

**“WHAT MUST POOR PEOPLE DO?”:
ECONOMIC PROTEST AND PLEBEIAN
CULTURE IN PHILADELPHIA, 1682–1754**

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By the early 1720s falling prices for grain exports to the West Indies and the bursting of the South Sea Bubble resulted in the worst economic crisis in Pennsylvania's short history. As trade ground to a standstill in Philadelphia, unemployment rose and Pennsylvanians submitted numerous petitions to the provincial assembly requesting the printing of paper money in the cash-poor colony.¹ The assembly responded by emitting £15,000 in bills of credit in 1722, followed by another printing of £30,000 in 1723 and the creation of a provincial Loan Office.² Despite the emissions, in subsequent years urban tradesmen and small farmers continued to protest the lack of money in the province and persistently demanded an increase in the money supply throughout the colonial era. Supporters of paper currency, such as “Roger Plowman,” claimed in 1725 that the “poor Husbandman” was being squeezed by usurious landlords, while urban smiths,

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shoemakers, tanners, tailors, weavers, and shopkeepers were beset by a “thousand Difficulties” in carrying on their trades because of the scarcity of money in the town.³ The city’s merchants were divided on the issue—Quaker trader Francis Rawle penned the first public argument in favor of paper money, while defenders of the elite merchant and proprietary interest subscribed to a hard money position, believing supporters of paper encouraged disorder among the “mighty and many Headed Multitude.”⁴

Philadelphia in the 1720s was indeed tumultuous, yet the political conflicts that erupted in that decade brought to the surface grievances many laboring Philadelphians had fostered for decades.⁵ And though economic and political conditions in the colony stabilized in the 1730s, city commoners protested against urban and provincial monetary policies well into the middle decades of the century. Servitude for repayment of debt, rates of interest, ground rents, wages, a lack of money, and merchants’ manipulation of currency were all sources of complaint for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Philadelphians.⁶ Inhabitants’ petitions to the assembly reflect the variety of economic challenges that confronted colonists involved in the Atlantic economy, and petitioners ranged from wealthy traders to poor day laborers. In times of acute conflict, however, free Philadelphians of all social classes expressed a fundamental antagonism between rich and poor. Popular protests were directed at urban merchant-creditors or political authorities, and remonstrators often expressed an opposition among the “common People,” the “poor People,” or the “laborious People,” and the city’s “Rich Men and Merchants.”⁷ When James Logan claimed that the “common People” would believe “strongly what they are told is for their Interest” in 1725, he was expressing a widespread perception among the upper class concerning the susceptibility of ordinary people to demagoguery and licentiousness. For Plowman and others who cited the interests of the “Commonalty,” without an adequate amount of currency local producers would be subjected to the depredations of “Extortioners and Lawyers,” evidence of a traditional belief that would find a distinctive expression in early Philadelphia.⁸

While by the 1720s and 1730s many Pennsylvania legislators supported the printing of bills of exchange, all authorities agreed on the threat posed by counterfeited currency.⁹ Political leaders in colonial Pennsylvania consistently expressed concern over the importation of counterfeited notes and coins into the province, and it is significant that the first property offender executed in Philadelphia, Edward Hunt, was convicted of high treason for counterfeiting in 1720. It is also suggestive that in condemning Hunt the provincial council

cited a statute of 1718 that vastly increased the number of capital offenses in the province, at a time of growing economic hardship in the city.¹⁰

Yet in medieval and early modern England, as in colonial Philadelphia, "Extortioners and Lawyers" were often targets of popular protests, while crimes like counterfeiting were viewed by the common people as comparatively benign.¹¹ In England, despite increasingly punitive corporal punishments for coining beginning in the sixteenth century, counterfeiters were often portrayed in cultural productions as highly skilled heroes, who could argue their crimes were attempts to correct the failure of the national mint and treasury to provide the people with an adequate amount of coin. There is evidence that in the cash-poor colony some Philadelphians held similar beliefs, particularly those of the "poorer sort," who were disproportionately dependent on the circulation of small change for economic survival.¹² Moreover, by the 1730s and 1740s an emerging local press published the exploits of outlaws and rebels throughout the Atlantic world, and new and mysterious figures who subverted the colonial order entered the popular consciousness.¹³ By the 1720s and 1730s provincial lawmakers passed statutes that transformed Pennsylvania's penal system, while printers like Benjamin Franklin—who emphasized "To Counterfeit is DEATH" on the twenty-shilling notes he printed for the colony—contrasted criminals and subordinate groups with polite and virtuous colonists.¹⁴

Between the founding and the mid-eighteenth century Philadelphians petitioned, protested, and undertook direct actions over urban and provincial economic policies and practices. Following an initial examination of such actions with an analysis of counterfeiting and colonial culture provides a unique window into popular beliefs concerning money, law, and criminality in a growing urban center of the British Atlantic world. While historians have examined the political impact of the depression of the 1720s on the city, as well as the currency situation of Pennsylvania and the colonies in general, comparably slight attention has been given to popular beliefs and values in relation to currency, legal change, and crime.¹⁵

As in much of the early modern Anglo-American world, residents of the colonial city regularly ignored provincial laws, such as refusing to serve on the night watch. A number of Philadelphians assaulted constables, jailbreaks were not unusual, and numerous unlicensed taverns could be found in the city.¹⁶ A focus on counterfeiting in light of Philadelphia's economic problems, however, sheds new light on conflicting values systems concerning criminality among colonial authorities and the common people

of Philadelphia. An examination of economic protests in the city reveals an early modern populist critique of wealth and power; an exploration of popular attitudes toward crime and counterfeiting prior to the outbreak of the French and Indian War provides a fuller picture of Philadelphians' understanding of the social function of money and law during a time of social, legal, and cultural change.

Cash, Commoners, and a "Pernicious Devouring Extravagant Court"

William Penn's charter for Pennsylvania granted him the power to incorporate towns and regulate commerce and markets in his province. However, Philadelphia's function as a port town in the commercially oriented colony would profoundly alter the English corporate model on which the city was based.¹⁷ For most seventeenth-century peoples in the Anglo-American world the market was a physical place rather than an abstract concept governed by an economic invisible hand. Price controls, the inspection of goods, and the morality of prohibitions against regrating (raising prices) and forestalling were culturally accepted norms that privileged the public good over private self-interest.¹⁸ The medieval and early modern European foundation on which Philadelphia was created is demonstrated by the town charters granted by Penn in 1691 and 1701, which gave the municipality the right to regulate urban markets and bestow the freedom of the city to independent traders and mechanics.¹⁹

The charter of 1691, which had long been requested by leading town merchants, instituted a framework in which traditional economic regulations designed to guarantee basic standards of subsistence for the commonalty could be implemented. Yet the charter created a closed, hereditary oligarchy, while that of 1701 made admission to freemanship highly restrictive, requiring two years' residency and possession of an estate or personal property valued at £50 or more.²⁰ The corporation of Philadelphia under the common council would remain a politically quiet government throughout the colonial era, in contrast to the more factious assembly and provincial council. This did not stop city coopers, shoemakers, saddlers, feltmakers, and other master workmen from seeking regulatory and protectionist legislation from the corporation and colonial government in the early years of the eighteenth century. Yet in colonial Philadelphia the common council remained an elite body that was often unresponsive to the needs of city residents, and for many

inhabitants the municipal government would become an object of hostility and resentment rather than a defender of the public good.²¹

The town grew rapidly, however, and the arrival of significant numbers of farmers, tradesmen, and merchants was a source of comment among seventeenth-century observers. As early as 1685 Penn noted with satisfaction the many industrious husbandmen in the new colony and the numerous artisans that inhabited the city. Two weekly markets, two annual fairs, and the ringing of a bell in town signaling work times for workmen all demonstrated to the proprietor the early success of his orderly "Holy Experiment." Some years later Gabriel Thomas commented on the "Indefatigable" work ethic of Philadelphians, and emphasized to prospective European immigrants the abundance of economic opportunities available for those willing to labor industriously. By 1690 the town could boast 22 shopkeepers and 119 craftsmen practicing 35 different trades, and the urban population grew from a few hundred in 1683 to 2,000 by 1700.²² In 1696 Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York complained to the Lords of Trade that Philadelphia had already begun to rival the much older city of New York in trade and wealth, in large part because high taxes for frontier defense and comparably low wages drove many New Yorkers to Pennsylvania.²³

In the bustling town currency was in short supply, and the wages that free workers were able to demand led potential employers to look for cheaper sources of labor. The British metropolis sought to limit the amount of money in circulation in the American colonies, and the specie that colonists were able to acquire was soon sent to England in exchange for goods manufactured in the home country. Debt, high interest rates, and uncertain market conditions were characteristic features of colonial economies, and the Board of Trade and provincial legislatures regularly clashed over economic policy. In early Pennsylvania, as a result of a limited supply of money, inhabitants often paid taxes in jewels, gold rings or plate, and agricultural produce.²⁴ A letter of 1684 from Chief Justice Nicholas More to Penn, then in England, is suggestive of the economic and social environment of Pennsylvania in its formative years. More complained that the money supply was greatly depleted because of the rapidity with which labor-hungry Pennsylvanians purchased arriving African laborers, and two of his own slaves had recently run away with another—presumably "white"—servant.²⁵ Imperial economic policy, colonists' demand for cheap labor, and the resistance of an unfree labor force to the provincial work regime produced a unique form of conflict in the city from the founding.

It did not take long for the free laboring classes of Philadelphia to feel the impact of the scarcity of currency and the high cost of imported goods in town. Toward the end of the 1680s new lieutenant-governor John Blackwell, a Puritan former military commander who Penn hoped could control factional colonists, wrote to the proprietor that commodities sold at Philadelphia for three to four times the price in England. When the "poore people" of Pennsylvania were fortunate enough to find the money to buy imported goods, they paid four shillings for items costing twelve pence in London. Blackwell blamed the situation on the avariciousness of Quaker merchants; as he sardonically punned, "each prays for his neighbor on First Days and then preys upon him the other six." Particularly galling for Blackwell was the fact that inhabitants paid inflated prices for necessities like linens, woolens, hats, and other goods; "This is not righteous," he wrote to Penn with indignation.²⁶ Even for Blackwell, life was allegedly "very Costly" in Philadelphia, and he claimed—if with some exaggeration—he could live better at half the charge in London. Such a representation contrasts starkly with promoters' contemporary accounts of the favorable environment for the laboring classes in the colony. If subsistence needs were easily met in early Pennsylvania, and free workers were in a favorable bargaining position with potential employers, market conditions were evidently a source of hardship for many city commoners from an early date.²⁷

The lack of a medium of exchange also led a number of colonists into debt in town and country.²⁸ Compounding the problem for a number of debtors in Philadelphia was a 1704 common council decision to raise the fees for debtors' court in the city.²⁹ Those who found themselves unable to pay the new fees protested the ordinance in a revealing petition to Governor John Evans six months after the passage of the act. "Divers poor Inhabitants" of the city and county (suggesting urban and rural petitioners, as well as nonfreeholders) cited an act of the assembly for determining debts under forty shillings, which gave justices of the peace the ability to give judgments in a flexible manner, with court fees seldom exceeding three shillings. The council's ordinance, however, forced those with no money for creditors to pay the municipality "Extravagant" fees, resulting in the incarceration of the impoverished inhabitants in the town gaol. The only way for petitioners to "Redeem their Bodies" was to find someone—most likely debtors' children—willing to bind themselves into servitude for a number of years, "to the great Ruine and Destruction of themselves [debtors] and families." Forty-four debtors sent a similar appeal for the governor to deliver them "out of the Jaws of that

pernicious devouring and Extravagant Court" in 1706, but Evans took the position that the magistrates of towns and cities in Pennsylvania were lawfully entitled to set court fees and fines, as was done in England.³⁰ Residents dependent on loans from local creditors found themselves victims of a process many likely viewed as conspiratorial—or at least "pernicious." When unable to promptly pay back loans, debtors could be forced into servitude without legal recourse to local or provincial authorities, while a lack of money could make repayment impossible. For petitioners the city common council, rather than a defender of the common welfare, had become an oppressor of the "poor distressed Inhabitants of this City."

Though debtors never became a primary source of unfree labor in the city, servitude for debt stood in contrast to a culture in which individual independence was highly prized and is suggestive of Philadelphia's unique system of social relations. The repayment of debts through servitude was first made legal in 1685, and Pennsylvania's punishment for runaway servants—five days of labor for every day absent—was far harsher than in neighboring New York or Virginia.³¹ By the early 1700s Philadelphians were bound into servitude for debt, and the practice continued into the middle decades of the eighteenth century.³² According to Gottlieb Mittelberger, who was in the colony at mid-century, those unable to pay debts went to prison until someone could vouch for them, "or till he is sold." Some were compelled to sell their children into servitude, others served for a period in proportion to their debt. The practice of being sold into servitude to pay for court and jail fees evidently existed into the 1750s, for in 1757 a "Mulatto Fellow" named Timothy Jeffreys absconded from service after he had been "sold out [of gaol] for his Fees."³³ While for many debtors the ability to repay loans through labor was no doubt preferable to incarceration, by the eighteenth century debt and employers' demands for labor had led to the abandonment of Penn's belief that prisoners should not be forced to pay for their own confinement.³⁴

The provincial council was well aware of the uniqueness of Pennsylvania's labor system and how far it departed from metropolitan practice. In 1730, in a dispute with the home country over renewal of a bill for the relief of insolvent debtors (earlier acts for debt had been disallowed in England, only to be renewed with amendments in Pennsylvania), the council claimed that working off debts through labor services was perfectly logical, in contrast to English custom. In the view of the council, while those in Britain were "wholly Strangers to Servitude as practiced amongst us, or [the] binding of Persons otherwise than as Apprentices," in Pennsylvania it was entirely

reasonable for those “fitt for Labour” to satisfy debts through work.³⁵ The council suggested the policy satisfied both creditors and debtors, but acknowledged the threat from the “odd humours & Tempers” frequently expressed by those most likely to be jailed for inability to repay outstanding debts.³⁶ While debtors and prisoners never rivaled indentured servants or slaves as a source of bound labor in the city, for Pennsylvanians who were “fitt for Labour” a fine line often existed between liberty and dependence, and the scarcity of cash made servitude for debt a realistic threat.

Tenants as well as debtors complained of economic hardship. Early in the eighteenth century, Philadelphia renters protested landlords’ demands that tenants pay rent in adjusted rates of exchange following a 1704 proclamation of Queen Anne. The proclamation prohibited colonists from inflating the value of their money by more than one-third of its sterling equivalent.³⁷ Inhabitants of Philadelphia County petitioned the assembly, claiming that great “Inconveniences” would arise if money due for contracts made before the proclamation adjusting exchange rates was collected in the new rating. Petitioners spoke on behalf of “the People” of the province, and were concerned their debt burden would increase as the value of money was diminished. By 1709, the year proclamation money was adopted by the Pennsylvania Assembly, a new petition from renters in the city complained that landlords demanded that rents be paid in the adjusted currency. The appeal also protested creditors’ requirement that borrowers repay loans in the new currency, while emphasizing debtors were being charged illegally excessive—up to 33 percent—rates of interest. Petitioners, nonfreeholders who rented space in the city, framed the complaint in terms of unjust oppression, and grouped usurious landlords and creditors into the same category. The assembly initially attempted to accommodate petitioners by adjusting the act to allow contracts made before the previous May to be paid in the old money. Landlords, however, continued to demand rents in the new currency.³⁸

The issue remained unresolved for a number of years; in 1715 a number of urban freemen joined other inhabitants in protest over landlords’ continuing demand that they be paid in proclamation money. And in 1718 the assembly received two more petitions from city renters requesting permission to pay in the old currency. Tenants produced receipts showing they had continued to pay rents in pre-proclamation currency, evidence of renters’ refusal to conform to what they believed were owners’ illegitimate demands while maintaining the notion of a “just” price. Landlords alleged the new currency’s value was closer to sterling, suggesting the new rates more closely approximated

money's "real" price. At a hearing before the assembly, landlords represented by Joseph Jones and future supporter of paper currency Francis Rawle requested the House privately hear their counsel before making a decision concerning the petition. The following day landlords appeared with their legal representatives; tenants, inexplicably, did not show, and the issue was tabled. While it is uncertain what became of the conflict, it soon became clear that many urban renters supported the printing of paper currency. During the debates over paper money in 1726, tenants who had improved their properties "by Buildings" requested their lands be used as security for the printing of bills of credit. The assembly rejected the petition; since the estates were not freeholds, the House did not deem them to be a proper credit for paper money.³⁹ Popular demands for currency emissions in the 1720s had partial roots in Philadelphia in conflicts between landlords, creditors, debtors and tenants over the value of money and the payment of debts and rents that dated to a 1704 proclamation of Queen Anne.

The first three decades of the eighteenth century also witnessed laboring Philadelphians' attempts to maintain traditional urban economic privileges, though these too would be shaped by the colonial context. In 1708 urban mechanics and laborers complained to authorities that wages were being pushed down because slaveholders hired out slaves for local jobs, indicating the casual nature of work in the city and the absence of guild protections for city artisans.⁴⁰ Following the first large influx of Irish workers to the city in 1717 and the common council's admittance of 424 new arrivals to urban freedom, a number of tradesmen requested the incorporation of their trades, since strangers "not Qualify'd" to practice crafts—despite their obtaining urban freedom—were driving down wages.⁴¹ Although the common council admitted newcomers to the freedom of the city for a fee, it failed to enforce minimum wage levels, a clear violation of the public good and reciprocal obligations from the perspective of local workmen. Moreover, though the council recommended the incorporation of crafts, there is no evidence of protectionist regulations concerning urban artisans being enacted.

While a number of free craftsmen in the city requested incorporation to maintain minimum wage scales, a bill in the House proposed to set a limit to the wages of "itinerant" day laborers.⁴² Five years later, during the depression, unskilled workers complained to the assembly that slaveholders hired out slaves for "servile Work" in and around Philadelphia to the ruin of poor day laborers and their families. Petitioners' request that slaves be prohibited from working "House to House" was, however, laid aside by the assembly,

as such a law would be “injurious” to the public, as well as a violation of the “Right and Privilege of such as keep *Negroes*.” Granting the petitioners’ request would have violated slaveholders’ property rights and would also have deprived local employers of a cheap source of casual labor. The struggle over wages continued outside the city in the following years. In 1727 investors in the iron works—probably that of Bucks County, founded the previous year—petitioned the assembly, requesting they be allowed to import slaves duty free, because free laborers demanded “excessive” wages. Wage workers’ and employers’ divergent views and petitions were symptomatic of the colony’s system of labor. Though the laboring classes’ social mobility in Philadelphia declined during the course of the eighteenth century, for officials and employers high wages and the availability of land threatened profitability and economic development throughout the colonial era.⁴³

Following the emissions of paper money in the 1720s, however, some provincial lawmakers celebrated the salutary effects of the printing of bills of credit, as debtors were able to repay loans, interest rates were reduced, and the crucial urban shipbuilding industry had revived.⁴⁴ Yet the depression of the early part of the decade brought into sharper relief already existing tensions between local laboring classes, government authorities, and urban merchant elites. These tensions emerged once again at the end of the 1720s, when another economic slump resulted in popular demands for a new emission of paper. Voicing its support for the popular movement, the new *Pennsylvania Gazette* stressed that honest inhabitants were forced to sell household necessities at public vendue just to get enough cash to go to market. During the same year printer Benjamin Franklin published an essay on the need for paper currency and, in the process, articulated a labor theory of value.⁴⁵ Some local residents engaged in more direct action. Lieutenant-Governor Patrick Gordon issued a proclamation against rioting after hundreds of urban and rural commoners met in the city and intimidated assembly representatives opposed to a new emission of paper. According to Gordon several “menacing Speeches” were made by “outsiders” of “necessitous Circumstances” against assemblymen and other private persons. The crowd threatened to level the house of longtime Penn confidant and critic of paper James Logan. Likely familiar with Logan’s authorship of *A Dialogue Shewing what’s therein to be found* in 1725, which disparaged the pretensions of commoners in the city, the crowd satisfied itself with throwing bricks through the windows and tearing the shutters off the home of the city’s former mayor. The assembly ultimately agreed to another emission of £30,000 in bills of credit to the satisfaction of large numbers of Pennsylvanians.⁴⁶

Though the overt economic conflicts of the 1720s subsided in the following decade, disputes with important political and religious dimensions frequently found expression in the public forum of city newspapers. Ronald Schultz has emphasized that even during the flush years of the 1730s radical-popular political ideas were expressed in town, for example in John Webbe's "Z" letters in the *Gazette*.⁴⁷ Such "quiet agitation" was made more explicit in 1739, when Philadelphia tanners (who claimed to represent all of the city's tradesmen) engaged in a public dispute with inhabitants who petitioned the assembly for the removal of the town's malodorous tan yards. The argument between urban artisans and city gentlemen became a source of "a great deal of Noise in this City" over the summer and fall, as both sides claimed victory in their hearings before the colonial assembly in a public medium.⁴⁸ In the aftermath of George Whitefield's second visit to the city in 1740 the doors of the aristocratic city Dancing School were briefly locked by school proprietor Robert Bolton, who converted after hearing Whitefield's evangelical message. Following the closing "a great Stir" ensued, as Benjamin Franklin, using the pseudonym "Obadiah Plainman," defended the city's common people and the school's closing against an anonymous defender of the Dancing School and the "better sort" in the pages of the *Gazette*.⁴⁹

More overt conflict followed city merchants' 1741 decision to drive the English copper halfpence from the province, a plan that created a monetary crisis during a period of severe distress for the city's poor. As rumors circulated that the ongoing war with Spain would reach the North American mainland, a particularly severe winter and a smallpox outbreak inflicted significant hardship on townspeople, as firewood and provisions were in short supply.⁵⁰ At a "General Meeting of the Merchants" in the city it was decided the price of the English halfpence would be set at eighteen per shilling rather than the customary twelve, which would have in practice rendered the coin nearly useless. The city's "considerable Dealers" refused to accept the small change except at the reduced rate, shopkeepers followed suit, and bakers refused to bake bread until the money issue was settled. A crowd of city commoners, dependent on the halfpence for economic survival, gathered on a cold Friday in January and proceeded to break the windows of a number of merchants and others who refused to accept the halfpence as payment. The following day large numbers of demonstrators assembled once again, but urban magistrates "surpress'd" the gathering, though precisely how this was done is unknown.⁵¹

Discontent among the city's laboring classes continued, however, as the problem remained unresolved over the rest of the winter and spring. A broadside published by "Dick Farmer" claimed great confusion had

arisen among “all sorts” in the city due to uncertainty over the value of the halfpence. However, according to Farmer the “poorer sort of *Labourers*” was the group most negatively impacted by merchants’ refusal to accept the coin at the customary rate.⁵² In June, at a meeting of the common council, members acknowledged the small coins were needed by urban inhabitants, though they emphasized that because the halfpence had been received at too high a value great quantities of the coin had been imported from neighboring colonies, which drained gold and silver from Pennsylvania. Great “Disquiet” among the city’s common people nevertheless followed merchants’ attempt to revalue the coin. The unrest created by the plan forced the council to require merchants and businesses to accept the halfpence as payment in town, though at the reduced rate of fifteen per shilling, rather than the customary twelve. In this instance the common council was forced to acknowledge the importance of the halfpence to urban inhabitants of modest means. It sought to balance the threat from angry commoners with the danger the city would be inundated with the halfpence, and attempted to find a middle ground. At the same time, the corporation took measures to prevent similar crowd actions in the future—should such “disorders” occur again, council members and any supporters they could gather were to retire to the mayor’s house, “in order to Suppress such Riots.”⁵³

The controversy in the city over the halfpence was soon overshadowed by a crisis in town and country caused by war and servant enlistment, and reflected colonists’ conflicting views concerning status, property, and labor. Recalling earlier imperial wars, the Pennsylvania Assembly resisted raising money or bodies for the War of Jenkins’ Ear (1739–44) that fed into King George’s War (1744–48), leading Lieutenant-Governor George Thomas to retaliate by offering indentured servants freedom in exchange for service.⁵⁴ Bound workers volunteered in large numbers to escape service and creditors, initiating a two-year dispute between Thomas and the assembly over taxes, servitude, and the nature of property. Assemblymen, asserting that their right to the labor of servants while they had time to serve was absolute and no different than any other form of property, including their dominion over transported felons, demanded restitution or the return of enlistees. They argued that if the property of masters was so precarious as to be subject to the caprice of servants, they would be forced to purchase slaves, whose status was not in question. Thomas claimed that the condition of apprentices and servants differed from that of transported felons, and as British subjects servants had the legal right to enlist in the king’s service. Before the end of 1740 the

assembly claimed that several hundred servants—not including those who had been discharged and run away—had enlisted, and demanded no less than £3,000 in compensation. Prior to the end of 1741 in the city and county of Philadelphia, at least 188 servants had abandoned masters for service in the military (compared to 58 in Chester County and 19 in Bucks County), and petitioners were awarded close to £1,600 by the House. According to Sharon Salinger, servant enlistments reduced Philadelphia's servant population by more than half, from 929 in 1739 to fewer than 400 in 1748, though the virtual elimination of servant immigrants during the war played a key role.⁵⁵

Assemblymen emphasized that it was farmers and tradesmen, whose subsistence depended on the labor of servants, who were most aggrieved by enlistment. Indeed, rural Chester petitioners complained the enlistment of servants amounted to "a very hard and unequal Tax," since the county's wealthiest residents owned slaves and therefore contributed nothing to the war effort. Philadelphia masters claimed they were unable to carry on their trades without servants, some having mortgaged their estates in the Loan Office to purchase them, indicating city petitioners in this instance were freeholders. By this time unfree laborers were crucial to the urban economy, and city mechanics and manufacturers were highly dependent on bound labor.⁵⁶ In the summer of 1740 freeholders of the city and county of Philadelphia delivered a paper to the assembly expressing their thanks to the House for endeavoring to preserve their "Rights and Properties, particularly with Regard to Servants."⁵⁷ Such praise for the assembly from wealthy tradesmen and freeholders was absent some years later when the French threat loomed and the House continued to resist provisions for defense. Benjamin Franklin's assertion that it was the "middling People, the Tradesmen, Shopkeepers, and Farmers" of the province and city that bore the brunt of wartime hardship and taxes was representative of many freemen's hostile attitude toward the House by the end of the decade.⁵⁸

Those who enlisted had grievances of their own. Soldiers openly threatened mutiny should they be separated from their comrades, or if they were returned to the "inhumane usage of the Masters of some of them, and the Creditors of others for small Debts." A number of enlistees had clearly been bound into servitude for debt, and soldiers' military experience resulted in the formation of an alliance between free and unfree servicemen. A Captain Thinn reported to the governor that when a number of soldiers were informed they were to be returned to their masters, "Freemen as well as Servants laid down their Arms" and threatened to march to other colonies, "where the

King's Soldiers were better used." A provincial council board, charged with investigating the discharge of soldiers, found that to do so would likely cause "Mutinies, Tumults, and Disorders" among them, "whether Freemen or Servants."⁵⁹ While many servants forged bonds of solidarity with freemen and refused to return to masters, others abandoned service after registering. In an interesting reversal of the 1690s, many laborers fled Pennsylvania for New York; other runaways were allegedly "skulking about" Philadelphia and its environs as late as 1742, where if caught they were threatened with death for desertion.⁶⁰

Disobedient servants and unruly subalterns continued to plague authorities throughout the war and into the 1750s, indicating the relative weakness of law enforcement mechanisms and masters' hegemony in the city. The notorious election riot of 1742, which saw proprietary supporters attempt to break a Quaker-German political alliance by recruiting sailors in the city to intimidate and assault potential voters, occurred in the wake of the Thomas-assembly quarrel over servant enlistments, and the governor's refusal to agree to a new currency emission.⁶¹ In 1752 an ad appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* stating that large numbers of indentured servants had wronged their masters by running away. Throughout the war the roads around town were allegedly flooded with "loose and vagrant fellows" claiming to be soldiers and privateers fleeing the French enemy. With the war over, servants and other suspicious types continued to wander through the country, many of whom were aided by the "basor sort" of sailors in their efforts to board ships and flee service. The same year saw three men severely beat members of the city watch, despite the implementation of an act for strengthening the night watch and lighting city streets.⁶² Despite pleas from urban masters for better regulation of the servant population and official attempts to maintain social order, the municipal government and law enforcement mechanisms remained largely ineffectual.

Currency problems also remained public issues at midcentury. Petitions requesting money were regularly submitted during the war years, and in 1748, while Lieutenant-Governor James Hamilton considered assembly requests for more currency, the city created a lottery to raise 1,000 pieces of eight for use in the city and colony.⁶³ While the city corporation deemed the lottery a success in promoting the public good, as in earlier years labor issues were intimately related to the availability of currency. During assembly debates over striking more bills in 1752 after the deliverance of another city petition, a committee headed by Franklin agreed that in the past paper money

had produced many salutary effects. The committee cautioned, however, that one inconvenience to making loans—and hence land—available to the “industrious Poor” was that it tended to make labor excessively costly, and this was a danger to be borne in mind as long as there was cheap land available in America.⁶⁴

By the middle decades of the eighteenth century a phenomenon closely related to provincial conflicts over money and law enforcement, counterfeited currency, had become as alarming for authorities as ostensibly excessive wages. Like paper money, however, Philadelphians’ attitude toward counterfeiting and its practitioners was strongly informed by popular beliefs concerning the social function of money and law.

Counterfeiting, Plebeian Culture, and Urban Change

The economic grievances that many Philadelphians expressed in the first half of the eighteenth century are better understood when placed in an early modern context in which traditional ideas concerning money, law, and crime were being challenged by a new economic and legal order.⁶⁵ For many engaged in trade and commerce in Europe and America, a fundamental difference existed between “real” money, meaning gold or silver, and “imaginary” moneys of account, such as bills of credit.⁶⁶ In colonial Philadelphia those opposed to the printing of paper money believed it caused money to depreciate and drained specie from the colony.⁶⁷ Supporters of paper were less concerned with inflation than with having no medium of exchange and therefore stressed the utility of bills of credit in facilitating trade and employment. Equally important, supporters of paper often viewed the economically powerful of the city with considerable suspicion. Those who did not belong to the elite thought about money in fundamentally different ways. In 1718, for example, rural petitioners to the assembly requested that farm produce be accepted as legal tender—much as tobacco in the Chesapeake and wampum in the northern colonies served as currency in the seventeenth century, Pennsylvania farmers hoped to use produce to pay taxes and debts, as well as to purchase arriving servants.⁶⁸ The use of “fake” money, or the clipping of coins (the shaving, filing, or cutting the edges of minted money), was not, therefore, considered by many to be a particularly nefarious activity. Coining violated no principle tenet of Christian morality, yet in England authorities deemed the crime to be treason, making it punishable by death.⁶⁹ Pennsylvania followed the

metropolitan lead in punishing counterfeiters with increasing severity in the eighteenth century, and in Philadelphia, as in London, coiners were portrayed in the press as socially marginal thieves, cheats, and rogues. Yet popular representations could be interpreted in a number of ways, and the rise in corporal punishments for counterfeiting coincided with a belief among many Philadelphians that authorities themselves manipulated currency to victimize local producers.

The first prosecution for counterfeiting in Philadelphia occurred in 1683. Charles Pickering, Samuel Buckley, and Robert Fenton were convicted of passing counterfeit Spanish coin and New England shillings (the colony of Massachusetts began illegally minting money in 1652) in the city. Pickering was ordered to make restitution to any person bringing in counterfeited money in addition to a substantial £40 fine, though corporal punishment was not administered. Buckley, in exchange for his testimony and confession, was fined £10, and Fenton, a servant, was sentenced to sit in the stocks for one hour.⁷⁰ As late as 1693, with Pickering now deceased, men like merchant Griffith Jones could claim £120 in compensation from the executors of Pickering's estate after earlier receiving fake bills from the man. Fenton seems to have been unreformed by his hour in the stocks; in 1699 he was found with altered money in Connecticut and admitted to collaborating with makers of fake currency out of Boston, Northampton, and Long Island. Unlike Pennsylvania, in Connecticut at this date there was no law to deal with coiners of foreign money, and Fenton escaped punishment.⁷¹

In the late 1680s the Pennsylvania Assembly enacted more severe penalties against counterfeiting—from three months to seven years imprisonment, though in keeping with the colony's Quaker-influenced legal code corporal, public punishments were absent.⁷² According to Lieutenant-Governor Blackwell, however, Pennsylvania commoners did not believe counterfeiters to be serious offenders; nor was the practice necessarily morally wrong. In his letter to Penn concerning scarce currency and covetous Quaker merchants, Blackwell noted counterfeiters—"vile persons," in his view—had lately appeared in the city. Yet the "poorer sort" were under an "erroneous apprehension" concerning counterfeited currency; they believed that "whilst they embase it, not below its currency, they wrong no body!"⁷³ Such a belief was widespread in early modern England, and the fact that Blackwell emphasized ordinary Pennsylvanians felt counterfeiting "wronged" no *person* if currency did not depreciate is suggestive of a particular vision of the world. Rather than a concern with offending an abstract law of the state,

ordinary Philadelphians expressed a plebeian value system, in which social and economic relations were viewed in both moral and utilitarian terms. If governing authorities failed to provide a sufficient amount of money, local commoners seemed to believe an unofficial form of currency would have to suffice.⁷⁴

Counterfeited currency was therefore in evidence in the city from an early date, as was a trade in stolen money. Women were also regularly involved in illegal economic activities. In 1695 Elizabeth White and Mary Jerome admitted to receiving stolen money from a John Maclebray, who had allegedly taken the money from the home of Samuel Rowland. Both were released and ordered to appear at the next court of quarter sessions, though neither seemed to have shown up. A few years later John Sable was presented by the grand jury for passing counterfeit coins to a woman in the city; he was found guilty of trading two bits of false coin, but the conviction was quashed by the grand jury for "uncertainty." Early in the eighteenth century tavernkeeper John Simes was indicted for allowing dancing and cross dressing during Twelve Night festivities in his establishment—a customary cultural practice frowned upon by Quaker authorities. Two years later Simes was again in court, his tavern having become a place in which counterfeited currency was passed.⁷⁵

Women's involvement in counterfeiting and illegal trade was directly related to their role as urban tavernkeepers. In 1713 George Perkins was taken to the town gaol on suspicion of having coined or counterfeited Spanish money in the city. He escaped from jail, however, and the sheriff seized all the goods in Perkins's home, including a significant quantity of liquor, suggesting Perkins ran a tavern or dram shop. George's wife, Mary, petitioned the common council, stating the confiscation of her household goods prevented her from supporting herself and three children. The council, in order to avoid Perkins and her children becoming a public charge, relinquished her possessions.⁷⁶ Impoverished women were often awarded free liquor licenses by city authorities to keep public relief rolls to a minimum. Throughout the eighteenth century selling liquor without a license was, however, a common occurrence. Sharon Salinger has suggested laboring-class taverns that were often run by women were spaces in which social norms in Philadelphia were transgressed.⁷⁷ Illegal taverns were not only the places in which women sold alcohol to servants and slaves; these mixed-race establishments that catered to apprentices, servants, slaves, and mariners were also the spaces through which stolen goods and counterfeited money circulated.

Authorities began to take counterfeiting more seriously in the eighteenth century, following the passage of the 1696 Coinage Act in England, and particularly after the 1718 statute that introduced to Pennsylvania a number of English criminal laws.⁷⁸ The first person executed under the new law was an immigrant silversmith named Edward Hunt, convicted of high treason for counterfeiting Spanish coin. By the time of Hunt's hanging in 1720 Philadelphia's first newspaper, Andrew Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury*, was in circulation and printed Hunt's last dying speech, a popular literary genre in England.⁷⁹

The act of printing the gallows speech, and the contents of the speech itself, illuminates a number of issues: provincial legal and cultural Anglicization, the dangerous prevalence—at least from authorities' perspective—of counterfeiting in the city, and the continuing divide between elite and popular views of the seriousness of the crime. Equally important was the *Mercury's* function as an instrument of propaganda, for while it printed Hunt's subversive speech, it was at pains to emphasize the illegitimacy of Hunt's last words as well as the justice of his punishment. The paper reinforced the legitimacy of capital punishment for coining in a colony whose legal system was in part founded on William Penn's view that to die for property crime was "a very hard thing."⁸⁰

The *Mercury* implicitly acknowledged the controversial nature of Hunt's execution. The paper prefaced the gallows speech by emphasizing he had been captured as a Jacobite rebel in Preston, Lancashire, in 1715; he had been transported to Antigua as a convict servant after the rebellion; and he later arrived in Philadelphia, where he was "most justly" condemned for his crime. The *Mercury* also informed readers (some of whom would likely have witnessed the spectacle themselves) that Hunt's defiant final words misrepresented the administration of justice in the province and attempted to "infuse both ill Principles and Practices into the Minds of the People." Prior to subscribers reading Hunt's account, then, the paper made it clear the offender was a felon, a rebel, and a liar and was undoubtedly guilty and deserving of death in order to preempt any possibility the reader would sympathize with the accused, or question the legitimacy of the punishment.⁸¹

The speech itself provides an important perspective on the city's economic culture and Pennsylvanians' competing views of justice. According to Hunt, while acknowledging that the crime he was to die for was against the law, he stressed he did not commit the offense with the *intent* to cheat or defraud anyone. On the contrary, being ignorant of the breach of any law (of God or

man), the silversmith said he believed at the time that he "might cut those Impressions as innocently as any other, or the Stamps that the Gentlemen of this place employ'd me about, to make Farthings." In Hunt's view, if gentlemen could hire the silversmith to cut farthings, why could he not make similar impressions himself, and why were they not also punished?⁸² Hunt also protested that he had not been tried according to the laws of England, suggesting that Quaker jurors who had not taken oaths were unqualified to pass judgment on English subjects.⁸³

Though the coiner asked God to forgive him his sins as the execution script required, he also requested forgiveness for his persecutors, emphasizing his judges "know not what they do," a direct refutation of the primary social function of the genre—the offender's acknowledgment of the justice of the punishment. While Hunt honorably closed the drama by asking the Lord to protect his wife, Martha, "from the Pollutions of the World," it was clear the *Mercury's* printing of the speech was not intended to romanticize the exploits of the rebel and outlaw.⁸⁴ The provincial council, though some members suggested a reprieve was in order, emphasized the need to "make some public Examples" of criminals, and that a pardon would be of little service "to so miserable a Life."⁸⁵ Hunt, in contrast, stated that he could not see "what Advantage there can be to any in my Death," and it is probable, despite the efforts of Bradford's *Mercury*, that at least some Philadelphians sympathized with the condemned's plight.

Hunt's speech and what it asserted about counterfeiting is especially illuminating when placed in the context of the depression and political conflicts concerning paper currency in the 1720s. For while the silversmith's protestations concerning his crime closely resemble commoners' beliefs as articulated by Governor Blackwell thirty years earlier, the pamphlets published during the same period demonstrate a popular view of the function of money only hinted at in earlier protests and petitions. Though most pamphlets of the decade were written for a learned audience, a few appealed to a distinctly plebeian sensibility—and particularly to those indebted to urban merchants opposed to paper currency.⁸⁶

Rather than paper money as a temporary means to maintain a balance of trade until a local manufacturing interest could provide goods to support a larger export trade (first argued by merchant Francis Rawle), popular pamphlets appealed to commoners' sense of use, equity, and justice.⁸⁷ The reason merchants feared paper, according to Roger Plowman, was because they would have to accept the money as payment for debts, and would

therefore not be allowed to seize the lands of insolvent debtors at half the value—their intended aim from the beginning. To a fictional Mr. Rich's assertion that paper money had no intrinsic value, in contrast to gold and silver, Plowman replied: "it will purchase Land or the Country Produce as cheap as ever it was sold: And is that good for nothing?"⁸⁸ In another pamphlet the "Observator" asked "honest Roger": "What is the Necessary Use of Money?" to which Roger replied: "there's no living without it; I buy Bread, Beef, Cloathing, and now and then a Cann of good Beer or a Noggen of right Nants, to Chear up my Spirits after a hard Days work." With bills of credit he was able to purchase a pair of buckskin breeches for winter, and meat and drink at "the Club" (a reference to the working-class Tiff, or Leather Apron, Club), more cheaply than he could have in London with sterling silver.⁸⁹ Far from erudite meditations on balances of trade, the credit system, and legal sources of sovereignty, these publications appealed to the usefulness of paper in helping common people meet basic material needs.

Pamphlet writers appealed to a popular belief that a just monetary policy should provide a public function rather than serve to enrich a few. Allegedly avaricious merchants, on the other hand, used money—or the lack of it—to enrich themselves at the expense of local producers. When creditors like Robert Rich demanded debtors repay loans in money that wasn't available, Plowman asked: "what must the poor People do? You will have Money; but money is not to be got, neither here nor at the *West Indies*, and yet nothing will satisfy you but money." In Plowman's view creditors like Rich were "the greatest Tyrants upon Earth, and worse than the *Egyptian* Task-masters." Paper money was better than no money at all; the only people who benefited from scarce currency were creditors, lawyers, and jailors. According to the anonymous writer of the satirical *Triumvirate of Pennsylvania*, commoners unjustly complained "rich Misers" hoarded money at the expense of the "laborious and industrious" part of the community. Should the bill for paper money pass, he warned, all would be brought to a level by emboldened democrats in the assembly.⁹⁰ Pamphleteers' assertions that paper money served a vital social function, and that local "Tyrants" used their control over monetary policy to oppress others, were designed to appeal to the sentiments of the free producers of the commonalty.

In this context it should not be surprising that counterfeited bills of credit surfaced in the city, or that inhabitants caught with unofficial currency claimed their poverty and a scarcity of money justified the crime. In 1732 Franklin's *Gazette* reported that the publican of the Indian King

Tavern, Richard Brockden, suspected a man requesting change for three twenty-shilling notes was attempting to pass counterfeit bills. After the man and his sister were apprehended, the offender admitted to receiving a large number of counterfeited bills from Ireland from a man by the name of Watt, who convinced the man the passing of the money "was no Sin, for it would make Money plentier among poor People."⁹¹ Much like the "poorer sort" referred to by Governor Blackwell nearly fifty years earlier, and Edward Hunt in 1720, though according to the unnamed offender he was aware he had broken the law, the idea that he intended no harm was stated as potentially mitigating the seriousness of the crime. Whether the Irish counterfeiter actually convinced the offender his crime was no sin is less important than the fact that it was claimed to be a legitimate excuse. Equally important, for Philadelphians of the lower sort money was still scarce, and by this time it was not uncommon for unofficial bills and those who passed them to be found in the city and throughout the region.⁹²

Beginning in the later 1720s growing numbers of Irish and German immigrants arrived at the port, and by the 1730s increasing exports of agricultural goods bound for the British Isles and Southern Europe passed through the city.⁹³ As the city population reached 10,000, the rapidly changing urban environment brought new patterns of consumption as well as an increased exploitation of unfree labor in the mid-Atlantic region.⁹⁴ The anonymous environment of Philadelphia also became a magnet for runaways, and fugitives, criminals, and transported felons were frequently represented in local publications.⁹⁵ At the same time a traditional popular fascination with outlaws and bandits dating to antiquity was evident in Philadelphia, as tricksters and confidence men who defied social norms became colonial celebrities.⁹⁶ In 1731 Franklin lamented in the *Gazette* that numerous copies of *Robin Hood's Songs* sold at two shillings per book annually from his print shop, while a small number of *David's Psalms* sat unsold for more than two years. Similarly, a few years later the paper advertised for the return of a borrowed volume of *Select Trials, for Murders, Robberies, Rapes, Sodomy, Coining, Frauds, and other Offences* from the Old Bailey in London. After Joseph Watt, the man who convinced the brother and sister encountered earlier that it was no "sin" to pass counterfeited money, was whipped, pilloried, and had his ears cropped in the center of the city for his crime, he behaved so as to "touch the Compassion of the Mob, and they did not fling (as was expected) neither Snow-balls nor any Thing else." Snowballs were expected because it was January; six months later, in June, Watt was again in the city jail, though

he afterward escaped and seems not to have been heard from—at least by authorities—in the city again.⁹⁷

By this time, Philadelphians could read countless tales concerning English felons, Atlantic pirates, and slave revolts, in addition to numerous accounts of rogues and vagabonds in the city and region. That celebrities like confidence man Tom Bell, “known by his Rogueries throughout the Colonies,” could be apprehended in Philadelphia only to easily escape the local jail once again suggests the weakness of colonial law enforcement mechanisms in both practical and ideological terms. Bell made numerous appearances in Philadelphia, though he seems to have been more comfortable in New York.⁹⁸ The notorious “King of the Gypsies,” Bampfylde-Moore Carew, also made a mid-century appearance, not only visiting cities like Philadelphia and New York but publishing an account of his exploits there.⁹⁹ While in Pennsylvania the gypsy son of a wealthy Devonshire family allegedly met George Whitefield, and in Philadelphia Carew met the principal merchants of Philadelphia, while also “counterfeiting” an Irish brogue and passing a day “very merrily” with an Irish publican in High Street.¹⁰⁰ In cosmopolitan American cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston felons like John Poulter found refuge from the law, “in which Places no Questions are asked them.”¹⁰¹

While it is unlikely a majority of urban commoners sanctioned illegal acts—suggested by the fact that offenders were indeed often pelted with refuse while in the pillory—it is not difficult to believe that the sympathy expressed for counterfeiters like Watt was also symptomatic of a populist hostility to city officials and urban “great Men.” After all, following the election of the popular former governor William Keith to the assembly in 1726, celebrating rioters razed the stocks and pillory, symbols of authority and disciplinary power.¹⁰² A plebeian labor theory of value was again expressed during the 1730s, as hostility toward urban gentlemen was accentuated by the increasing prominence of what Richard Bushman has called the “refinement process” in the colonies.¹⁰³ According to “Constant Truman” in 1735 it was well known that it was the “poor Countryman and the industrious Mechanick, after all, that supplies the Merchant, and fits out the Gentleman with all his fine Cloaths, his gay Houses and Furniture, and his Train of Servants and Attendants.” In fact, without the producers, merchants and gentlemen might actually have had to beg, starve, steal, or even labor for their livelihood, as did farmers and artisans. Truman implored potential voters not to be intimidated by corrupt magistrates and loan office trustees

when voting, though he reserved particular wrath for "crafty" lawyers, who frequently used their knowledge of the law to intimidate and exploit regular people. In short, Truman's essay was a protest against political deference, and his pamphlet made an explicit connection between social power, law, and economic exploitation.¹⁰⁴

Truman claimed to speak for the "honest Hearted Men" of Pennsylvania—the industrious, if poor, freemen with the right to vote. After mid-century, however, it has been estimated approximately one in fifty city inhabitants, or perhaps one in ten adult men, met the legal property qualifications (£50 in personal property) to vote, meaning most of the city's day laborers, sailors, and poor artisans could not participate in the formal political process.¹⁰⁵ At the same time an autonomous urban subculture took shape in the city. The "tumultuous" gatherings of servants and slaves had frustrated authorities from the city's founding, but by the early 1740s unfree Philadelphians' evening revelries around the courthouse were a daily occurrence, and city grand juries and the common council voiced increasing concerns over threats from subaltern groups.¹⁰⁶ In 1744 the grand jury was shocked to find the debauchery of the neighborhood called by the "common people" Helltown in the Northern Liberties, at which the "horrid Oaths and Imprecations" so regularly heard on the streets of the city by respectable inhabitants were encouraged in the neighborhood's numerous disorderly and unlicensed taverns. Economic growth produced new social distinctions in the city, and wealthy tradesmen like Franklin helped create a public discourse concerning criminals and the dangers posed by the lower classes.¹⁰⁷

Closely related to the concerns of respectable Pennsylvanians over urban crime and disorderliness were officials' worries over counterfeiting. In 1727 Governor Patrick Gordon grandiosely informed the assembly that he had discovered a "horrid attempt" to adulterate neighboring colonies' bills credit. According to Gordon counterfeiting was the "blackest and most detestable Practice" known, for it upset provincial credit, commerce, and trade. He further asserted large quantities of counterfeit bills had been diffused throughout Pennsylvania, as Jersey bills expertly faked in Ireland were rumored to be flooding into the mid-Atlantic region. Gordon urged the gentlemen of the assembly to be alert for the bills, since it would take "more Skill to distinguish them than is to be expected amongst the common, and especially amongst the Country People." The governor recommended a new law be passed for punishing counterfeiters, and the assembly approved. In 1738, during an assembly discussion over a new emission of paper money,

there was also considerable debate concerning the punishment to be inflicted on counterfeiters. The House decided that the counterfeiting of any new bills should be punished by death without benefit of clergy.¹⁰⁸

In the early 1740s many Philadelphians were more concerned with merchants' plan to drive the English halfpence from the colony than with counterfeiters or coin clippers. The broadside published by Dick Farmer that emphasized the hardship merchants' and shopkeepers' nonacceptance of the halfpence inflicted on laboring Philadelphians also asserted that city merchants intentionally devalued local currency. While the common council's account stressed usage of the coin at the customary value drove specie from the colony, Farmer claimed urban merchants had themselves imported the halfpence and then distributed them to farmers, millers, and tradesmen at an advanced rate. After delivering the coins to local commoners, traders then refused to take them back or receive them as payment for goods or debt at the rate they were given. Farmer recalled a similar situation twelve years earlier (in 1729, another year of significant conflict, as has been seen). While at that time urban merchants signed an agreement to accept bills of credit from the Lower Counties (Delaware) at the same rate of provincial bills, it was not until the Loan Office accepted the counties' bills that the "Mischief" was remedied. The legal power of the state was needed to curb the nefarious dealings of the city's merchant community, for in Farmer's view (and allegedly "19 Parts in 20 of all People in the *Province*" agreed with him), only the provincial assembly could "rescue the People out of the Merchants Power."¹⁰⁹ The broadside's representation of a popular suspicion of merchants who held a disproportionate amount of power in the town and province demonstrates the persistence of a cultural system originating in the city's mercantile beginnings.

The common council attempted to accommodate Philadelphians' complaints concerning the halfpence, yet counterfeited currency continued to circulate in the city. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, when bills of credit were emitted counterfeiters often sent samples to England, Ireland, Amsterdam, or Germany to make plates for copying them, or to have counterfeits struck. In 1739 Peter Long, a weaver of Philadelphia with experience counterfeiting in New Jersey, sent directions and samples to an English printer for counterfeiting bills of Newcastle and New Jersey. Long's cousin and contact in Dorsetshire, mariner Robert Jenkins, was apprehended after a nervous English printer informed authorities of the plan in London, who then wrote to Governor Thomas of Pennsylvania with information concerning how to detect the counterfeits. Warrants were issued for Jenkins, and he

was arrested in New York while serving as a cook on a voyage to the colonies. In a secret compartment in his chest 971 counterfeit bills were found, and Jenkins was taken to Philadelphia for questioning. He denied knowing anything about the counterfeit money, but admitted to forging a document in order to avoid the press gang, as he had previously been forced to serve on a man of war.¹¹⁰

A woman named Rachel Brick of Salem County was also deposed, and suggested the extent of counterfeiting in the mid-Atlantic region. She claimed that during a discussion at her home between Long and one William Paulling, Paulling claimed "amongst all the Counterfeiting ther[e] was no Jersey money Counterfeited," to which Long disagreed. Long then took out of his pocket a pocketbook with what seemed a "large parsale of money," and proceeded to show the difference between "true Bills" and counterfeit Jersey notes.¹¹¹ While the fate of Long and Jenkins is unknown, intercolonial and transatlantic networks of counterfeiters worked in similar ways throughout the 1740s and 1750s.¹¹²

By mid-century in Philadelphia and throughout the mid-Atlantic region highway robbers, urban pickpockets, and transported felons plagued colonial society—at least if local newspaper reports are believed. At mid-century Franklin polemicized against Britain's Transportation Act, and in 1753 an essayist in New York's *Independent Reflector* wrote approvingly of a number of recent hangings in Philadelphia for robbery.¹¹³ In Philadelphia in the 1750s counterfeiters like William Kerr and Daniel Jesson were not punished with death, but they were whipped and had their ears nailed to the pillory, where their heads were then pulled from the device.¹¹⁴ Yet even in the midst of an alleged crime wave that local writers used to criticize metropolitan policy, authorities recognized the need to balance terror with mercy, particularly regarding counterfeiting. When Daniel Johns, Rebecca Johns, and Stephen Phillips petitioned the common council for the remittance of their fines for coining and passing counterfeit pieces of eight in 1749, they emphasized their poverty as well as their "extreme Ignorance of the nature & mischievous Consequences" of the crime, and their request was granted.¹¹⁵

Around the same time the assembly passed a bill for a professional night watch, modeled on that of London and mandating the artificial lighting of city streets.¹¹⁶ Commenting on the usefulness of the bill in a letter to Governor James Hamilton in 1751, Thomas Penn also demonstrated the persistent cultural tolerance for counterfeiting, stating even people "of substance" occasionally engaged in coining and the printing of money. Equally

indicative is a letter from the following year, in which Penn stated the suppression of counterfeiting would require all the power of government available, for large numbers of inhabitants—including, he was surprised to note, some Quakers—too often sheltered such “sanctified Villains” from the force of law.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Scholars who emphasize consensus and social peace in the prerevolutionary era tend to view what constitutes “the political” in overly narrow terms, seeing the formal political arena as the primary space in which social discord became manifest.¹¹⁸ Historians more concerned with material and class issues in early Philadelphia have gravitated toward the revolutionary era, explicitly or implicitly suggesting a relative absence of poverty before the French and Indian War translated into a lack of conflict in the city.¹¹⁹ By contrast, as this article has argued, taking into account how monetary policies impacted ordinary people, and how popular beliefs and actions shaped the colonial economy and culture, can reorient analysis in useful directions. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Philadelphia commoners were able to alter economic policy through petitions and methods of direct action sanctioned by plebeian cultural norms. Ordinary Philadelphians regularly protested what they perceived to be unjust and oppressive economic policies throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. In addition, social problems that would become more acute in later years—disputes over wages, the employment of slaves, and resistance from an unfree laboring population—were evident from the founding.

What set the mid-eighteenth century (roughly the late 1720s to the 1750s) off from the earlier period were a growing population and an increasingly complex urban economy and society. In the middle decades of the century the provincial assembly responded to popular demands for paper money, which made possible the repayment of debts and encouraged trade and employment. An abiding concern for lawmakers and employers, however, was the price and supply of labor, while by mid-century middling Pennsylvanians also depended heavily on the labor of servants and slaves. In the city the municipal government’s role as protector of the common good was largely absent from an early date, and in the commercial port commoners’ hostility to the urban merchant oligarchy was expressed during trade slumps and

wartime hardship. This hostility was articulated in an early modern idiom in which rich merchant-creditors, lawyers, and officials allegedly colluded to exploit farmers and tradesmen through their control of monetary and legal policy. This discourse was expressed even after economic growth produced new social distinctions in the city, whether through freemen's critique of elites' conspicuous consumption, or in assembly debates over servitude and property during wartime.

What laboring Philadelphians actually thought about counterfeiters and their crime must remain a matter of speculation. While it would be reductionist to claim that for Philadelphia's common people counterfeited currency substituted for the government's failure to provide an adequate amount of money, there was certainly what Malcolm Gaskill has called a "dissonance in attitudes" between authorities and the popular classes—including some of the "better sort"—concerning the seriousness of the offense. It may also be significant that there were no executions for counterfeiting in Philadelphia between 1720 and 1770 (when Herman Rosenkrantz was executed) despite legal change and the infliction of whippings and other mutilations on offenders.¹²⁰ In New York City, by contrast, authorities' decision to execute counterfeiters in 1756 and 1762 resulted in threats of crowd action to such a degree that in the latter year Lieutenant-Governor Cadwalader Colden called out soldiers stationed at Fort George to prevent a popular movement to free the prisoners. (In both instances city authorities had significant trouble finding anyone to act as hangman.)¹²¹ Many freemen of Philadelphia no doubt thought counterfeiters were a nuisance. Yet it is suggestive that while as early as the 1680s Governor Blackwell characterized coiners as "vile persons," as late as 1752 many in the city thought of counterfeiters as "sanctified Villains"—a testimony to the ambivalence and irony inherent in popular representations of colonial outlaws. More important, understanding monetary policies and conflicts in early Philadelphia requires attention be given to the beliefs and values of those most dramatically impacted by economic and legal change.

NOTES

1. For the depression, see Richard A. Lester, "Currency Issues to Overcome Depressions in Pennsylvania, 1723 and 1729," *Journal of Political Economy* 46, no. 3 (June 1938): 324–75; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 118–21; Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 332;

- Arthur L. Jensen, *The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1963), 16–17; James G. Lydon, “Philadelphia’s Commercial Expansion, 1720–1739,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter *PMHB*) 91, no. 4 (October 1967): 401–18. Between 1718 and 1723 Pennsylvanians submitted to the assembly no less than six petitions requesting an increase in the money supply. *Pennsylvania Archives* (hereafter *PA*), 120 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Severns and Co., 1852–56; Harrisburg, 1874–1935), 8th ser., 2:1262, 1263, 1361, 1398, 1415, 1464.
2. *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682–1801* (hereafter *Statutes*), 18 vols. (Harrisburg: C. M. Busch, 1896–1916), 3:324–38, 389–407. With the creation of the Loan Office freeholders mortgaged land in exchange for loans made with interest. The bills were to be retired at the time of repayment.
 3. *A Dialogue Between Mr. Robert Rich, and Roger Plowman* (Philadelphia, 1725), in Charles Evans, bibliographer, *Early American Imprints: First Series* (hereafter *EAI*) (New York: Readex Microprint, 1985), no. 2624, 1, 3–4. The allegorical Roger Plowman was likely a variant on the English Piers Plowman tradition, based on William Langland’s fourteenth-century poem of the same name. As a humble tiller of the soil Plowman searched for truth and was adapted to eighteenth-century Pennsylvania as the “honest” Roger.
 4. For criticisms of the demands for paper—and the alleged demagogues who encouraged such demands—see *American Weekly Mercury*, December 31, 1723; James Logan, *A Dialogue Shewing, what’s therein to be found* (Philadelphia, 1725), in *EAI*, no. 2652. For the first essay calling for paper, see Francis Rawle, *Some Remedies Proposed, for the Restoring the sunk Credit of the Province of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1721), in *EAI*, no. 2287. By this time the founding generation of Quaker merchants was being replaced by an emerging group of Anglicans, though Quakers clung to political power with “surprising tenacity.” Gary B. Nash, “The Early Merchants of Philadelphia: The Formation and Disintegration of a Founding Elite,” in *The World of William Penn*, ed. Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 350.
 5. Throughout this article I will use categories like “laboring classes” and “common people” interchangeably. Though these categories were not always identical, Philadelphians who protested against economic oppression often associated labor and productivity with the common people. Important discussions of social structure and working people in colonial and revolutionary America can be found in Gary B. Nash, Billy G. Smith, and Dirk Hoerder, “Laboring Americans and the American Revolution,” *Labor History* 24, no. 3 (Summer 1983): 414–39; and Alfred F. Young, “The Mechanics of the Revolution: ‘By Hammer and Hand All Arts do Stand,’” in Young, *Liberty Tree: Ordinary People and the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 27–99.
 6. Though primarily concerned with the revolutionary and early republican periods, a useful discussion of debt, credit, currency, and related issues is Bruce H. Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).
 7. See, for example, *A Dialogue Between Rich and Plowman*; and *The Triumvirate of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1725), in *EAI*, no. 2712.
 8. Logan, *A Dialogue Shewing*, 13 (quote), 40; *A Dialogue Between Rich and Plowman*, 2. For a recent analysis of the development of the terms “common people,” “commonalty,” “common-weale,” and “commonwealth” over the *longue durée* in early modern England, see David Rollison,

A Commonwealth of the People: Popular Politics and England's Long Social Revolution, 1066–1649 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

9. According to their definitive work on the economic history of British North America, John McCusker and Russell Menard assert counterfeiters "seem always to have been at work in the colonies," and Kenneth Scott long ago explored the prevalence of counterfeiting in colonial North America. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 339; Kenneth Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957).
10. In 1718 the numbers of capital punishments in Pennsylvania were expanded from one (willful murder) to twelve. *Statutes*, 3:199–221; Jack D. Marietta and G. S. Rowe, *Troubled Experiment: Crime and Justice in Pennsylvania, 1682–1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 22. For the council's deliberations, see *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania, from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government* (hereafter MPC), 16 vols. (Philadelphia: J. Severns, 1852–53), 3:109. The case of Edward Hunt will be treated in more detail below.
11. In addition to nobles, lawyers and others connected with systems of justice were frequently targets of popular uprisings in medieval and early modern England. Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men made Free: Medieval Peasant Movements and the English Rising of 1381* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 194–95, 226–27; Andy Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159–64. During the Civil War lawyers and unjust laws were the focus of John Warr's defense of the common people in "The Corruption and Deficiency of the Lawes of England Soberly Discovered: or Liberty Working up to Its Just Height, 1649," in *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England*, ed. David Wootton (New York: Penguin, 1986), 148–63.
12. Malcolm Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 124–37. Gaskill makes a similar point for early modern England (130–31).
13. For counterfeiting in the colonies, their practitioners, and the severity of Pennsylvania punishments, see Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonia America*, 210. For the literature of crime, see Daniel A. Cohen, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1676–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Daniel Williams, "Introduction," in *Pillars of Salt: An Anthology of Early American Criminal Narratives*, ed. Williams (Madison, WI: Madison House, 1993), 1–64. Counterfeiters like Owen Sullivan of New York achieved a great deal of notoriety in the colonies as a highly skilled maker of money, and the fame of his "Dover Money Club" is reminiscent of the popularity of counterfeiters in the home country. Indeed, New York attorney general John Tabor Kempe kept a special file on Sullivan. See John Tabor Kempe Papers (SJC, Criminal), Series 1, Box 2, Folder 3, New-York Historical Society. Scott devoted a full chapter to the Dover Money Club in *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, chap. 2. Sullivan's "Last Dying Speech" was published in New York City in 1756, and the immortalization of his defiant gallows' confession would have contributed to his "mythogenetic" appeal. It is also significant that Sullivan's execution had to be delayed, since the government of New York could find no one in the city willing to act as a hangman. "A Short Account of the Life of John*****Alias Owen Syllavan," in *Pillars of Salt*, ed. Williams, 142–49.

14. For Franklin and crime see David Waldstreicher, *Runaway America: Benjamin Franklin, Slavery, and the American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 95–96. For an image of Franklin's twenty-shilling notes, see <http://www.librarycompany.org/BFWriter/images/large/3.7.jpg>.
15. For Philadelphia in the 1720s, see Thomas Wendel, "The Keith-Lloyd Alliance: Factional and Coalition Politics in Colonial Pennsylvania," *PMHB* 92, no. 3 (July 1968): 289–305; Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 149–53; Ronald Schultz, *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720–1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 22–23; Alan Tully, *Forming American Politics: Ideals, Interests, and Institutions in Colonial New York and Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 358. For economic issues in Pennsylvania see Lester, "Currency Issues." For economic issues in the colonies generally, see Joseph A. Ernst, *Money and Politics in America, 1755–1775: A Study in the Currency Act of 1764 and the Political Economy of Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973); McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*.
16. For assaults against constables and abuses of the watch, see Grand Jury Presentment of Samuel Holt, March 5, 1695, in "Philadelphia County Court of Quarter Sessions and Common Pleas, 1695," ed., Edwin B. Bronner, *American Journal of Legal History* 1, no. 1 (January 1957): 90; Grand Jury Presentments of Francis Jones, Samuel Perry, Samuel Stacy, James Metcalf, and Thomas Marriot, August 6, 1695, in Bronner, "Court of Quarter Sessions," *American Journal of Legal History* 1, no. 3 (July 1957): 236–37. For refusals to serve on the night watch, see Lists presented by the Grand Jury, 1705, Ancient Records of Philadelphia, 1702–1770, Am. 3054, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP). See also Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 132–34; A. Roger Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (New York: Norton, 2005), 81–82, 250; and Keith Wrightson, "Two Concepts of Order: Justices, Constables and Jurymen in Seventeenth-Century England," in *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. John Brewer and John Styles (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 21–46. For taverns in the city see Peter Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
17. *MPC*, 1:21–22, 26, 34, 382, 388, 392. For the English town heritage, see Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *The Manor and the Borough*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans Green, 1908); Peter Clark, ed., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2, 1540–1840 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
18. The classic statement concerning the moral economy in eighteenth-century England is E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50, no. 1 (1971): 76–136. See also his "Custom, Law, and Common Right," in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1993), 97–184. On changing elite attitudes toward "the economy"—a concept not yet in existence—in seventeenth-century England, see Joyce Oldham Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).
19. "The First Charter of the City of Philadelphia, 1691," *PMHB* 18, no. 4 (1894): 504–9. Details of the 1701 charter are explicated in Edward P. Allinson and A. M. Boies Penrose, *Philadelphia, 1681–1887: A History of Municipal Development* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and Scott, 1887), 8–59.

20. "First Charter of Philadelphia, 1691"; Allinson and Penrose, *Philadelphia*, 8–9. The property qualifications of the 1701 charter would have excluded about 30% of those on the tax list of 1697 from freemanship status. Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 232–33.
21. *Minutes of the Common Council of the City of Philadelphia, 1704–1776* (hereafter MCC) (Philadelphia: Crissy and Markley, 1847), 20, 34; PA, 8th ser., 1:411–12; Judith M. Diamondstone, "Philadelphia's Municipal Corporation," *PMHB* 90, no. 2 (April 1966): 183–201.
22. William Penn, "A Further Account of the Province of Pennsylvania, 1685," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West Jersey, and Delaware, 1630–1707*, ed. Albert Cook Myers (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1912), 260–62; Gabriel Thomas, "An Historical and Geographical Account of Pensilvania and of West New-Jersey, 1698," in *Narratives*, ed. Myers, 317–39; Mary Maples Dunn and Richard S. Dunn, "The Founding, 1681–1701," in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 10, 20.
23. Fletcher also pointed out that numerous soldiers stationed at the fort in the city deserted service, because neighboring colonists "pretending charity" regularly sheltered the runaways. Fletcher to the Lords of Trade, June 10, 1696, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, ed. John Romeyn Brodhead, 15 vols. (Albany, NY: Weed and Parsons, 1853–87), 4:159–60.
24. John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600–1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 125–26; Ernst, *Money and Politics*, chap. 1; Lester, "Currency Issues," 326–27.
25. In the same letter More also famously noted that at this early date there was there was "Mutch robrey in City and Countrey." More to Penn, December 1, 1684, in *Papers of William Penn*, ed. Dunn and Dunn, 2:608.
26. Blackwell quoted in Joseph J. Kelley Jr., *Pennsylvania: The Colonial Years, 1681–1776* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 62. Interestingly, while the ex-Cromwellian Blackwell was in Boston prior to his appointment in Pennsylvania, he submitted a bill to the Massachusetts General Court to establish a land bank, which failed. George Athan Billias, *The Massachusetts Land Bankers of 1740* (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1959), 1.
27. Blackwell to Penn, June 24, 1689, in "Original Letters and Documents," *PMHB* 6, no. 3 (1882): 363. Blackwell's price estimates for imports are corroborated by contemporary estimates in New York. Jasper Dankaerts criticized similar merchant practices in New York in 1682, while the Reverend John Miller claimed English goods were marked up between 100% and 400% in the 1690s. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson, eds., *Journal of Jasper Dankaerts, 1679–1680* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), 244–46; Reverend John Miller, "A Brief Description of the Province and City of New-York: With Plans of the City and Several Forts as they existed in the Year 1695," in *Historic Chronicles of New Amsterdam, Colonial New York and Early Long Island*, ed. Cornell Jaray (Port Washington, NY: Ira J. Friedman, 1968), 35. For the high price of imports in Pennsylvania see also Lester, "Currency Issues," 342–43.
28. For a scattering of cases of debt in the 1680s, see "Philadelphia County Court of Quarter Sessions," 1685–86, Am.3092, HSP. In 1695 Chester farmer Thomas Smith successfully sued Philadelphia merchant Thomas Smith for dispossessing Smith of his goods for an outstanding debt without due process. Bronner, "Philadelphia Court of Quarter Sessions," *American Journal of Legal History* 1,

- no. 2 (April 1957): 175–76. For other cases of debt in the county court of common pleas in the 1690s see Bronner, “Philadelphia Court of Quarter Sessions,” no. 1, 185, 187, 240–50.
29. *MCC*, 19.
 30. “The Humble Petition of Divers poor Inhabitants of the City and County of Philadelphia,” Records of Philadelphia County, 1671–1855, Collection 1014, Box 1, Folder 6, HSP. For the 1706 petition, see John Fanning Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia, and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: E. S. Stuart, 1887), 1:358. For Evans’s response see *MPC*, 2:269.
 31. *Charter to William Penn, and Laws of the Province of Pennsylvania, passed between the Years 1682 and 1700* (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, State Printer, 1879), 200–201. In 1705 the assembly revisited the law making “Debtors pay by Servitude,” and agreed to reaffirm the statute. *PA*, 8th ser., 1:522, 523. The runaway law was originally suggested by William Penn himself. *MPC*, 1:40, 80. For New York and Virginia, see *Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, 5 vols. (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon, 1894–96), 1:147–48; Kermit L. Hall, Paul Finkelman, and James W. Ely Jr., eds., *American Legal History: Cases and Materials*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 53; Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1946), 437. In Dutch New Amsterdam runaways were also forced to serve double time after 1640. E. B. O’Callaghan, comp. and trans., *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638–1674* (Albany, NY: Weed, Parson and Co., 1868). For the changing laws in Massachusetts, which included corporal punishments and eventually extra time—though not close to the degree in Pennsylvania—see Lawrence William Towner, *A Good Master Well Served: Masters and Servants in Colonial Massachusetts, 1620–1750* (New York: Garland, 1998), 195–200; Barry Levy, *Town Born: The Political Economy of New England from Its Founding to the Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 64–72. According to Joan Lane it was not until the Seven Years’ War and large-scale flight from service among male apprentices that time was added to the original terms of contracts in England—and this 1766 act specified only that the length of time missed would be added to the period of servitude. Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600–1914* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 5.
 32. In addition to “The Humble Petition,” see Records of Philadelphia County, 1671–1855, Collection 1014, Box 1, folders 7 and 8, HSP. See also Philadelphia Court Cases, 1710–1713 Am.3047, HSP; and Court of Common Pleas, 1697–1732, Am.3039, HSP.
 33. Mittelberger, quoted in Cheesman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1926), 104–5 n. 15; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 31, 1757, in *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728–1790*, comp. Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 41.
 34. The “Laws Agreed upon in England” stated that prisons were to be “free, as to fees, food, and lodging.” *MPC*, 1:38.
 35. Though the English apprenticeship and guild system declined precipitously after 1680. Levy, *Town Born*, 42; Clark, *Cambridge Urban History*, 284, 372, 546. See also Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, “Failure to Become Freemen: Urban Apprentices in Early Modern England,” *Social History* 16, no. 2 (May 1991): 155–72.
 36. *MCP*, 3:376–77.
 37. McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, 126.

38. *PA*, 8th ser., 1:461, 533, 534, 541; 2:840, 841–44, 889.
39. *Ibid.*, 2:1124, 1237, 1263, 1266, 1269, 1739.
40. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts and Co., 1884), 1:186; Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Colonial Craftsman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950), 141.
41. Those admitted to the freedom of the city ranged from laborers to merchants, and fees were either £5 6s. or £15 6s. (with an exception of £2 for carters). *MCC*, 118–35, 146–47.
42. The bill also prohibited the selling of liquor to slaves. *PA*, 8th ser., 2:1240.
43. *Ibid.*, 2:1477, 1485; 3:1846. For servants' social mobility in Pennsylvania see Sharon V. Salinger, *"To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682–1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For free urban laborers in the second half of the eighteenth century see Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750–1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
44. *PA*, 8th ser., 3:1829–32.
45. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 20, 1729; Franklin, *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of a Paper Currency* (Philadelphia, 1729), in *EAI*, no. 3165; Schultz, *Republic of Labor*, 25. For Franklin, monetary policy, and *A Modest Enquiry* see Alan Houston, *Benjamin Franklin and the Politics of Improvement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 41–52.
46. *MPC*, 3:351–52; Gordon, *By the Honourable Patrick Gordon Esq. . . A Proclamation . . .* (Philadelphia, 1729), in *EAI*, no. 3201; *Statutes*, 4:98–116. See also Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, 1:79; Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 65. Logan famously ridiculed "the *Sot*, the *Rambler*, the *Spendthrift*, and *Slip-Season*" in *A Dialogue Shewing*, 25.
47. Schultz, *Republic of Labor*, 27–28; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 8 and May 6, 1736.
48. Interestingly, tanners utilized the pages of the *Mercury* to present their argument; their opponents published in the *Gazette*. *American Weekly Mercury*, August 16 and September 13, 1739; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 30 and October 18, 1739. For the petition and hearing see *PA*, 8th ser., 3:2487, 2490, 2501.
49. On the controversy, Whitefield's appeal to the lower sort (in particular his attention to the colonies' black population), and Franklin and the public sphere, see William Pencak, "The Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship: Benjamin Franklin, George Whitefield, the Dancing School, and a Defense of the 'Meaner Sort,'" in Pencak, *Contested Commonwealths: Essays in American History* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield and Lehigh University Press, 2011), 197–212.
50. *MCC*, 396–99; *MPC*, 4:491–92. It was also during this same period that the Land Bank controversy occurred in Massachusetts, though no reference was made in Pennsylvania to the debate to the north. See Billias, *Massachusetts Land Bankers*.
51. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 8, 1741; *New-York Weekly Journal*, January 26, 1741.
52. "Dick Farmer," *Whereas Great Quantities of English Copper . . .* (Philadelphia, 1741), in *EAI*, no. 5178. The Evans Collection mistakenly attributes the broadside to 1743.
53. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 18, 1741; *American Weekly Mercury*, June 25, 1741; *MCC*, 402, 405.
54. *MPC*, 4:396; *American Weekly Mercury*, April 17, 1740; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 24 and July 10, 1740.

55. PA, 8th ser., 3:2603, 2608–9, 2656, 2659, 2677; MPC, 4:437, 448; Salinger, “*To Serve Well and Faithfully*,” 59.
56. MPC, 4:435–38; PA, 8th ser., 3:2603, 2564, 2670, 2600, 2628; Salinger, “*To Serve Well and Faithfully*,” 59, 62, 65, 69.
57. PA, 8th ser., 3:2614–15.
58. Franklin, *Plain Truth: Or, Serious Considerations on the Present State of the City of Philadelphia, and Province of Pennsylvania, By a Tradesman of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1747), in EAI, no. 5948, 14.
59. MPC, 4:466–67, 440, 468.
60. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 22, 1742; MPC, 4:456.
61. Michael Bradley McCoy, “Absconding Servants, Anxious Germans, and Angry Sailors: Working People and the Making of the Philadelphia Election Riot of 1742,” *Pennsylvania History* 74, no. 4 (Autumn 2007): 427–51; Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*, 129–32; Norman S. Cohen, “The Philadelphia Election Riot of 1742,” *PMHB* 92, no. 3 (July 1968): 306–19. Thomas was prohibited from agreeing to more currency by the Penns, who were unable to collect quitrents, and King George, following parliamentary inquiries into colonial money. MPC, 4:318–20, 471–88.
62. *Pennsylvania Journal*, July 23, 1752; MCC, 561; MPC, 5:505
63. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 9, 1748; MCC, 498–99.
64. PA, 8th ser., 4:3483, 3515, 3518, 3520. As in 1748, Governor Hamilton refused assembly requests for more currency. MPC, 5:564.
65. Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology*; Rollison, *Commonwealth of the People*; Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975). For the colonial context see Peter Charles Hoffer, *Law and People in Colonial America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).
66. McCusker, *Money and Exchange*, 3–4.
67. Though James Logan epitomized the opposition to emissions of bills of credit, many were also, like Logan, aligned with the proprietary interest. This included most members of the common council. Diamondstone, “Philadelphia's Municipal Corporation,” 197; Schultz, *Republic of Labor*, 20–21.
68. PA, 8th ser., 2:1262, 1394–95.
69. Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 127; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 3.
70. According to the testimony of Buckley and Fenton, the three men made the money together, while Fenton admitted to cutting the seals for Pickering. MPC, 1:84–88; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 24.
71. Bronner, “Court of Quarter Sessions,” no. 1, 177; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 25, 35.
72. *Charters and Laws*, 206.
73. Kelley, *Pennsylvania*, 62.
74. For the English tradition, see Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 132–35; Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (New York: Verso, 2006), 55–56. Such beliefs complicate and suggest an expanded vision of what constituted the “moral economy” is in order, both in England and the novel economic and cultural contexts of the colonies. Thompson, “Moral Economy of the English Crowd.”
75. Bronner, “Court of Quarter Sessions,” no. 1, 91; Grand Jury Presentments of John Sable and John Simes, 1702, Ancient Records, HSP; Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 231–32, 300 n. 59.

76. MCC, 98–99.
77. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking*, 231–33. See also Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*; Jessica Kross, "‘If you will not drink with me, you must fight with me’: The Sociology of Drinking in the Middle Colonies," *Pennsylvania History* 64, no. 1 (Winter 1997): 28–55.
78. The 1718 act does not mention counterfeiting specifically, but its adoption of English common law for high treason meant that counterfeiting could be punished by death. *Statutes*, 3:200. For the dramatic increase in capital offenses, see also Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 22. For the Coinage Act see Linebaugh, *London Hanged*, 51–52; Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 126–27.
79. For gallows literature in early modern England, see J. A. Sharpe, "‘Last Dying Speeches’: Religion, Ideology, and Public Execution in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 107 (May 1985): 144–67; Lincoln B. Faller, *Turned to Account: The Forms and Functions of Criminal Biography in Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ian A. Bell, *Literature and Crime in Augustan England* (New York: Routledge, 1991); Linebaugh, *London Hanged*; Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*. For the emergence of gallows literature in Pennsylvania in the 1720s, see Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 158–59.
80. Penn, "Fundamental Constitutions of Pennsylvania," in *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680–1684: A Documentary History*, ed. Jean R. Soderlund (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 103–4.
81. *American Weekly Mercury*, November 24, 1720. The following paragraph is drawn from this issue of the paper.
82. In England such craftsmen were often highly admired for their workmanship, as coining frequently supplemented workers’ income. Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 137. Scott devotes a chapter to counterfeiting silversmiths in *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 210–35.
83. The significance of oaths in the early modern Anglo-American world has yet to receive the attention it deserves from cultural historians. For evidence of the tremendous importance of oaths in eighteenth-century Anglo-American society see *The Nature and Importance of Oaths and Juries* (New York, 1747), in *EAI*, no. 6015.
84. Hunt’s wife, Martha, was found guilty of misprision of treason and was sentenced to the unprecedented punishment of life imprisonment and a £500 fine. Five years after the hanging of her husband, however, she was found a proper object of mercy and pardoned. *MPC*, 3:244; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 54.
85. *MPC*, 3:110.
86. For examples of more scholarly essays see (all in *EAI*): Rawle, *Some Remedies Proposed*; David Lloyd, *A Vindication of the Legislative Power* (Philadelphia, 1725), no. 2649; James Logan, *The Antidote, in some Remarks on a Paper of David Lloyd’s, called A Vindication of the Legislative Power* (Philadelphia, 1725), no. 2650; William Keith, *A Modest Reply to the Speech of Isaac Norris, Esq.* (Philadelphia, 1727), no. 2890; *To my Respected Friend, I. Norris* (Philadelphia, 1727), no. 2889; and Isaac Norris, *The Speech Delivered from the Bench in the Court of Common Pleas held for the City and County of Philadelphia, the 11th Day of September, 1727* (Philadelphia, 1727), no. 2937.
87. Rawle was the first to publicly propose emitting bills of credit in *Some Remedies Proposed*.
88. *Dialogue Between Rich and Plowman*, 1.
89. *Observer’s Trip to America*, 35–36.
90. *Dialogue Between Rich and Plowman*, 1, 2; *Triumvirate of Pennsylvania*, 1, 3.

91. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 19, 1732, quoted in *Franklin Papers*, 1:278–79. See also Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 78–79; Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*, 88–89.
92. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 16, 1730; December 12, 1734, and April 3, 1735; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 79–81.
93. For immigration see Salinger, “*To Serve Well and Faithfully*,” 51–56; Marianne S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: The Beginnings of Mass Migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 41–42. For the growing importance of British and continental European outlets for Pennsylvania wheat, which came to challenge the West Indian trade, see Lydon, “Philadelphia’s Commercial Expansion.”
94. Salinger, “*To Serve Well and Faithfully*,” 69; Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 21.
95. Waldstreicher, *Runaway America*, 19, 56; Barry Levy, “Levelers and Fugitives: Runaway Advertisements and the Contrasting Political Economies of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts and Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History* 78, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 1–32; Marietta and Rowe, *Troubled Experiment*, 158–59.
96. For outlaws in the Roman empire see P. A. Mackay, “‘Klephtika’: The Tradition of the Tales of Banditry in Apuleius,” *Greece and Rome* 10, no. 2 (October 1963); Brent D. Shaw, “Bandits in the Roman Empire,” *Past and Present* 105 (November 1984): 3–52; Thomas Grünwald, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and Reality*, trans. John Drinkwater (New York: Routledge, 2004). For outlaws in medieval England see Thomas H. Ohlgren, ed., *Medieval Outlaws: Ten Tales in Modern English* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998). Much work on banditry in the modern era has been inspired by Eric Hobsbawm’s *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Norton, 1959); and Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1969). Counterfeiters were not social bandits, but representations of the exploits of outlaws likely held the same “mythogenetic” appeal in the colonies that they did in early modern Europe. See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 165–66; Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 223–24.
97. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 17, 1731; March 14, 1738; January 11, 1733; June 21, 1733.
98. *Ibid.*, June 23, 1743. For Bell’s adventures in the colonies see Steven C. Bullock, “A Mumper among the Gentle: Tom Bell, Colonial Confidence Man,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 55, no. 2 (April 1998): 231–58.
99. *The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde Moore Carew* was first published in England in 1745 and was advertised in Philadelphia in 1773. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 21, 1773.
100. *The Life and Adventures of Bampfylde Moore Carew* (London, 1835), 61.
101. Poulter, alias Baxter, is quoted in Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, *Eighteenth-Century Criminal Transportation: The Formation of the Criminal Atlantic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 99.
102. MPC, 3:260; Patrick Gordon, *By the Honourable Patrick Gordon, Esq; . . . A Proclamation* (Philadelphia, 1726), in EAI, no. 2801.
103. Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992).
104. *Advice to the Free-holders and Electors of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1735), in EAI, no. 3863. Note also the similarity between the pseudonym of Constant Truman and the character of Obadiah Plainman, used by Franklin some years later. See Pencak, “Beginning of a Beautiful Friendship.”

105. Smith, "Lower Sort," 130–44; Gary B. Nash, "Up from the Bottom in Franklin's Philadelphia," *Past and Present* 77 (November 1977): 57–83; Theodore Thayer, "Town into City, 1746–1765," in *Philadelphia*, ed. Weigley, 99.
106. As early as the 1690s the Philadelphia Grand Jury complained that "Negroes & loose People" fraternized on First Days. Bronner, "Court of Quarter Sessions," no. 1, 92. But see the "Petition of the Grand Inquest to the Mayor and Commonalty of the City of Philadelphia, January 1735/6," Records of Philadelphia County, 1671–1855, Collection 1014, Box 1, Folder 14, HSP; MCC, 314, 315, 326, 342, 376–77, 405.
107. "Some Indictments by the Grand Jury of Philadelphia, 1744," *PMHB* 22, no. 4 (1898): 498–99. For Franklin on unruly servants and slaves, see his "Petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly Regarding Fairs," in Larabee, *Franklin Papers*, 1:211–12; Waldstreicher, *Runaway America*, 94.
108. *PA*, 8th ser., 3:1806–9, 2457; *Statutes*, 4:358.
109. Farmer also signed his broadside "in Behalf of *Thousands*." *Whereas Great Quantities* . . .
110. *PA*, 1st ser., 1:578–81, 619–21; *MPC*, 4:422, 429; Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 6, 87–92.
111. Brick's story was corroborated by her husband or brother, William. *PA*, 1st ser., 621–23; *MPC*, 4:422, 429.
112. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 9, 1735; July 12, 1739; November 3, 1743; August 9, 1744; January 11, 1744; October 22, 1747; November 10, 1748. See also Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*.
113. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1751; *Independent Reflector*, March 15, 1753. An informative narrative concerning the "Philadelphia robbers" at midcentury is *An Account of the Robberies Committed by John Morrison, and his Accomplices, in and near Philadelphia, 1750* (Philadelphia, 1750–1), in *EAI*, no. 6624.
114. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, February 25, 1752, and February 19, 1754.
115. *MCC*, 520.
116. *PA*, 8th ser., 4:3403, 3405, 3406, 3412–13, 3422; *MPC*, 5:505. For London's night watch and lighting of streets in 1736, see Ekirch, *At Day's Close*, 330.
117. Thomas Penn to James Hamilton, July 29, 1751, and March 9, 1752, Correspondence of Thomas and Richard Penn with James Hamilton, 1741–1771, American Philosophical Society. The author wishes to thank Chris Pearl for alerting him to these documents. Wealthy silversmiths like Gideon Casey were able to pay £50 fines for the offense in 1752. Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial America*, 211.
118. Alan Tully, *William Penn's Legacy: Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726–1755* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977); Tully, *Forming American Politics*.
119. Excepting, of course, the upheavals of the 1720s. Nash, *Urban Crucible*; Schultz, *Republic of Labor*; Smith, "Lower Sort"; Thompson, *Rum, Punch, and Revolution*.
120. Gaskill, *Crime and Mentalities*, 127; *The Life and Confession of Herman Rosencrantz* (Philadelphia, 1770), in *EAI*, no. 11,839.
121. See "A Short Account," in *Pillars of Salt*, ed. Williams, 148–49; Cadwalader Colden to Sir Jeffrey Amherst, 1762, *Collections of the New-York Historical Society*, 1917 (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1917), 6:121–22; *New-York Mercury*, February 22, 1762.