disembarking. In a sense, Goodwill Hose was seeking to increase its prestige by disrupting a ritual high point for their rivals. The rioting fire companies also attacked their enemies when rival companies were escorting new engines home and taking possession of silver horns.<sup>45</sup>

In early modern culture, men sought recognition for themselves through performing competitively before groups according to agreed-upon criteria. All were given a chance to perform, and when a man lost, he was generally expected to acknowledge defeat, pay off any bets, and acknowledge the victor as a member of the group. This mutuality of recognition among rivals was neither part of the interaction nor part of the self-representation of the fire companies after the 1830s. Fire company songs were specific about this hostility and contempt. To the extent that the rioting companies were willing to face injury and death, the foes themselves were cowards. If "not a single coward heart could be found" in the Good Will Engine Company, their rivals in Fairmount Engine were "gassy cowards" who ran off even when they had a numerical advantage. Likewise, if the "Fairy Boys" would dare almost anything, their enemies in Lafayette Hose had to hide even in their own hose house: "We flogg'd the Lafe in their own house, that Company so brave,/ They ran into their Cupalo their coward lives to save." Victory over the other company was almost never hard fought, with a number of injured on both sides; rather, it was almost instantaneous as the enemy ran away almost as soon as they had to face Good Will, Fairmount, Lafayette, and Liberty Hose. In "The Western's Song," Western Hose was represented as easily repulsing an attack by the Good Will: "[t]hey thought first by attacking us, to have a little fun,/ [b]ut it was not long, my Western boys, before they commenced to run." With such strong representations of company superiority and inferiority, fire company "brotherhood" had become an occasion for fratricidal struggle rather than the sense of shared service to the community that animated eighteenth-century bucket companies.<sup>46</sup>

It is important to emphasize that the fire companies could turn almost any reason for disagreement into an occasion for rioting. Fire companies in the Northern Liberties, Southwark, Kensington, Spring Garden, and Moyamensing

regularly battled the other companies in their districts for neighborhood supremacy and often came into conflict with companies from neighboring districts as well. For example, Northern Liberties Hose Company regularly fought with both Northern Liberties Engine and U.S. Hose in the Northern Liberties and Independence Hose from Kensington. Ethnic differences were also prominent in several rivalries, including those between the Irish Catholic "Moyas" and the Irish Protestants of Franklin Hose, and between nativist outfits like Weccacoe Engine and Shiffler Hose and the predominantly Irish Weccacoe Hose. The fire companies rioted for so many reasons, however, that they should be considered as looking for occasions to start animosities so they could demonstrate their worth as fire companies and humiliate their opponents. The races that occurred almost any time fire companies encountered each other on the way to fires often led to violence. Violent rivalries were also sparked by disputes over position at fires, temperance, which company was founded first, which company was the premier rioting company, and other kinds of quarrels. The "Fairy Boys" of Fairmount Engine Company were an outstanding example of a company that rioted for almost any reason. Made up largely of butchers, Fairmount Engine of Spring Garden had a long-standing neighborhood rivalry with Good Will Engine Company. In 1842, however, men from Fairmount Engine also attacked U.S. Hose to settle a grudge over the silver horn that the "Blue Dick" boys had won in a charity contest. In later years, Fairmount Engine and Moyamensing Hose engaged in epic combat over rioting pre-eminence. From the perspective of the "Fairy Boys," rioting was a way to demonstrate and increase the prestige of the company. So, they looked for opportunities to engage in large scale, fratricidal battles with their brother firemen.<sup>47</sup>

The willing exposure of one's self was also a core motif of the Washingtonian temperance societies that were active in Philadelphia between 1841 and 1845. The most important event in Washingtonian meetings was a series of "experience speeches" in which men talked about their careers as drunkards—how their drinking had ruined their prospects, bloated their faces, and drove their wives to early graves. By courageously displaying their degradation as drunkards in this way, Washingtonian speakers sought to encourage men in their audiences to recognize their own helplessness in the face of alcohol and sign the total abstinence pledge. Like the rioting firemen, the Washingtonians identified masculine courage with this kind of self-exposure rather than the recognition-seeking performance of early modern culture. In the case of the Washingtonians, experience speakers talked about the inner

degradation of the body and spirit rather than the physical harm emphasized by the firemen. However, the *Washingtonian's* language of inner degradation was easily translatable into the language of physical harm. In his first speech on his visit to Philadelphia in 1845, for example, the *Washingtonian* speaker John B. Gough characterized the pain of a drunkard as analogous to the pain of a surgeon's saw cutting through muscle and bone during an amputation. Far from embodying different cultures as Laurie suggests, fire company rioting and the *Washingtonian* temperance movement were both part of the transition away from traditional forms of early modern popular culture during the 1830's and 1840's.<sup>48</sup>

Another element in the self-representation of antebellum fire companies was the mutually reinforcing character of masculine and feminine imagery. Amy Greenberg argued in her book on fire companies in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Baltimore that volunteer firemen idealized their engines as feminine, virginal, and chaste, and sought to protect them from being "molested" or "violated" by other companies. According to Greenberg, firemen identified the masculinity of the company in terms of protecting vulnerable engines from rivals in the same way that they viewed themselves as protecting a helpless city from fire. Philadelphia firemen also used a sexual language of molestation and violation to characterize the attacks of other companies on their engines. However, the Philadelphia companies also identified their engines and hose carriages with stereotypically masculine qualities like power and tenacity. Many of the companies gave their engines and hose carriages nicknames like "Blue Dick," "Red Crab," "Raven," and "Towboat" to indicate the toughness and tenacity associated with defeating rivals and protecting the public from fire. These masculine and feminine connotations reinforced each other. For example, masculine qualities were viewed as carrying hose carriages into confrontations with rival companies. The "Towboat" or "Yellow Hickory" of Liberty Hose was especially known for its toughness and speed. At the same time, those masculine qualities exposed an engine or hose carriage to molestation at the hands of other companies. As a result, engines also needed protection and companies like Fairmount Fire Company referred to their engines as feminine ("She is the smartest 'der machine'") and called on their members to stand by her and protect her. The oscillation between masculine and feminine also could apply to the company as a whole. In the "Green Monsters' Song," boys who ran with Good Will Engine Company pledged to "whip those bloody butchers [of Fairmount Fire Company]/ Or die upon the ground." Thus, they demonstrated their masculinity by being willing to die at the



hands of their rivals. However, the song also identified the men of Good Will Engine with the femininity of the engine. The Good Will engine was feminine in the sense that it was "the blossom of this town,/It can be plainly seen,/with her chandelier gallery/And side panels of green." The company and the men in it were given a feminine representation as well.

The Fairmount say they are No. 1,  
 But I do not think it so,  
 For the Good Will Engine is No. 1,  
 When to a fire she does go.  
 And when she gets in service,  
 It would dazzle all your eyes,  
 To see their gold and blue hats  
 As they shine upon the blaze.

"The Good Will Engine" might be seen only as referring to the engine itself. However, the allusion to "their gold and blue hats" expands the reference and gives it some ambiguity. If the "Good Will Engine" refers to the engine, the reference to "their gold and blue hats" indicates that the song meant the feminized engine to include the men operating the engine. However, if, as seems more likely, "Good Will Engine" refers to the fire company as a whole, then the company was being represented as feminine with the men in "their gold and blue hats" being included in that representation. As was the case with their engines and hose carriages, the masculine virtues of courage, toughness, and speed put the members of the fire companies in situations where they were exposed to the weapons of rival companies. This willing self-sacrifice and vulnerability could be represented in masculine terms as was the case when Pennsylvania Hose had a picture of "the Death of Harold at Hastings" painted on their frontispiece. However, this kind of vulnerability was more often symbolized as feminine and Good Will Engine and other companies integrated feminine imagery into the representation of their engines and themselves as a result.<sup>49</sup>

Mutually reinforcing masculine and feminine images could also be seen when the engine companies held trials to demonstrate the prowess of new engines. In a contest like the one between the Humane and Phoenix Hose companies in May 1842, the companies demonstrated their "masculine" strength in manning the levers of their new engines, but represented the physical integrity of their machine (and ultimately themselves) in terms of a

"feminine" opposition between virginity and violation. To be masculine was to have the power to pump water over long distances, but masculinity also involved exposing oneself and one's engine to the violation of being "washed" by another engine. To be successfully masculine was to violate the opposing engine by "washing" it instead.<sup>50</sup>

Masculine and feminine imagery also coexisted in some of the banners displayed in the triennial Firemen's Parades. In the 1843 parade (the most extensively reported in the *Public Ledger*), the banner of the Hibernia Engine Company included two female figures, "one representing the genius of liberty . . . , affording protection to the other, the genius of Erin." The motto was "to assist the suffering and protect the weak." Here, the female figures associated the company with both conventionally masculine virtues of valor, strength, and independence and traditional feminine qualities of weakness and vulnerability. As an American company, the members of the Hibernia Engine Company would have identified themselves with the Genius of Liberty exercising its masculine virtues of courage, daring, and strength "to assist the suffering and protect the weak" as represented on the banner by the Genius of Erin. However, as an Irish-American company, the members of the Hibernia also would have identified themselves with the Genius of Erin which was representing the vulnerability of both Ireland and the victims of fires. It is possible to understand how the men of the Hibernia could identify with both figures through reference to fire company songs. In songs like "The Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory" of Lafayette Hose, the highest pitch of masculinity was viewed as exposing oneself—as knowingly making oneself vulnerable to injury, disability, or death—while confronting the bullets, knives, and bricks of the enemy. Likewise, the members of the fire companies exposed themselves to the occasional dangers of smoke inhalation, being trapped in burning buildings, or having walls fall down upon them while they actually fought fires. In this sense, the exercise of masculine virtue put firemen in a position that had analogies to the victims of fires whom they sought to protect. Like the victims of fires, the firemen were exposed and vulnerable to imminent injury and death. Indeed, if the firemen were injured while fighting fires or engaging in riots, they would need assistance from apothecaries and doctors just as much as fire victims. Thus, the men of the Hibernia Company could identify with the Genius of Erin not only because of their Irish backgrounds, but also because they could experience themselves as vulnerable and suffering.<sup>51</sup>

This identification is also evident in the Hope Hose banner which represented "Hope standing on a rock by the sea side, while a vessel is dashed to pieces by the breakers and people are busily engaged in rescuing passengers and crew." The banner portrayed the destructiveness of the seas, the vulnerability of the passengers and crew in the wake of their failure to avoid shipwreck, and the revival of spirits accompanying the "hope" of imminent rescue. Here, the sea serves as an allegory for fire and the helplessness of the civilian population before the "devouring element." Since the introduction of hose, the population at large had not been a significant part of the effort to fight fires. When large fires struck, the population of Philadelphia was as bereft and helpless as the people on a sinking ship. At the same time, "Hope" represented the courage and steadfastness of the rescuers as they themselves encountered the breakers in their efforts to pull people from the broken ship. By being willing to expose themselves to the dangers of the sea, the rescuers were able to provide hope for the shipwrecked passengers and crew. For the members of the Hope Hose Company, it was their collective willingness to expose themselves to the dangers of fire for the benefit of the population that identified them as Hope Hose and created the meanings invested in their banners, engines, and uniforms.<sup>52</sup>

The incorporation of stereotypically "feminine" vulnerability and helplessness into the representation of fire company masculinity further distinguished the fire companies from early modern popular culture. Female figures had been representing the masculine qualities of groups at least since the French adopted Marianne as the symbol of the Revolution. According to Lynn Hunt, female figures were appealing to revolutionary leaders because they could not be confused with a "father/king" figure like Louis XVI. Although Americans were more flexible about portraying George Washington as a father figure, feminine figures like Liberty were also used to represent the masculine virtues of the new republic. Nevertheless, even though female figures could represent male virtues, early modern popular culture had represented qualities associated with femininity—helplessness, passivity, weakness, irrationality, luxuriousness, shrewishness, and scolding—as "the other" against which males defined themselves. To the contrary, the volunteer fire companies brought traditional feminine qualities into the dynamic by which they represented themselves as a group with masculine qualities and associated "otherness" with rival companies of other men. From the point of view of the fire companies, the more they manifested a feminine vulnerability in exposing themselves to their rivals, the more brave, daring,

and courageous—in other words, the more masculine—they were. By incorporating feminine symbolism into their self-representations of masculinity in such a positive way, Philadelphia firemen were further separating themselves from early modern popular culture.<sup>53</sup>

## Conclusion

Far from being an example of traditional popular culture, Philadelphia's rioting fire companies were part of the transition to early forms of industrial culture during the 1840s. In post-revolutionary Philadelphia, early modern leisure was organized around individual performances that allowed men to manifest their identification with republican values like independence. When members of the fire companies signed the constitution, they obligated themselves to perform the duties of ordering their buckets, attending meetings, and serving as clerk as a precondition for fighting fires as a member of the company. Because firefighting involved a variety of individual performances (bringing buckets to the fire site, setting up lines, and operating the company engine) in the context of carrying out an important civic duty, firemen could be honored as independent men and public-spirited citizens by the rest of the community. In this way, firefighting was consistent with other early modern leisure practices that allowed men to be recognized as independent, honorable, true-hearted, good-natured, or free while maintaining a strong sense of solidarity with the other men in work groups, tavern companies, and the community at large.

There were just as many merchants, gentlemen, and government officials as there were artisans in the fire companies after the Revolution. However, after the advent of hose in 1803 and the spread of fire companies to working-class suburbs like Northern Liberties and Southwark, artisans began to predominate and the fire companies became younger as large numbers of apprentices joined up. Because the use of hose put a premium on arriving first at the fire site, the hose and engine companies changed priorities from ordering buckets to the group effort to pull their apparatus to the fire and inaugurated the era of fire company racing with its attendant scuffles and brawls. The volunteer fire companies also developed committee structures for carrying out company activities and adopted simple forms of company symbolism (distinctive coats and capes, company labels on equipment, and bells for the carriages). These changes reinforced the

early modern character of the volunteer fire companies in several ways. The collective effort to pull engines and hose carriages created opportunities for men to display themselves by commanding the engines and hose carriages, blowing their horns as directors, and controlling the pipe at the fire. The introduction of hose also resulted in most major fire sites becoming festive scenes. Because most members of the engine and hose companies had little to do at a fire, they employed the occasion to buy large amounts of alcohol, consume other refreshments, and engage in boasting, witticisms, practical jokes, and story-telling in the effort to gain recognition from the gathered crowds. In this sense, the changes that accompanied the introduction of hose should be considered a permutation of traditional early modern popular culture.

By the 1840s, Philadelphia's volunteer fire companies had undergone an extensive cultural transformation. Where the early hose and engine companies had provided an organizational context for individual performance, the fire companies of the 1830s and 1840s organized themselves around the fabrication, affirmation, and ritual celebration of collective identity. In fire company rioting, the members of companies like Fairmount Fire Company engaged in a circular affirmation. Because they were "Fairy Boys," they could courageously face up to the bullets, bricks, and brickbats of rival companies. At the same time, the willing exposure of their bodies to the missiles of the other companies demonstrated the qualities of the company. This connection between the ready exposure of self and collective identity was something that was not characteristic of either the earlier fire companies or traditional Philadelphia popular culture in general. To the contrary, the emphasis on the exposure of self in fire company rioting was quite similar to the displays of degradation that characterized the experience speeches of Philadelphia's Washingtonian temperance societies. In fact, several companies had loose affiliations with the Washingtonians and firemen in their company equipment were sometimes featured at Washingtonian events in the early 1840s. Very little attention has been given to the way that the disparate developments in the urban popular culture of the 1840s—the Washingtonian societies, religious evangelism, volunteer fire companies, minstrel shows, gangs, drinking sprees, and boxing—fit together. However, there was enough overlap between the volunteer fire companies and the Washingtonians to conclude that both were part of a broad transition from early modern cultural practices to a new kind of popular culture in the industrializing city.

## NOTES

1. The bulk of the research for this paper was funded by a travel grant from the McNeil Center for Early American Studies. Follow-up research was supported by a Faculty Research Grant and Summer Research Grants from Morehead State University. Michelle Woolwine and Amy Prince provided valuable research assistance.
2. For the attack by Moyamensing Hose, United States Hose Company, Minute Book, Fire Company Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania [hereafter HSP], Feb. 24, 1845; for "Blue Dick," Ibid., Feb. 9, 1842; for charity contest, Ibid., Sept. 20, 1842; for conflict with other hose companies, Ibid., Apr. 12, 1843, Sept. 2, 1844; for speers, Ibid., Jan. 12, 1842 and Mar. 9, 1842; for selling of hose carriage, Ibid., Apr. 12, 1848.
3. E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," *Past and Present* 38 (1967): 70-74; Bruce Laurie, "Nothing on Compulsion": Life Styles of Philadelphia Artisans, 1820-1850," *Labor History* 15 (1974): 343-49; Bruce Laurie, *The Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 46, 58-60, 116; Frank H. Schell, "Old Volunteer Fire Laddies, the Famous, Fast, Faithful, Fistic, Fire Fighters of Bygone Days," Frank H. Schell Papers, HSP.
4. The term "early modern culture" is adopted from Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Hants, Eng.: Scolar, 1994), 1978; for mumming, St. George Ridings, church ales, and Robin Hood plays, see Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 7, 33-34, 55, 59, 66-67; for accession days and monarch's birthdays, see David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), xii, 50-56, 57, 60-61, 64. For the emphasis on the performative and democratic elements in early modern popular culture, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 153-54, 160, 165, 167-68, 172, 185. For discussions of the political implications of early modern popular culture in Europe, see Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 182; Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 12-17.
5. David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 22-27, 78-82, 146; Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 22-23, 25, 83, 92-102, 153-54, Ric Northrup Caric, "'To Drown the Ills that Discompose the Mind': Care, Leisure, and Identity Among Philadelphia Artisans and Workers, 1785-1840," *Pennsylvania History* 64 (1997): 465-89.
6. For examples of fire company racing, fighting, and attacks on other companies, see Schell, "Old Volunteer Fire Laddies, the Famous, Fast, Faithful, Fistic, Fire Fighters of Bygone Days," 5-11, 20-21, and the *Public Ledger*, May 7, 1841. For balls, triennial parades, escorts, and visits, *Public Ledger*, Mar. 7, 1840, March 28, 1843, Aug. 5, 1841, April 5, 1842, and Oct. 20, 1841. For Fairmount Fire Company's involvement in the Washingtonian movement, see *Public Ledger*, Oct. 4 and Nov. 1, 1841; for Northern Liberty Hose's involvement in both the temperance movement and rioting, see *Public Ledger*, May 7, 1841.

7. For the construction of early modern masculinity in terms of the opposition between self and "other," see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 9; for constructions of otherness, see Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 37–39, 47–49, Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Random House, 1985), Caric, "To Drown the Ills That Discompose the Mind," 465–89. For the construction of women as the "other" see Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 20–26, 160–161; Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–4, 16–17, 147–54; Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 51–53, 59, 61; Carol Karlsen, *The Devil in the Shape of a Woman: Witchcraft in Colonial New England* (New York: Random House, 1987), 103–104; Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).
8. For the rivalry between Good Will Engine Company and Fairmount Fire Company, see the *Philadelphia Gazette*, March 4 and 6, 1841; for the representation of engines and hose carriages in feminine terms, see Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 70–75; for nicknames of engines and hose carriages, see John Parry, *The Firemen's Songster* (Philadelphia, 1855), Library Company of Philadelphia, 25–26.
9. Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Viking, 1938), 129–30; J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884*, vol. 3 (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts, 1884), 1883–85. It is impossible to determine when the Britannia, Cordwainer's, Sun, Amicable, and Crown and Beaver fire companies went out of service permanently. Consequently, a precise number cannot be given for volunteer fire companies and their membership in 1785. Statistics on fire company membership were derived from the minute books of the Delaware Fire Company, Hibernia Fire Company, and Diligent Fire Company, Fire Company Collection, HSP; also Philadelphia directories for 1785 and 1791–1805, HSP. Also see Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution*, 149–54; Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993), xiv–xv, 25–27.
10. Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 58.
11. Caric, "To Drown the Ills that Discompose the Mind," 471–72.
12. Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, Fire Company Collection, HSP, March 1816. All subsequent references to fire company minute books are from the Fire Company Collection of HSP.
13. Articles of Fellowship Fire Company, Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, 1798; for the Delaware Fire Company which required its members to keep four buckets, see the Minute Book of the Delaware Fire Company, July 6, 1786. For stamping the company's name on buckets, see *Ibid.*, April 5, 1786.
14. Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, March 7, 1809.
15. Both the Hibernia and Fellowship companies cancelled meetings because clerks had not delivered notices or had not turned over the minute book to the succeeding clerk. For the Hibernia Fire Company, see Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, April 1786; for the Fellowship Company, see Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, July 1802.

16. For the lapse of the clerk function in the Delaware Fire Company, see Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, Aug. 4, 1790; for Hibernia clerks, see Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, January through June 1785; for the case of Philip Bunting, see membership list with the Minute Book of the Reliance Fire Company.
17. For the failure to serve and expulsion of Tench Francis, see Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, April, May, and July, 1786; for two dollar fines, see Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, 1800.
18. For clerk's reports, see the minute books of Hibernia Fire Company, Fellowship Fire Company, Reliance Fire Company, and Humane Fire Company; for appeals of fines, see Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, May 1806; Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, May 1808; for Jacob Baker, see Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, Aug. 20, 1786.
19. Attendance percentages compiled from Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, 1785-1794 with the two dates of greater than fifty percent attendance being Dec. 1790 and April 1789; also from Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, 1800-1805. The decline of the membership of Fellowship Fire Company from 19 to 14 was incorporated into the calculation of the average attendance. Also see Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, Nov. 15, 1795 and Jan. 5, 1797.
20. Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, Jan. 6, 1800.
21. Ibid., March 1813.
22. Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, November, 1790.
23. Ibid., May 1793.
24. Scharf and Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia*, 3:1894; Ralph Smith to Perseverance Hose in Minute Book, Perseverance Hose, Feb. 5, 1838; Minute Book, Pennsylvania Fire Company, Oct. 6, 1807; Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, June 4, 1811; Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, September 1805; Minute Book, Diligent Fire Company, May 17, 1819; Minute Book, Reliance Fire Company, February, 1819.
25. W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Craft Apprentice: From Franklin to the Machine Age in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 24-28, 35-39, 43; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic, 1994), 16; *The Tickler*, Sept. 21, 1808, Apr. 12, 1809, Jan. 24, 1810.
26. Rorabaugh, *The Craft Apprentice*, 43
27. Ralph Smith to Perseverance Hose in Minute Book, Perseverance Hose, Feb. 5, 1838.
28. Duane regularly posted notices concerning the republican legion in the *Aurora*. See, for example *Aurora*, July 7, 1800, July 7, 1804; also see the *Tickler*, Aug. 5, 1808, Oct. 19, 1808, Nov. 2, 1808, Mar. 8, 1809. For strengthening attachments to gentility, see Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 365-70; for Waln's account of firemen, see Robert Waln, Jr., *The Hermit in America on a Visit to Philadelphia*, 2<sup>d</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1819), Library Company of Philadelphia, 235-38; for Anderson's recruitment efforts for the Delaware Fire Company, see Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, 1811. Anderson proposed 20 men for membership. Of those members, there were three artisans, one grocer, and three merchants. Ten men were not listed at all, a sign that he was recruiting more members from outside the ranks of the merchant class.
29. For the standing committee, see Minute Book, Perseverance Hose Company, July 5, 1806; for engineers and fining the secretary of the standing committee, *ibid.*, Aug. 2, 1806; for *ad hoc* committees, *ibid.*, Sept. 6, 1806; for committee to wait on directors and replacement of committee, *ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1806.



30. Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, Jan. 5, 1797, Aug. 6, 1811; Delaware Fire Company, Engineer's Minutes, 1813; Minute Book, Fellowship Fire Company, Jan. 6, 1800, April 1806, entries for September, October, and November, 1806; Minute Book, Hibernia Fire Company, March 1785; Minute Book, Perseverance Hose, entries for 1806-1807;
31. Engineer's Minutes, Delaware Fire Company, 1813.
32. For account of militia parade accompanying procession for inauguration of James Madison, see *The Tickler*, March 8, 1809.
33. Frank H. Schell, "Old Volunteer Fire Laddies, the Famous, Fast, Faithful, Fistic Fire Fighters of Bye-Gone Days," 2; Scharf and Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia*, 3: 1895-1896; Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, Jan. 6, 1826.
34. Minute Book, Perseverance Hose, Nov. 1807; Compiled from Minute Book, Pennsylvania Fire Company, 1808-1813; Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, April 1806 and September 1812. For a complaint about the way that fire sites had become scenes of amusement, see "Rusticus," *The Tickler*, Sept. 6, 1809.
35. For the significance of the Washington Procession, see Jane Campbell Scrapbooks, No. 29, HSP; for preparation of U.S. Hose, see Minute Book, U.S. Hose, Feb. 2, 1832, Feb. 14, 1832, Feb. 16, 1832, and Feb. 20, 1832. There were only four mentions of company symbolism in the U.S. Hose Minute Book between 1826 and 1832. For analyses of the Federal Procession and Lafayette Procession, see Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 117-27.
36. *Public Ledger*, March 28, 1843. Fifty-four Philadelphia companies marched in the parade with 4,122 marchers being reported for 48 companies. The Philadelphia companies averaged 87.7 marching members. So the number of Philadelphia marchers would have been over 4,600. Fifty-two marchers were reported for visiting companies as well. Also see Frank H. Schell, "Old Volunteer Fire Laddies," 27.
37. *Public Ledger*, May 1, 1837; *Public Ledger*, Feb. 5, 1846.
38. For visit of the Water Witch Fire Company, see *Public Ledger*, Oct. 8-9, 1840; for return of Fairmount Fire Company, *Public Ledger*, Oct. 21, 25-28, 1843.
39. Minute Book, U.S. Hose, Feb. 9, 1842; for presentation of horn to Northern Liberties Hose, *Public Ledger*, May 1, 1842; for David Paul Brown lecture where the William Penn Hose Company of Kensington took the pledge, *Public Ledger*, April 5, 1842; for the involvement of fire companies in the Washingtonian movement, see *Public Ledger*, May 7 (Jefferson Total Abstinence Society meeting at Northern Liberties Hose House); Aug. 8 (formation of Young Men's Fairmount Total Abstinence Temperance Society, No. 1 based in Fairmount Fire Company); Nov. 1, a "firemen's temperance meeting" sponsored by the Young Men's Fairmount Total Abstinence Temperance Society at the Fairmount Fire Company engine house; Oct. 19, City Temperance Beneficial Association meeting at hall of Vigilant Fire Company; Jan. 10, 1843, for Good Will Engine Company sponsoring temperance entertainment for visiting firemen. For temperance meeting featuring firemen, see *Public Ledger*, Oct. 5 and Oct. 13, 1841.
40. For "improving every occasion," see *Public Ledger*, April 19, 1839; also see Minute Book, U.S. Hose, June 27, 1837, Feb. 13, 1839; Minute Book, Delaware Fire Company, May 3, 1839, Jan. 30, 1840; Minute Book, Franklin Fire Company, HSP, Aug. 14, 1838.
41. Minute Book, Niagara Hose Company, Aug. 29, 1842, Dec. 13, 1843. For an account of the use of nail-studded clubs in riot between Good Will Engine and Fairmount Engine, see *Philadelphia*

- Gazette*, March 8, 1841; for Franklin Hose and Washington Engine, *Public Ledger*, Jan 10, 1843; for Western Hose, *Public Ledger*, Sept. 14, 1843; for Moyamensing Hose and Marion Hose, *Public Ledger*, Oct. 11, 1843; Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 153–57.
42. John B. Parry, *The Firemen's Songster* (Philadelphia, 1855), Library Company of Philadelphia, 25–26.
43. *Ibid.*, 30–33.
44. *Ibid.*, 6–7, 12.
45. *United States Gazette*, Nov. 10–14, 1843; *Public Ledger*, Nov. 10–14, 1843.
46. Perry, *The Firemen's Songster*, 6–7, 12, 34.
47. For the conflicts involving Northern Liberties Hose, see Minute Book, U.S. Hose, Feb. 9, 1839; *Public Ledger*, May 7, 1841, Feb. 9, 1842; for ethnic-based rivalries, see Laurie, *Working People of Philadelphia*, 152–55; for disputes over historical priority, see Perry, "Hibernia Engine No. 1," *The Firemen's Songster*, 89–90; for disputes over temperance, Laurie, "Fire Companies and Gangs in Southwark: the 1840's," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790–1840* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 75; for Fairmount Engine and Good-Will Hose and Weccacoe Hose, *Public Ledger*, Feb. 7, 1844; for accusations of hose companies setting fires for the purpose of ambushes, see *Public Ledger*, April 1, 1844, and an incident with U.S. Hose, May 7, 1844. For Fairmount Engine's showdown with Moyamensing Hose, see Schell, "Volunteer Fire Laddies," 14–15.
48. For a general history of the Washingtonian movement, see Leonard U. Blumberg, *Beware the First Drink: The Washington Temperance Movement and Alcoholics Anonymous* (Seattle: Glen Abbey, 1991); for an analysis of experience speeches, see Ric N. Caric, "Displays of Degradation: The Washingtonian Temperance Movement in Philadelphia, 1841–1845," Ohio Valley History Conference, Oct. 25, 2002. In Philadelphia, the first Washingtonian meetings were held as "conversation meetings" in March 1841. By the end of 1842, there were over seventy Washingtonian societies in the Philadelphia area. For conversational meetings, see the *Public Ledger*, March 12, 13, and 22; for the Gough speech, *Public Ledger*, Jan. 15, 1845.
49. Amy S. Greenberg, *Cause for Alarm: The Volunteer Fire Department in the Nineteenth-Century City*, 70–74; for the nicknames of engines and hose carriages, see the "Red Crab and the Yellow Hickory" and "The Bed-Bugs' Song" in Parry, *The Firemen's Songster*, 25–26, 45–46; for the Fairmount Fire Company, *Ibid.*, 13–14; for the Good Will Engine Company, see J. E., "The Green Monsters' Song," Philadelphia, Scroggy, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania; for the new Pennsylvania Hose Company carriage, *Public Ledger*, March 27, 1846.
50. *Public Ledger*, May 19, 1842.
51. *Public Ledger*, March 28, 1843.
52. *Ibid.*
53. For representations of the French Republic, see Maurice Aguilhon, *Marianne Into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789–1880* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) 13–16; Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 83.