

# Pennsylvania History

A JOURNAL OF MID-ATLANTIC STUDIES

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## SUBMISSION INFORMATION

*Pennsylvania History* publishes documents previously unpublished and of interest to scholars of the Middle Atlantic region. The Journal also reviews books, exhibits, and other media dealing primarily with Pennsylvania history or that shed significant light on the state's past.

The editors invite the submission of articles dealing with the history of Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic region, regardless of their specialty. Prospective authors should review past issues of *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, where they will note articles in social, intellectual, economic, environmental, political, and cultural history, from the distant and recent past. Articles may investigate new areas of research or they may reflect on past scholarship. Material that is primarily of an antiquarian or genealogical nature will not be considered. Please conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* in preparing your manuscript.

Send article submissions and suggestions for special issues to Editor William Pencak, by email [wap1@psu.edu](mailto:wap1@psu.edu) (preferred) or by mail, P.O. Box 132, Coburn, PA 16832.

Send books for review and announcements to Patrick Spero, Dept. of Political Science, Schapiro Hall, Williams College, Williamstown, MA 01267.

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*We thank Karen Guenther for keeping our membership lists in order.*

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and Ohio State University

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The Pennsylvania Historical Association endeavors to stimulate scholarly activity and arouse popular interest in the Commonwealth's history. It sponsors *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, a publication series, and annual meetings held successively throughout the state.

[www.pa-history.org](http://www.pa-history.org)

*On the cover:* Row homes. Sinking houses district. Northeast Philadelphia.

Photograph by Martin J. Desht.

## CITY RAIN

*Martin J. Desht*  
*Photographer*

*M*artin J. Desht's photo-documentary exhibit *Faces from an American Dream* recorded the social impacts of America's transition from the industrial manufacturing economy to the service and information economy, particularly in Pennsylvania. *City Rain* was a minor project incidental to the work on American deindustrialization. *Faces from an American Dream* has been touring for more than twenty years. After early exhibits in Pennsylvania and a review in *Pennsylvania History*, the work traveled to Harvard University, Dartmouth College, New York University's Stern School of Business, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Senate, and many other colleges and universities, most recently Michigan State University's College of Law. It is currently scheduled for venues in New Mexico.

In 2006 Desht was photographer-in-residence at Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland. The exhibit *A Certain Peace: Acceptance and Defiance in Northern Ireland* explores that city's transition from a postindustrial economy rife with sectarian conflict to a new peacetime economy based on tourism, finance, and higher education.

Desht's work is represented in collections at Harvard University, the Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University, with significant collections archived at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

This is the third time Martin Desht has allowed us to publish his photographs to complement material in our journal. Examples of his work appear in “Work: With Selected Photographs from the Exhibit *Faces from an American Dream*” and “Staying Tuned” in *Pennsylvania History* 65, no. 3 (summer 1998): 368–81, and 66, no. 4 (fall 1999): 601–15, respectively. These can also be viewed on the journal’s website.

*Pennsylvania History* had intended to include the photographs here as part of the Fall 2012 environmental history special issue. For space limitations we could not, so we are happy to begin 2013 with these photographs supplementing this issue. Desht’s photographs are an important reminder that the publicity cities generate about their accomplishments frequently overlook much of their landscape.

For bookings and information about the exhibits, email mdsh4956@yahoo.com, or write to 11 Juego Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87508.

—Editor



FIGURE 1: Philadelphia, view north from Betsy Ross Bridge.



FIGURE 2: View from Interstate 95, traveling south, near Vine Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 3: Interstate 95, near Allegheny Avenue, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 4: Fortieth Street, at Market Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 5: Cambria Street, at Ninth Street, Philadelphia.

## CITY RAIN



FIGURE 6: Frankford Avenue, at Bleigh Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 7: Cambria Street, at Fourth Street, Philadelphia.





FIGURE 8: Huntingdon Street, at Ninth Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 9: Allegheny Avenue, at Second Street, Philadelphia.

CITY RAIN



FIGURE 10: Ridge Avenue, at Diamond Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 11: Ridge Avenue, at Girard Avenue, Philadelphia.





FIGURE 12: Ridge Avenue, at Twelfth Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 13: Lehigh Avenue, at Cedar Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 14: North Ninth Street, near Cumberland Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 15: Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, at Broadway, Camden, New Jersey.



FIGURE 16: Fourth Street, at Walnut Street, Camden, New Jersey.



FIGURE 17: East Lehigh Avenue, at Thompson Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 18: North Broad Street, at Erie Avenue, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 19: Allegheny Avenue, near Eighteenth Street, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 20: Interstate 95, at Tacony-Palmyra Bridge, Philadelphia.



FIGURE 21: Roosevelt Boulevard, Philadelphia.



THE UNION LEAGUE, BLACK  
LEADERS, AND THE RECRUITMENT OF  
PHILADELPHIA'S AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL  
WAR REGIMENTS

*Andrew T. Tremel*

In 1848 the slave-turned-abolitionist Frederick Douglass wrote in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* newspaper that Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, “more than any other [city] in our land, holds the destiny of our people.”<sup>1</sup> Yet Douglass was also one of the biggest critics of the city’s treatment of its black citizens. He penned a censure in 1862: “There is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than Philadelphia.”<sup>2</sup> There were a number of other critics. On March 4, 1863, the *Christian Recorder*, the official organ of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, commented after race riots in Detroit, “Even here, in the city of Philadelphia, in many places it is almost impossible for a respectable colored person to walk the streets without being assaulted.”<sup>3</sup>

To be sure, Philadelphia’s early residents showed some moderate sympathy with black citizens, especially through the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, but as the nineteenth century progressed, Philadelphia witnessed increased racial tension and a number of riots. In 1848 Douglass wrote in response to these

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attitudes, “The Philadelphians were apathetic and neglectful of their duty to the black community as a whole.” The 1850s became a period of adjustment for the antislavery movement. Julie Winch writes, “In conceding that prejudice, and not their alleged degradation, lay at the root of the restrictions they faced, the elite acknowledged that they could not expect to achieve everything they hoped for through self-improvement.”<sup>4</sup> A small, cohesive group formed in the 1850s that more actively lobbied the state for civil and political rights, taking a different approach from their predecessors. They were the same black leaders who mobilized the community to support the Union cause. Despite Philadelphia’s history and the unfavorable comments of Douglass, black leaders, and the *Christian Recorder*, the year 1863 appeared to be a significant turning point in the city’s race relations. That year, Philadelphia’s African Americans had the chance to serve in the Union army. This, many believed, would lead to acceptance and equality with the white citizenry.

In 1862, as opposition to the war grew throughout the North, wealthy white Philadelphians established the Union League. Although this organization formed to foster support for preserving the Union, it ultimately became the impetus for the recruitment of African American soldiers, laying the foundation for the city to raise more black regiments than any other northern city. This article will argue, however, that the Union League’s efforts would not have been successful without the cooperation and assistance of local African Americans and national figures like Frederick Douglass. He and other leaders spoke of the opportunities that military service could open. They hoped that this demonstration of patriotism and manhood would ease racial tensions and open the door to equal rights as citizens. This is not to diminish the importance of the Union League, but to contend that the whole recruitment process would have failed if African Americans were not willing to serve. This collaboration between whites and blacks led to the creation of some of the most successful black regiments in the Union army. Moreover, at the local level, the city’s white residents had no violent reactions despite initial opposition to the use of black soldiers. There was relative peace between Philadelphia’s communities at a time of great national crisis.

This article adds to the work of J. Matthew Gallman’s *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War*. Despite the war’s physical, economic, and emotional costs, the city’s residents maintained prewar routines. Gallman wrote that the city had a “complex system of private and public institutions” in the antebellum period that wartime associations built upon. The Union League, for example, can trace its origins to Republican

organizations of the 1850s. Just as the city's Republican Party did not dwell on the issue of slavery, it was not the League's primary focus. Its goal was to save the Union and it raised both white and black regiments to achieve this end.<sup>5</sup>

The Union League's wartime operations suggest that there were some short-term gains for Philadelphia's black community. Melinda Lawson concluded in *Patriot Fires* that "postwar conceptions of American identity and loyalty remained fluid." Though a comprehensive look at Philadelphia after 1865 is beyond the scope of this article, the war did mark a shift in nationalism in the sense that the color line was somewhat blurred during the Civil War. Black leaders cooperated with the Union League, which saw that the color of one's skin did not determine patriotism. Adding to this perception was the fact that Philadelphia's eleven black regiments were very successful from a military standpoint. The city was able to come together and achieve the government's war aims of preserving the Union and ending slavery. The Civil War was only a brief respite to racial tension, however. Discrimination and violence resurfaced after the troops returned home.<sup>6</sup>

With over 500,000 people in 1860, Philadelphia was the second-largest city in the nation. Worldwide, only London, Paris, and New York had a greater population. Most of the city's citizens were native born, and over 22,000 African Americans lived in the county. Politically, the city aligned itself with the Republican Party. In 1858 the People's Party, a coalition of Republicans and Know-Nothings, formed. It set aside the issue of slavery and focused on tariff reform. The People's Party's first mayoral candidate, Alexander Henry, won the 1858 election. During the Civil War, he earned a reputation for stamping out Southern sympathizers. In 1860 the city's ballots showed Abraham Lincoln as the People's Party's presidential candidate. While he attained 57 percent of the commonwealth's vote, only 52 percent of the city's residents cast their ballots for the Illinois Republican. Through the duration of the Civil War, the party focused on patriotism and Union rather than emancipation.<sup>7</sup>

After the start of the secession crisis, the city, like the rest of the country, hoped to avoid war. Early in 1861 "peace rallies" were held throughout Philadelphia. Residents continued their prewar activities as conflict loomed. Throughout the war, Philadelphians celebrated major national holidays, like the annual commemoration of George Washington's birthday, and immersed themselves in activities to help the war effort. For instance, the city hosted the Sanitary Fair in 1864 and raised over \$1 million for the Sanitary Commission. This organization was a predecessor to the modern Red Cross



and provided food, medical services, and other supplies to soldiers, particularly the injured. There was unquestionably a “persistence of localism and volunteerism” throughout the conflict. The founding of the Union League in 1862 fit into this paradigm. This institution combated the rising Copperhead movement. The term “Copperhead” was a derisive reference to the Peace Democrats, whose line of political thought attracted a number of Northerners as the economic and personal cost of the war mounted. Copperheads opposed the destruction of the South and wanted the Union restored *status quo antebellum*. The inactivity of the Union Army of the Potomac in the eastern theater that autumn also influenced antiwar sentiment.<sup>8</sup>

Near the end of 1862, many Philadelphians spoke openly about an end to the war with peace at all costs. The Union League formed in response to this attitude. George H. Boker, the secretary of the League’s Board of Directors, wrote in the first annual report, “The loyal men were everywhere depressed,” and they “proposed . . . to open a home for loyalty, where true men might breathe without having their atmosphere contaminated by treason.”<sup>9</sup> On December 27, 1862, about 200 men signed the Union League’s charter, forming the organization to promote pro-Union views. Many of them were Republicans; fifty-one had formed the Republican Club in 1856. When the founders drafted the Union League’s charter, it included explicit support of the Republican Party. Two individuals protested and the members voted to remove the language, as the Union Democrats who joined supported Lincoln as far as winning the war and preserving the Union but for nothing more. The founders only extended membership to loyal, upper-class, white men and saw the League’s numbers grow to 536 in 1863. All its early members saw the Union League as a necessity to “maintain their social position.”<sup>10</sup> An official history later acknowledged slavery as a cause for the war, but stated that the primary reason for the Union League was to support the Union war effort. A member reflected, “Patriotism has been under all circumstances the keynote action of the Union League.”<sup>11</sup> Even as January 1, 1863, the effective date of the Emancipation Proclamation, approached, the League’s focus was on preserving the Union and not yet on ending slavery. To some extent, attitudes evolved through the course of the war.

The Union League’s most significant task in its early months was the publication of pamphlets on various war-related themes, including a defense of President Lincoln’s suspension of *habeas corpus* and attacks on Copperhead organizations. Later pamphlets advocated the use of black soldiers. These pamphlets largely targeted the lower classes. By the end of 1864 the Union

League had distributed over 2 million leaflets. Furthermore, in the last two years of the war, they raised 10,000 white soldiers to the Union army.<sup>12</sup>

Members ultimately found that “loyalty, not race, defined a patriot.” By the spring of 1863, some members of the League had turned their attention to raising African American soldiers, believing that this would ultimately help accomplish the goal of preserving the Union. One member observed, “There were strong spirits in the Philadelphia Union League who were bent on demonstrating their wisdom and right to form [black] regiments.”<sup>13</sup> The members were undoubtedly aware of the provision in the Emancipation Proclamation that allowed for the enrollment of freedmen into the army. However, this document was only an indirect influence on the League. The Philadelphians cited the successful recruitment of the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts, the first two black units raised in the North, as their inspiration. There was some opposition within the Union League out of fear of “serious mistreatment” if the soldiers were captured. The Union League took two steps toward recruitment in the spring of 1863. First, the Board of Publications issued a pamphlet on the history of Pennsylvania blacks in military service. Second, the League prepared to petition the War Department for permission to raise three regiments.<sup>14</sup>

Initially, the Union League delayed its requests to the War Department because of the attitudes of many city residents, but resistance toward the enlistment of African Americans waned. Wealthy businessman and diarist George Fahnestock expressed a sentiment shared throughout the city when he wrote, “I only wish we had two hundred thousand Negroes in our army to save the valuable lives of white men.” Fahnestock observed, “The Negroes here are drilling, organizing into companies, holding meetings and will most probably form into regiments and be accepted as volunteers. Public opinion in this respect is undergoing a radical change, and if they make good soldiers, why not let them fight?” He saw that black soldiers could serve in some capacity, even if it was “digging ditches or laboring on entrenchments.” Others understood that the regiments counted toward state quotas, meaning there would be no state military draft if enough African Americans enrolled. The success of recruiting the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts mobilized white support in the city as well. By the time the Union League began its enrollment in late June 1863, 1,100 blacks had already left the city to join regiments elsewhere, including the Massachusetts regiments.<sup>15</sup>

As opposition to the use of black soldiers faded in Philadelphia, the Union League petitioned the War Department for permission to begin recruitment.

Initially, the War Department ignored the requests, but two important developments took place. On May 22, 1863, the War Department created the Bureau of Colored Troops, which facilitated enlistments throughout the country. Dudley Taylor Cornish contends that the bureau's founding meant that recruitment was no longer dependent upon "individual ambition or radicalism," but Philadelphia's operations relied heavily on local white activism and the assistance of the black community. The Bureau of Colored Troops appointed officers and mustered regiments directly into federal service; it was the Union League that carried out the work of raising the regiments. The War Department took little further action to aid or prevent the enlistment of black soldiers.<sup>16</sup>

In late May the War Department assigned Major George Stearns to the Philadelphia. One of the "Secret Six" who backed John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1859, Stearns had also helped to raise the Fifty-fourth Massachusetts. With \$5,000 of federal money at his disposal to raise the regiments, Stearns established a headquarters on Chestnut Street and contacted the Union League. With the tacit approval of the War Department, the Union League formed the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Troops under the leadership of Thomas Webster. A number of influential members joined the board over the next few months, including Republican congressman William D. Kelley, Colonel Louis Wagner, later the commandant of Camp William Penn where recruits were trained, and George H. Boker of the Union League.<sup>17</sup> On June 8, Stearns and the Supervisory Committee held a public meeting, which drafted a petition containing 276 names. The document informed the Bureau of Colored Troops that the Supervisory Committee would be the primary recruitment agency in eastern Pennsylvania and requested permission to raise three regiments of African American soldiers. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton approved the proposal three days later, and the Supervisory Committee received formal permission on June 26.<sup>18</sup>

The Supervisory Committee had to recruit and seek donors both inside and outside Philadelphia. An appeal on June 27 noted the Union League's realization that it would have to look beyond the Philadelphia area for success. Thomas Webster ultimately established various "recruiting stations" throughout Pennsylvania and neighboring New Jersey and Delaware. The advertisement also said that if there were a large number of African Americans willing to serve, "we can make this the centre of recruitment for the colored population of all the States where such enlistments are not permitted by the State authorities."<sup>19</sup> Not only did Webster need to demonstrate the Union

League's willingness to facilitate recruitment, but he also had to convince white donors that blacks would make good soldiers. When Robert E. Lee's Confederate army entered Pennsylvania that month and the state called for emergency volunteers, Webster cited the willingness of African Americans to volunteer as a sign of their patriotism. Additionally, the Supervisory Committee appealed to patriotism by arguing that all available means should be used to defeat the Confederacy—a sentiment that became very popular throughout the North by the summer of 1863. Webster also penned an appeal for the famed abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, to spread the word of the Union League's efforts. The paper estimated that only 6,000 to 7,000 black Pennsylvanians were of age and physically capable to join the war effort. Though this could fill six to seven regiments, it was unclear how many would be willing to serve. Webster mentioned the black military successes at Port Hudson and Milliken's Bend, Louisiana, in May and June 1863, hoping to dispel Northern doubts that blacks had the ability to fight. He estimated the cost to recruit each regiment would be around \$10,000.<sup>20</sup>

The Supervisory Committee ultimately received support from both black volunteers and white financiers that made their work a success. Thomas Webster wrote to President Abraham Lincoln on July 30 to inform him that he had received a number of "voluntary and very liberal donations in money" to defray their costs.<sup>21</sup> The Supervisory Committee's report published early in 1864 showed a total of \$33,388 in donations. Donors included Thomas Webster and other Union League members, numerous insurance companies in Pennsylvania and Delaware, the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, and the Reading Railroad.<sup>22</sup>

In 1863 the Union League only had permission to raise three regiments, but the War Department later authorized two more. By early February 1864 five regiments—the Third, Sixth, Eighth, Twenty-second, and Twenty-fifth United States Colored Troops (USCT) were full. The Union League was able to raise these regiments at a lower cost than Webster predicted. Webster and the Supervisory Committee raised five regiments at less than \$7,000 each. In contrast, New England recruiters spent \$60,000 to raise both the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Massachusetts regiments. The Supervisory Committee was proud of its accomplishment in raising five regiments for roughly the same amount it cost Massachusetts to raise two. An official Union League history noted, "Philadelphia had the distinction of enlisting and equipping nearly 5,000 colored troops in shorter time and more economically than could be claimed elsewhere."<sup>23</sup>

Philadelphia's work in mustering more black soldiers than any other city in the North was a significant achievement. James McPherson wrote that the

Union League was responsible for “some of the most intense recruiting.”<sup>24</sup> The majority of African American regiments formed in the occupied areas of the South. The free states of Massachusetts, Ohio, New York, Connecticut, Indiana, Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa contributed a total of twelve regiments, while Philadelphia (the only Pennsylvania city to form USCT regiments) raised eleven. However, this success would not have occurred if Thomas Webster and the Supervisory Committee had not looked outside of Philadelphia. Soldiers who joined from other states counted toward their native state’s quota, but the War Department credited the regiments toward Pennsylvania. Wherever the Union League’s operatives worked, they found African Americans eager to serve.<sup>25</sup> Lieutenant Oliver W. Norton of the Eighth USCT traveled to Delaware and wrote, “Our camp was thronged with visitors, and darkies who wanted to enlist. There are hundreds of them, mostly slaves, here anxiously awaiting for the recruiting officer.”<sup>26</sup>

Recruitment efforts began in the Philadelphia area and spread into other parts of Pennsylvania and other Northern states. Regimental records list the soldiers’ birthplaces, which show that while there were undoubtedly slaves who migrated North before the war, many of the soldiers were born in free states. The first three regiments, the Third, Sixth, and Eighth USCT, show this trend. The number of Pennsylvania recruits decreased as the enlistment campaign continued into late 1863. The Third USCT contained 744 men by August 1863, each of whom mustered in at Philadelphia. The Third boasted the largest number of Pennsylvanians—418. Roughly half of them, 203, hailed from what today is the Philadelphia metropolitan area (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties).<sup>27</sup>

There were fewer Pennsylvanians in each of the other two regiments. Of the 808 soldiers in the Sixth, 315 were from Pennsylvania. There were 218 from the Keystone State among the 800 soldiers in the Eighth. Fewer soldiers claimed a birthplace in the Philadelphia area—127 and 53, respectively. All three regiments showed that a large number of soldiers joined from the central part of Pennsylvania, particularly the Lancaster area. There were 101 from Lancaster in the Third, twenty-three in the Sixth, and seventeen in the Eighth.<sup>28</sup>

As word spread of the recruitment (through Union League propaganda and other media, such as the *Christian Recorder*), the Supervisory Committee found volunteers in other locations, primarily in the mid-Atlantic region (see table 1). Soldiers in the Sixth and Eighth also mustered in at cities outside of Philadelphia. For example, most of the Delaware soldiers enlisted in Smyrna, Delaware. There were 37 Delawareans in the Third, 78 in the Sixth, and 142 in the Eighth. New Jersey was another popular recruiting target,

TABLE 1. Birthplaces of USCT Soldiers

State	3rd	6th	8th	Total
Alabama	0	1	2	3
Arkansas	0	0	1	1
Canada	3	1	4	8
Connecticut	1	1	4	6
Cuba	0	0	1	1
Delaware	37	78	142	257
Georgia	0	4	1	5
Illinois	2	1	1	4
Indiana	22	2	0	24
Iowa	1	0	0	1
Kentucky	13	2	0	15
Louisiana	2	0	1	3
Maryland	66	56	82	204
Massachusetts	1	2	5	8
Mississippi	2	0	0	2
Missouri	2	0	1	3
New Jersey	38	46	72	156
New York	14	7	119	140
North Carolina	8	5	9	22
Ohio	13	3	4	20
Pennsylvania	418	315	218	951
South Carolina	3	1	1	5
Tennessee	4	3	1	8
Vermont	0	0	1	1
Virginia	37	50	58	145
Washington, DC	6	2	5	13
Totals	693	580	733	

*Source:* U.S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 3rd USCT Infantry," "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 6th USCT Infantry" and "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 8th USCT Infantry," vol. 1, Regimental Descriptive Book, RG 94, NA.

*Note:* The numbers do not add up to the full total of those who left Philadelphia, as the mustering officers did not always compile complete data on the enlistees.

providing 156 volunteers among the three units. The Union League, in its wide recruitment efforts, seemed to face little competition from other cities that may have had an interest in raising black troops. For example, the

Twentieth, Twenty-sixth, and Thirty-first USCT all formed in New York City. The Philadelphia Supervisory Committee was still able to recruit in areas of central and western New York and New Jersey. The publicity of the Union League's efforts, the willingness of white leaders to reach beyond Philadelphia, the rhetoric of black leaders, and the enthusiasm of soldiers to fight all aided in this broad effort. As Webster hoped, the city became a recruitment center for black soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

To reach out to the African American community, the Supervisory Committee used a number of methods including public meetings, posters, and newspapers. A call to arms appeared on June 27, aimed strictly at African Americans. The document stated that even though the pay for an African American soldier was lower than that of a white soldier (\$10 a month for a black man instead of \$13) and the War Department prohibited bounties, winning freedom was an incentive to enlist. The Union League also published a small booklet with three articles: "Washington and Jackson on Negro Soldiers," "General Banks and the Bravery of Negro Troops," and "Poem to the Second Louisiana." The latter two pieces looked at the military success of African Americans at Milliken's Bend and Port Hudson. The authors remarked that it was a mistake to wait until so late in the war to appeal to blacks throughout the country. Whites and blacks hoped that the use of African Americans could turn the tide of the war in favor of Union. Frederick Douglass and other black leaders believed this and also thought that the use of black troops would guarantee the end slavery once and for all.<sup>30</sup>

Early in 1863, African Americans throughout the North enthusiastically responded to the rhetoric of black leaders. The Supervisory Committee anticipated a similar reaction in Philadelphia. There was a large, well-publicized meeting held on July 6, 1863, at National Hall. Members of the Union League and local blacks, such as Octavius V. Catto and Jacob C. White, both graduates of the city's Institute for Colored Youth (a Quaker school for free blacks), coordinated the event. The speakers included Congressman William D. Kelley, suffragist Anna E. Dickinson, Professor Ebenezer Bassett of the Institute for Colored Youth, and Frederick Douglass. The audience consisted of blacks and whites, men, and women. The evening began with an address from Representative Kelley. Born in Philadelphia in 1814, Kelley served as the city's deputy prosecutor and a judge for the Court of Common Pleas. He ran unsuccessfully as a Republican for a city congressional seat in 1858, but won the seat two years later. At the July 6 meeting, Kelley became the first



white elected official to address a predominantly black assembly. He had two goals with his address, each echoing the Union League's main concerns: to encourage African Americans to enlist and to foster white support for recruitment. The congressman appealed to the masculinity of local blacks. He argued that African Americans had more opportunities than their "servile and menial" work as barbers, waiters, or tradesmen provided. He asked how they could be content with such work "when the profession of arms—the terrible but glorious work of war—invites you to acknowledged manhood, freedom, and honor?" Kelley commented that the soldier now had a chance to "prove his manhood to the world, and command the respect and gratitude of those of his fellow-citizens." He also noted that white activism led to Pennsylvania's 1780 gradual emancipation law. Not only did Kelley explain the need for white financial support, but he also called for their moral support. Realizing that black soldiers would be killed and maimed, he told whites to support black war widows and orphans in any way they could.<sup>31</sup>

Professor Ebenezer D. Bassett, a prominent black citizen, followed later in the evening and continued on similar themes. He said, "For generations, we have suffered under the horrors of slavery, outrage and wrong; our manhood has been denied, our citizenship blotted out." He continued, "cannot we leave [our homes], and swell the hosts of the Union, to save our liberties, vindicate our manhood, and deserve well of our countries?"<sup>32</sup> Bassett indicated that the only way to assure the future recognition of African American equality was through military service.

Kelley and Bassett both understood that examining perceptions of manliness was important in encouraging enlistment. Traditionally, masculinity was associated with soldiering.<sup>33</sup> Military service was symbolic of white males entering adulthood. Slaveholders defended the peculiar institution through language that emasculated slaves, referring to them as "animals" or "children." One soldier recognized that serving in the military broke his race away from bondage: "Put on a United States uniform on his back," he said, "and the *chattel* is a *man*."<sup>34</sup> As Kelley said, war proves manhood. The traits of manhood in the nineteenth century included "independence, courage, the right to bear arms, moral agency, liberty of conscience, and the ability to protect and care for one's family." Slaveholders consequently denied blacks all of the characteristics defining their humanity, especially the qualities listed here. By enlisting in the Philadelphia units, African American men would carry arms and demonstrate courage. In an era when only white males were citizens, asserting manhood became fundamental in the hopes for postwar equality.<sup>35</sup>



Such equality was lacking in the terms of service offered black soldiers. Inferior military pay for blacks suggested they were second-class citizens. Only months into his service, a soldier in the Sixth USCT commented on the pay issue, "When I was at home, I could make a living for [his wife] and my two little ones; but now that I am a soldier they must do the best they can or starve. It almost tempts me to desert and run a chance of getting shot, when I read her letters, hoping that I would come to her relief." He added, "It's a shame the way they treat us; our officers tell me now that we are not soldiers; that if we were we would get the same pay as white men. . . . Really I thought I was a soldier, and it made me feel somewhat proud to think that I had a right to fight for Uncle Sam."<sup>36</sup>

Some white officers questioned the military capabilities of African Americans and whether they merited equal pay; nonetheless, most black men served competently under fire and were able to win supporters among army officers.<sup>37</sup> The soldiers understood contemporary perceptions of manhood—they needed to provide for their families, and many Northern freedmen were accustomed to doing so. Patriotism among the soldiers waned in the early months of their service because they realized the government was not recognizing their equality in pay. Feminist Anna E. Dickinson assured in her July 6 speech, "Ten dollars a month and no bounty are bad; slavery is worse." She declared that once Congress witnessed the bravery of African Americans, they would receive equal pay to white soldiers. By performing work equal to that of white men, black soldiers would prove their ability and, therefore, their manhood. Citizenship would then presumably follow, for Pennsylvania had taken away the right of blacks to vote in its Constitution of 1838. Congress took a step toward recognizing the wartime achievements of African Americans in 1864 when they authorized equal pay for black soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

Frederick Douglass, the distinguished abolitionist and the keynote speaker at the July 6 meeting, also examined the link between soldiering and citizenship. He said of the black man, "Let him get an eagle on his button, and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket, and there is no power on the earth which can deny that he has earned the right of citizenship in the United States."<sup>39</sup> Douglass was aware of black success on the battlefield. He had faith that similar success would come in the future as more African Americans donned the Union blue uniform.

Douglass noted that Pennsylvania had turned away black volunteers during the Gettysburg campaign. The state had called for volunteers, and

Philadelphia mayor Alexander Henry permitted the arming of local African Americans. However, the state's commander, Major General Darius Couch, refused to accept their service, and Governor Andrew Curtin would not overturn Couch's decision. Douglass argued that in spite of the state turning them down, they should try to fight instead for the Union. He said that the nation was greater than the state, and that if soldiers earned their citizenship by fighting for the Union, they would ultimately "secure . . . citizenship in the State."<sup>40</sup> This statement foreshadowed the Fourteenth Amendment (ratified in 1868), which extended national and state citizenship to freedmen.

Douglass concluded that military service was the only way to assure both freedom and citizenship. He had asserted since the beginning of the war that blacks needed to fight to prove their equality as men. He saw no other option in overcoming discrimination. The *Douglass Monthly* stated that "the black soldier secures manhood and freedom via civilized warfare," the same way white men obtained their adulthood.<sup>41</sup> Carrying a musket was better than "mere parchment guarantees of liberty." He remarked in his July 6 address, "Should your constitutional right at the close of this war be denied, which, in the nature of things, it cannot be, your brethren are safe while you have a Constitution which proclaims your right to keep and bear arms." Douglass knew that by serving in the military African Americans had done their duty as citizens. In a city that saw fierce ante bellum race riots, the hint at protecting black rights with arms after the war resonated.<sup>42</sup> Though black Philadelphians found themselves confined to their own community, Douglass, Bassett, and others saw military service as an effective way to earn equality and citizenship.

Black leaders, particularly Frederick Douglass, continued their activism in Philadelphia throughout the war. At Major Stearns's request, Douglass went to Washington to promote Philadelphia's work. He had meetings with Secretary of War Stanton and President Lincoln. In both encounters Douglass raised the issue of equal pay, but also noted that African Americans had a "cause quite independent of pay or place." The abolitionist understood that the institution of slavery and the future of his race were at stake in the war. He left his meeting later that day with Lincoln with confidence: "My whole interview with the President was gratifying and did much to assure me that slavery would not survive the War and that the Country would survive both slavery and the War." He saw the likelihood that the war would open new opportunities for African Americans.<sup>43</sup>

National newspapers such as the *Christian Recorder* assisted Douglass, Stearns, and the Union League. On July 11 the *Christian Recorder* published a piece to encourage blacks, especially locals, to enlist at Major Stearns's Chestnut Street headquarters. The paper claimed that "blacks have been denounced as cowards" and called upon "all that can shoulder a musket" to disprove this notion. The accusation of cowardice opposed the masculine virtue of courage. The *Christian Recorder*, like Congressman Kelley and Frederick Douglass had done days earlier, called on men to defend their identity. The *Recorder* believed that 1,000 locals could contribute to the three Union League regiments, but it also called for men from its national circulation, fitting with the Supervisory Committee's plans to recruit both inside and outside of Pennsylvania. Another article in the *Recorder* declared, "It is the duty of the entire colored people of the North to support the war with arms." They understood, in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation, that the war was about redefining and not just saving the Union. Recruiters also used the *Anglo-African*, another black journal, to call for 5,000 volunteers. The paper noted that their stipend would be \$10 a month, but that they expected Congress to raise the payment to equal a white soldier's earnings. The editors hoped that the pending pay increase would serve as an incentive. Many had other motives to enlist.<sup>44</sup>

African Americans had plenty of reasons to join the new regiments. Some soldiers wrote of their reasons in Northern newspapers, though most blacks were illiterate. Black soldiers fought for the preservation of the Union, some hoping that it would lead toward political and civil rights and for the liberation of their enslaved brethren. James McPherson writes that "free and slave alike, they fought to prove their manhood in a society that prized courage as the hallmark of manhood."<sup>45</sup> The writings of some of the soldiers once they left for the front show some continuity with the July 6 speeches of Kelley, Dickinson, and Douglass. Corporal Henry S. Harmon of the Third USCT wrote of the courage of the soldiers, stating, "If our friends of the city of Philadelphia could but look into our hospital and see the wasted frame of those who were but yesterday noble specimens of manhood, the fear that we were forgotten would never again enter our mind." Soldiers continued to hope that once the nation's white population recognized the manhood African Americans demonstrated on the battlefield, blacks would earn citizenship. Another soldier in the Third wrote in July 1865 while on duty in Florida, "By good behavior, we will show that we are men, and able to fill any position in life that we are placed in. There is only one thing I want, that is my vote; let us see what time will do."<sup>46</sup>

The Union League's recruits reported to Camp William Penn, established on June 26, 1863, and under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Louis Wagner. Located eight miles from Philadelphia, near the home of Quaker abolitionist Lucretia Mott, this garrison saw more black soldiers (and white commanders) than any other training camp through the war. Over 11,300 soldiers and officers trained there. The fort's "very existence represented a victory over prejudice by a number of dedicated individuals."<sup>47</sup> It became a visible sign of local acceptance of African American soldiers. An officer remembered, "The stay at Camp William Penn was a very bright spot in my army experience. We were just in the suburbs of Philadelphia and went into the city often. Situated among the thoroughly enthusiastic Union people, our service with the colored men made us heroes to our good Quaker friends."<sup>48</sup>

The presence of the camp brought regular visitors to see the soldiers drill. Reviews and flag presentations were very popular. Wealthy donors presented several of the Camp William Penn units with banners. Designed by black Philadelphia artist David Bustill Bowser, the regimental flags depicted such scenes as a black soldier holding a captured Confederate at his mercy and a black soldier protecting a Union signified by a white woman.<sup>49</sup> Both the *Christian Recorder* and *The Liberator* thoroughly covered a flag presentation for the Sixth USCT on September 4. "Friends of the troops," likely members of the Union League and the black Philadelphians who furnished the colors, delivered the flag to Colonel Wagner. The day's events also included a parade by the Sixth. Both newspapers discussed a speech by Robert Purvis, a local black leader and an aide to Major Stearns. The *Christian Recorder* noted Purvis's remarks on their future mission, which perhaps were a forecast of the Sixth's wartime experience: "Soldiers, under this flag, let your rallying cry be for God, for freedom, and our country. If for this you fall, you fall the country's patriots, heroes, and martyrs."<sup>50</sup> The publicity of such events and the white population's attendance at them show that there was a widespread acceptance of using black troops.

Not all coverage was positive. Like any army outpost during the Civil War, Camp William Penn experienced large number of desertions. This led Colonel Wagner to post sentries at the gates of the camp—an order that also sparked tragedy. On August 13 the *Christian Recorder* reported on the death of a white man named William Fox. He and a group of friends appeared at the camp one evening and began harassing Private Charles Ridley, a sentry from the Sixth USCT. Ridley, who was on his first night of guard duty, asked them to move along. All of the men except Fox obeyed the order.

Despite the urgings of his companions, Fox continued to harass Ridley. The sentinel called into the fort for the corporal to assist him, but someone yelled to "shoot them." Believing this to be an order, Ridley gave Fox at least two more verbal warnings before firing, severely wounding him. The guard also thought that Fox was armed, though investigators did not find a gun. Before any inquiry took place, angry local authorities demanded that Wagner hand over Ridley. The colonel refused, believing that Ridley had done his job as a soldier. The incident resulted in some negative publicity, with most papers in the Philadelphia area agreeing that the shooting was unjustified. It briefly cast a cloud over the camp's reputation and also showed that while most of the city had come to support the Union League's work, there was still some opposition.<sup>51</sup>

Overall, the Union League's recruitment and activism appeared to turn the tide of racism in Philadelphia until the postwar period. One sign of the League's success was a parade held in October 1863 before the Sixth USCT departed for the Yorktown Peninsula in Virginia. A parade of this magnitude would have been unheard of before 1863. Prior to the war, if there were any black celebrations or political movements, whites would riot. As Susan G. Davis wrote, "Whites found blacks barely acceptable when they stayed inside the circle of their own private, domestic activities. . . . But when the image of a unified black community with moral and political claims on the rest of society was projected into the streets, whites felt their prerogatives threatened."<sup>52</sup> Initially, the Union League hoped to have a parade in the summer featuring both the Third and the Sixth. However, Mayor Alexander Henry, fearing a race-based reprisal against the soldiers, convinced the War Department to block the parade, and Secretary Stanton issued orders according to Henry's wishes. The Union League planned another parade for early October, this time with no interference from Mayor Henry or the War Department. On October 3 the Sixth regiment, along with several companies of the Eighth, paraded through the streets of Philadelphia. There is no record of Mayor Henry attending, and his earlier fears were unfounded, apart from one minor incident: A local white man tried to steal the regimental colors, but the color guard knocked him to the ground and reclaimed the flag to the delight of the crowd.<sup>53</sup>

A reporter for the *Christian Recorder* remarked, "Now, we say, that no troops ever passed through the streets of Philadelphia that made a better appearance." These glowing remarks were standard of *Christian Recorder* articles on the Union League regiments, which the paper continued to monitor

throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>54</sup> The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, a white newspaper, made similar remarks: “The men, who are all sturdy, able-bodied fellows, were neatly uniformed, and they marched with a steadiness and precision that would have done credit to veterans.” A Philadelphia Quaker responded to the parade thusly: “I have been an abolitionist all my life, but you gentlemen of the Supervisory Committee, in bringing about this parade, have gone further than I ever would’ve done.” The Union League’s official history said of the parade, “The march was a triumphant demonstration of confidence in the loyal instinct of the vast majority.”<sup>55</sup> Within a year of the Union League’s creation, Copperhead sentiment in the city had waned and Philadelphians at least quietly accepted that the use of black soldiers would help win the war for the Union.

Furthering racial peace in the city was the fact that the 1863 Union League regiments were very successful from a military standpoint. The Third, Sixth, and Eight USCT left Camp William Penn with basic military skills and other tools necessary for battlefield success. Ideological bonds that went beyond group cohesion could have played a role in these regiments’ successes. These ties were, in short, the goals of ending slavery and discrimination.<sup>56</sup> Late nineteenth-century historian George Washington Williams commented on the camp’s success: “The regiments that went from this camp were among the best in the army. Their officers had been carefully selected and specially trained in a military school under competent teachers, and the troops themselves were noted for intelligence, proficiency, and pluck.”<sup>57</sup> The Third saw fighting at Charleston, South Carolina, and near Jacksonville, Florida. When Confederates evacuated their defenses at Battery Wagner in Charleston, the Third was among the first to enter. The Sixth was arguably the most distinguished of the Union League regiments with two soldiers and an officer earning the Congressional Medal of Honor for heroism at New Market Heights, Virginia, in 1864. Soldiers in the regiment also received medals struck by General Benjamin F. Butler. They would go on to serve in the Fort Fisher Campaign in Wilmington, North Carolina. The Eighth fought in Florida, sharing a campaign in Jacksonville with the Third.<sup>58</sup> These soldiers returned to Philadelphia after their successes with the expectation of equality and citizenship.

Nevertheless, in Philadelphia, there would be only limited improvement in race relations. The Union League’s 1865 annual report applauded “that peace was secured by no terms or compromises with the traitors; by no yielding of a single principle of policy or of conscience involved in the contest, by no injudicious permission to the conquered to revive the old abuses of their

social system.”<sup>59</sup> Despite rejoicing in the demise of the slavery, the Union League membership was not ready to extend full equality to those it fervently supported during wartime. The Union League and other organizations refused to admit black members.

The African American leaders who emerged during and after the Civil War, such as Octavius Catto, who aided the Union League’s recruitment efforts, took a more active, public approach than earlier leaders like James Forten. One of their most prominent battles was over discrimination on Philadelphia’s streetcars. The first streetcar company began operations in 1858, and by the time of the war nineteen lines existed. Black troops had no access to the streetcars, nor did wives and children who were visiting wounded soldiers. The key reason for this segregation, remarked the *Philadelphia Age*, was that the behavior of black men was offensive to white women. Allowing black men on streetcars would only lead to rape.<sup>60</sup> In July 1864 Reverend William J. Aston, an associate of Catto’s, wrote a letter to the *Philadelphia Press* that challenged the existing rules. African Americans fought in the Civil War and they paid taxes. Were they “deemed citizen enough to fight for the nation but not to sit inside its streetcars?”<sup>61</sup>

On January 13, 1865, Catto led a meeting at Concert Hall to gather support for changing the streetcar laws. At the event, he cited numerous examples of discrimination, including one involving future U.S. congressman Robert Smalls. Smalls, a South Carolina native and ex-slave, was a hero known to Philadelphia for steering the CSS *Planter*, on which he served as a slave, to the Union blockade as the ship’s crew spent the night ashore. Yet the car’s conductor denied him a seat. Though African Americans did not have the vote, they appealed to the legislature. They found support from state senator Morrow B. Lowry of Erie, who was able to successfully steer antidiscrimination laws through the state house in 1867.<sup>62</sup>

Catto and other Philadelphians continued the fight for equality. The black community drafted numerous suffrage petitions through the late 1860s. Pennsylvania reluctantly ratified the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, which prohibited states from preventing individuals from voting on the ground of race or color. Abolitionist groups dissolved, believing they had accomplished their goals, and black Americans were left to fight for themselves. On October 10, 1871, the day of state and local elections, riots erupted on Sixth and Lombard streets, where black men attempted to vote. The day began with numerous cases of police brutality against African Americans. Whites in the area filed many of the complaints of



police violence. As judges issued arrest warrants for officers, rioting started. Octavius Catto was teaching that day and tried to stay away from the riots, but he faced harassment on his way home. At Ninth and South streets, a protester shot Catto. He died on the streetcar tracks, where a desegregated car was about to pass. W.E.B. Dubois wrote, "The murder of Catto came at a critical moment: to the Negroes, it seemed to be a revival of the old slavery-time riots on the day when they were first tasting freedom."<sup>63</sup> The postwar era marked a return to the discrimination African Americans faced in the antebellum period. In 1848 Frederick Douglass had written of the city's auspicious future for African Americans. While the Union League and black leaders briefly attained some level of respect during the Civil War, the city and the nation did not continue to recognize manhood and citizenship for African Americans in the postwar era.

In the face of a loss of civil rights at the state and national level in the late nineteenth century, there was one organization in which black veterans could find support: the Grand Army of the Republic. Formed in 1866, the GAR was a veterans' network that openly recognized the contributions of African American soldiers. Pennsylvania's state commander, Howard Reeder, said that "we care nothing for a man's nationality, race, politics, or religion. The fact that a man was ready at the call of his country in her hour of danger . . . is all the Grand Army of the Republic seeks to know."<sup>64</sup> Other Pennsylvania commanders in the postwar era included Robert Beath, an officer in the Sixth USCT, and Louis Wagner, commandant of Camp William Penn, who both expressed an appreciation of black military contributions.

Though there was a nationwide openness to African Americans, some Pennsylvania posts, notably in Harrisburg, refused admission to black veterans. As a result, African Americans established their own posts. Not all of the reasons for the creation of these separate posts are known, though Barbara Gannon suggests that they could have formed because of a desire for autonomy, an idea seen in Philadelphia's antebellum black community. There were at least twenty-one African American posts throughout the state, seven of which formed in the Philadelphia area. The John W. Jackson Post was one of the first formed in the state and remained until the 1920s. While most of the state's African Americans joined these separate councils, there were exceptions. Philadelphians in the Charles Sumner Post participated with their white GAR comrades in an 1892 parade on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC. The march was a recreation of the 1865 Grand Review with one significant difference—the inclusion of black soldiers. In the GAR



African Americans found recognition for their gallantry, though the GAR would not pass these sentiments on to its heir, the Sons of Union Veterans.<sup>65</sup>

The Civil War marked only a brief letup in racial tension in Philadelphia. Although any sign of African American organization or celebration in the antebellum era sparked white-led civil disturbances, the movement toward raising black regiments in Philadelphia met no violence during the war. By 1863 the city's white residents hesitated to use African American soldiers, but ultimately accepted them, at least tacitly, in the hopes that it would end the war and save the Union. There were multiple factors that made recruitment a success in Philadelphia. The first was the War Department for cooperating with Philadelphia's white elites, authorizing their efforts, and assigning men like George Stearns and Louis Wagner, the commandant of Camp William Penn, to the city. The second factor, and a key contributor, was the Union League. Had it not been for the League's activism, recruitment would not have begun during the summer of 1863, nor would it have continued throughout the remainder of the war. Its insistence on looking beyond the city into western Pennsylvania and the neighboring Mid-Atlantic states yielded a total of eleven regiments by 1865. The Supervisory Committee received important publicity from local newspapers and national publications like the *Liberator* and the *Christian Recorder*. The latter paper circulated among African Americans around the country and likely encouraged many to bear arms for the Union.

The recruitment effort would not been so great an achievement were it not for the work of the African American community, the third factor. Frederick Douglass, Octavius Catto, and local blacks all encouraged men to serve in the hopes that it would lead to citizenship. Last, one cannot forget those who answered the call to arms to fight for freedom and manhood. The combined work of the Union League and African Americans was successful not only from a military standpoint, but also in briefly ameliorating racial tensions in the city. The cohesiveness of Philadelphia's black community and its work with the Union League effectively made significant contributions that helped the Union and the city survive its greatest challenge.

## NOTES

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1. Frederick Douglass, *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, October 19, 1848, quoted in Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 6.
2. Frederick M. Binder, "Pennsylvania Negro Regiments in the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History* 374 (1952): 266.
3. J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia during the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 184–85.
4. Julie Winch, *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 82–90, 152, 166.
5. *Ibid.*, 9–10.
6. Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 183. The Union League appears in numerous secondary sources, including several published by the organization, but it often gets little more than a passing mention. Lawson provides an excellent discussion of Union Leagues throughout the North in her book. Several sources also mention the Union League's recruitment in passing.
7. The Act of Consolidation in 1854 combined the governments of the city and Philadelphia County. Thus, population figures after this time reflect the entire county. Frank H. Taylor, *Philadelphia in the Civil War, 1861–1865* (Philadelphia: Published by the city, 1913), 9–15; Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 2.
8. Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 6, 9–10. This is the premise of Gallman's work on wartime Philadelphia. For more on the Sanitary Fair and the raising of funds for the Sanitary Commission, see 118–69. James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 494. For more on the Copperheads, see also Frank L. Klement, *Lincoln's Critics: The Copperheads of the North* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Co., 1999), and Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
9. *125th Anniversary, 1862–1987: Annual Reports of 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866*, Published by Direction of the Library Committee (Philadelphia: The Winchell Company, 1987), iii.
10. Maxwell Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis: The First Century of the Union League of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Union League of Philadelphia, 1975), 1–2, 22–26; Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 103.
11. *Chronicle of the Union League in Philadelphia, 1862–1902* (Philadelphia: William F. Fell, 1902), vii.
12. Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 114–17; *Chronicle of the Union League*, 6; Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, 32–34.
13. *Chronicle of the Union League*, vii, 93; Lawson, *Patriot Fires*, 112.
14. Robert J. Mendte, *The Union League of Philadelphia Celebrates 125 Years, 1862–1987* (Philadelphia: The Union League of Philadelphia, 1987), 53; Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, 46.
15. Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 48; George W. Fahnestock diary, March 26 and June 6, 1863, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP); Mendte, *The Union League of Philadelphia*, 54.
16. Dudley Taylor Cornish, *The Sable Arm: Black Troops in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956; reprint, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987), 130–31.
17. U.S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, "The Negro in the Military Service of the United States, 1639–1886," file M858, RG94, National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter

- cited as NA); Jeffrey D. Wert, "Camp William Penn and the Black Soldier," *Pennsylvania History* 74 (October 1979): 339; *Chronicle of the Union League*, 93–94, 521; *Report of the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Troops* (Philadelphia: King and Baird Printers, 1864), back cover.
18. "The Negro in the Military Service"; Gallman, *Mastering Wartime*, 48; *Chronicle of the Union League*, 93–94; Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, 47; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (hereafter cited as *OR*) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1899), ser. 3, 3:404–5.
  19. Appeal dated June 27, 1863, Abraham Barker Collection, HSP.
  20. Ibid.; *Addresses of the Hon. W. D. Kelley, Miss Anna E. Dickinson, and Mr. Frederick Douglass, at a mass meeting, held at National Hall, Philadelphia, July 6, 1863, for the Promotion of Colored Enlistments* (hereafter cited as *Addresses*) (Philadelphia, 1863), 1; "Enlistment of Colored Regiments," *The Liberator*, July 17, 1863.
  21. "The Negro in Military Service."
  22. *Report of the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Troops*, 3–7.
  23. Ibid.; *Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia*, 100.
  24. James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War: How American Negroes Felt and Acted during the War for the Union* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968), 181.
  25. Thomas Webster, letter to the Supervisory Committee, April 25, 1864, Barker Collection.
  26. Noah Andre Trudeau, *Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862–1865* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 125–26.
  27. U.S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 3rd USCT Infantry," vol. 1, Regimental Descriptive Book, RG 94, NA.
  28. U.S. War Department, Adjutant General's Office, "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 6th USCT Infantry" and "Book Records of Volunteer Union Organizations, 8th USCT Infantry," vol. 1, Regimental Descriptive Book, RG 94, NA.
  29. Ibid.
  30. "Men of Color," July 27, 1863, Barker Collection; George Boker, "Washington and Jackson on Negro Soldiers/General Banks on the Bravery of Negro Troops/Poem—the Second Louisiana," published by the Union League, 1863, Barker Collection.
  31. Whiteman, *Gentlemen in Crisis*, 47; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1789–1989* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), 1294; *Addresses*, 2.
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MAKING NO DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN RICH  
AND POOR: THADDEUS STEVENS AND  
CLASS EQUALITY

*Christopher Shepard*

He was beloved by former slaves who viewed him as champion of their cause for freedom and equal rights. The South despised him as the instigator of the radical Reconstruction policies that plagued the region for more than a decade; Southern author Thomas Dixon even based his character Austin Stoneman on him in his work, *The Clansman*, which became the basis for D.W. Griffith's infamous film *Birth of a Nation* in 1915.<sup>1</sup> During the Civil War and Reconstruction eras of U.S. history, few men garnered as much power in Congress as Pennsylvania Republican Thaddeus Stevens. He was instrumental in matters such as financing the war, bringing the infant Republican Party to dominance in national politics, prosecuting Andrew Johnson's impeachment trial in 1868, and fashioning many pieces of civil rights legislation that helped African Americans commence their new freedom with the support of the federal government.

Since his death in 1868, historians have offered various interpretations of this controversial figure. Those who viewed

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Stevens positively labeled him as a “commoner,” a person intent on implementing political and economic equality all through the country. In 1882 E. B. Callender subtitled his biography on Thaddeus Stevens “Commoner,” stating that his mission in life “was the equality of all men” and to help “the sick and poor.” In his book Alphonse B. Miller acknowledged Stevens’s “fervor for equality,” as well as pointing to the inscription on his tombstone, “Equality of Man Before His Creator,” as definitive proof that even in death Stevens “insisted on fighting the battle of egalitarianism.” Likewise, Fawn M. Brodie noted in *Thaddeus Stevens: Scourge of the South* that most of his legislation was egalitarian in nature, while Hans L. Trefousse subtitled his work on Thaddeus Stevens *Nineteenth-Century Egalitarian*; Trefousse utilized Stevens’ passion for abolition and public education as conclusive evidence of his lasting legacy of egalitarianism.<sup>2</sup>

Several biographers extended Stevens’s egalitarianism further to portray him as an enemy of wealth and privilege. Samuel W. McCall observed that the Pennsylvanian “deemed no man so poor or friendless as to be beneath the equal protection of the laws, and none so powerful to rise above their sway.” He concluded, “Privilege never had a more powerful nor a more consistent foe.” Thomas Frederick Woodley used the term *The Great Leveler* as the title of his biography, so designating him as the leveler when it came to his political life and career, and James Albert Woodburn portrayed him as a “relentless foe of Privilege” in *The Life of Thaddeus Stevens*.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, some historians have been very critical of Stevens’s support for the protective tariff and American industry, considering him a defender of the elite rather than the common person. In *Old Thad Stevens: A Story of Ambition*, Richard N. Current identified the Pennsylvania congressman as a “champion” of Northern industrialists, at the same time claiming that Stevens assisted in bringing about “the Age of Big Business, with its concentration of wealth, its diffusion of poverty, its inequalities and its inequities.” Furthermore, Alphonse Miller, who did recognize the egalitarian propensities of the Commoner, wrote that Stevens “was the most powerful legislative advocate that big business had.”<sup>4</sup>

Both historical interpretations reflected only part of Stevens’s true thinking on economic issues. While he did spend his life aiding the poor and oppressed, he also sought to bolster the upper class and business community. Stevens was more a complex economic and political thinker than a guardian of the poor or a representative of the elite. Like most Republicans of that era,



he displayed an obsession with the concept of equality, whether political or economic, due to the fact that he staunchly believed in the “absolute equality of all men before the law.”<sup>5</sup> Whether they endorsed the freedom and political rights of African Americans, defended the different economic classes from oppression by the government, or professed the concept of equality of opportunity for everybody, Republicans believed they were trying to treat all citizens equally. Thaddeus Stevens was no different. The Commoner’s principles, words, and actions, which were those of the most Republican Party generally, strictly benefited neither the rich nor the poor; indeed, Stevens strove for a certain type of egalitarianism based upon the concept of economic class equality.

Even though Thaddeus Stevens spent most of his life in the Keystone State, he was born in Danville, Vermont, in 1792. He experienced many obstacles on his road to success. He was born with a clubfoot, which forced him to walk with a cane as he became older. A horrid disease caused him to lose all of his hair; he would wear a wig to cover his embarrassing baldness. In addition, Stevens’s father disappeared, and his mother was left to raise four sons by herself in an extremely impoverished situation. His destitute condition as a child shaped part of his future political thinking. As he remarked in 1837, poverty was “a blessing—for if there be any human sensation more ethereal and divine than all others, it is that which feelingly sympathises with misfortune.”<sup>6</sup>

Throughout his private life, Stevens was an avid helper of those in need, willing at any moment, as Alexander Harris wrote, “to extend a helping hand.”<sup>7</sup> His charitable contributions were legendary, and many of his Republican colleagues, such as John Sherman and James G. Blaine, reminisced about it decades later in their autobiographies and memoirs.<sup>8</sup> According to one newspaper, Stevens had “done more to comfort and aid and foster the poor, and the poor man’s children, ever since he had a dollar to spare.” A famous incident occurred when Stevens returned home to witness a widow’s house and farm being auctioned due to foreclosure. Stevens entered the bidding, won the farm for \$1,600, and then returned the property to the widow free of charge. When the Commoner died in 1868, his will earmarked large sums for his relatives, churches, schools, and colleges, and he never collected funds totaling thousands of dollars from business sales or loans.<sup>9</sup> Stevens gave, as several historians observed, “freely” and “recklessly, without regard to merit or necessity.” Undoubtedly, his experiences as a poor child made him more aware of the difficult circumstances that low-income people

faced each day. In *Thaddens Stevens: A Being Darkly Wise and Rudely Great*, Ralph Korngold pointed out that Stevens hated poverty because it restricted and humiliated people who were caught in that horrid state, which helps to understand his unwavering devotion to assisting them with his own personal finances.<sup>10</sup>

Along with his private charitable gifts, Stevens aided the poor during his public career as a member of both the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and the U.S. Congress. In the Pennsylvania House, Stevens was one of the first members to call for free public education for all children. When the measure was being debated, opponents sought to derail it by forcing the towns to keep public records of their low-income children. Stevens utterly detested this provision. He commented, "Hereditary distinctions of rank are sufficiently odious; but that which is founded on poverty is infinitely more so." If this provision was to go into effect, the law ought to be renamed "an act for branding and marking the poor, so they may be known from the rich and the proud." Stevens hated the idea of using schools to denigrate the poor when the intention of the program was to benefit all economic classes, including the children of the affluent who could also send their children to these free schools. Recording the names of poor children produced "castes and grades, founded on no merit of the particular generation, but on the demerits of their ancestors; an aristocracy of the most odious and insolent kind—the aristocracy of wealth and pride." Due to his passionate criticism of the law, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives reversed their decision and removed it from the education bill.<sup>11</sup>

In 1837 Stevens was invited to attend the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention. Yet again, the Commoner found himself defending his stance on public education and attacking the notion of making impoverished children a matter of public record. This time, he insisted that the idea created "one rank, composed of the wealth of the land, and another of the plebeians and poor," and its ultimate effect was to devastate "the spirit of many of your young men." He continued to deride the idea as uncaring and harmful, observing that making such a blatant distinction between children of different economic classes was not "in accordance with that spirit of liberty, which should prevail in every free country."<sup>12</sup>

When he won election to Congress, Stevens resumed his push for more free public schools. In 1862, in the midst of the Civil War, he supported a bill establishing schools in the District of Columbia, to be funded from the profits gained by the Washington and Georgetown Railroad. Several members

of Congress spoke out against the bill, and Stevens deduced that they did so because they did not believe poor children were worthy of educating with public money. "We should," said Stevens, "take care of the rising generation, and give them an opportunity of being educated, whether their fathers and mothers are able to educate them or not."<sup>13</sup> The House eventually passed the bill. Moreover, he backed the creation of the Department of Education to help the newly freed slaves receive schooling to become productive citizens. He was critical, though, of giving them an upper-level education too quickly, preferring to teach them the basics so that they might be able to vote, find work, and take care of themselves. Speaking on the House floor a month before his death, Stevens said, "I should be ashamed to vote against educating the people. I would track them from the lowest man or boy who could be taught to read and write upward until the sciences would become germane to their condition."<sup>14</sup>

The issue of free public schools became a vital component for the Republican Party and its program for creating a self-sustaining and self-reliant citizenry within the United States; the party hoped to give "every child growing up in the land of opportunity of a good common-school education."<sup>15</sup> Republicans believed education was so important because it would transform children into upstanding and intelligent adults—central to an informed electorate. Free education as well led to the diffusion of intelligence and opportunity to succeed in the nation's capitalist economy. It helped not only the poor children whose parents were mostly unable financially to provide a decent education, but also those children in the middle and upper classes who were also allowed to attend the schools for free.<sup>16</sup> At the end of his life, Stevens judged the cause of public education in Pennsylvania his only successful venture as a political figure, mentioning to a friend that it "was the proudest effort of my life. It gave schools to the poor and helpless children of the state."<sup>17</sup>

Besides helping the poor in general to improve their condition, Stevens fought all of his life to aid African American slaves. For the more "radical" Republicans, ending the institution of slavery was a passionate mission. Since they presented themselves as the party of equality, these Republicans led campaigns to give slaves economic freedom and political rights, which they espoused in their 1864 and 1868 party platforms.<sup>18</sup> They wanted African Americans to enjoy the benefits stated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, just as most whites had experienced for the first 100 years of the nation's history; this included the right

to have an equal opportunity to pursue their version of the American dream and enjoy the fruits of their hard work.<sup>19</sup>

It has never been clear as to why Stevens took what was, at that time, a radical position on the slavery question. Some speculated that his transition occurred when, as a young lawyer, he defended a slave owner in court against a slave who claimed she was free because for some time she lived in Pennsylvania, which had already outlawed slavery. He won the case but probably felt guilt for standing on the side of slavery. After that point, "Stevens believed that the ownership of human beings was wrong and that equal rights were the cornerstone of republican institutions." Whatever the occasion, he worked tirelessly to end the institution and to reach out his hand in assistance to them whenever it was possible through his law practice and his efforts with the Underground Railroad.<sup>20</sup> In 1850, during Stevens's first term in Congress, members debated how to handle the newly acquired lands from the Mexican War, especially concerning the slave question. When Henry Clay fashioned the Compromise of 1850, Stevens denounced the measure as too conciliatory to the Southern states.<sup>21</sup> He continued to speak zealously against slavery throughout his many years as a member of Congress; one of the most famous examples occurred in January of 1862, when he pleaded to his colleagues to utilize a victory in the Civil War as a means to end slavery. "Without slavery," said the Pennsylvanian, "we should this day be a united and happy people. So long as it exists, we cannot have a solid Union." Stevens admitted that he could never condone "ownership of any human being in any human soul;" from his standpoint, slavery created "savages of human beings," and the only way to prevent this from happening was to halt its practice. He concluded his speech by declaring,

The occasion is forced upon us, and the invitation presented to strike the chains from four millions of human beings, and create them MEN; to extinguish slavery on this whole continent; to wipe out, so far as we are concerned, the most hateful and infernal blot that ever disgraced the escutcheon of man.

With the end of the war in 1865, Stevens witnessed his lifelong goal accomplished when the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery, became a part of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>22</sup>

Although the slaves achieved freedom, many still faced dire circumstances. Most had very little money, no land, no homes, and little if any education.

Once more, the ex-slaves found an ally in the Commoner. Stevens sponsored the formation of the Freedmen's Bureau, which built schools and provided job skill training to African Americans. He, however, deemed even that insufficient, and in 1866 Stevens presented to Congress a measure that would offer forty acres per man from land confiscated from Southerners during the war.<sup>23</sup> Despite some congressional support, President Andrew Johnson, along with more moderate Republicans and the Democrats, wanted to give the land back to pardoned rebels. This action angered Stevens, as many African Americans had already settled the land and built homes, schools, and churches for themselves. Stevens condemned those who opposed his plan, stating, "Some of our friends here still retain a portion of their old hatred of the negro."<sup>24</sup> When it appeared inevitable that the lands were going to be returned to the former owners, Stevens tried to help the African Americans by having the government pay them twenty-five dollars per acre for land they had improved. "By our Freedmen's Bureau law, the abandoned lands were ordered to be seized and allotted among the freedmen. This has been done," declared Stevens. They utilized the land wisely, fostering strong communities, but

It is now sought to allow the rebels whose lands we thus seized to come back and expel the men whom the Government allotted these freeholds, as it was bound to doing honestly and in law. Those freedmen are to be turned out. It does not say that the Government shall expend twenty-five dollars an acre for the land for the purpose of placing these freedmen somewhere else, where they have no homes and no plantation to work. I say that would be cruel and unjust.

The Republican-controlled Congress eventually passed Stevens's measure. Johnson vetoed the bill, but there were enough votes in both chambers to override his veto.<sup>25</sup>

While helping the unfortunate, Stevens saw no problem in assisting with equal zeal the needs of the wealthy and business community. The chance to accumulate wealth was a central principle for most Republicans and their views on economic policies for the United States. Lincoln once remarked in 1860 that the best course of action for the government to take on the economy was "to leave each man free to acquire property as fast as he can."<sup>26</sup> Most in the party felt, just as Lincoln, that those who had achieved wealth and stature were positive examples that would encourage everyone to strive to reach such heights. Republicans also believed that the accumulation of

wealth by some led to national prosperity that benefited every person participating in the economy.<sup>27</sup> As George Boutwell succinctly stated, “every man is interested in adding as much as possible to the wealth of the community.”<sup>28</sup>

Stevens demonstrated a strong desire to accumulate wealth for himself. In 1811 he entered Dartmouth College as a sophomore and excelled academically, giving the valedictorian’s address when he graduated in 1814. He reasoned that the greatest asset of a civilization was the pursuit of property and wealth. Before humanity had turned to the “acquisition and unequal distribution of wealth,” they lived “in a state of barbarism,” characterized by an equally shared poverty. Societal improvements only came when men began pursuing “new motives of pleasure and profit.” Although the pursuit and acquisition of wealth led to abuses and luxury, Stevens considered these inevitable byproducts of a process that produced more comforts and greater happiness and, therefore, was “more entitled to applause than censure.” Besides, “debauchery, intemperance and idleness” were the inevitable results of the unequal distribution of wealth, and they were more prevalent in an impoverished community than an affluent one. Stevens continued, “If the lofty mansion sometimes becomes the habitations of costly excess, the hovel and the cabin are as frequently polluted by the gratifications of baser passions.” The pursuit of wealth caused society to improve itself, and that improvement “has banished barbarism” for a more civilized and cultured society.<sup>29</sup>

Stevens recounted the fact that most historical civilizations witnessed the jealousy and hatred the poor classes held against the wealthy because they felt overpowered and abused by them. With this seed of hatred, demagogues who supposedly “championed” their cause easily seduced the poor; this led to what Stevens termed “party spirit” in the political sphere, and its ultimate consequences were division and conflict in a nation. To prevent this negative outcome, the pursuit and unequal distribution of wealth should be praised instead of punished. Stevens saved his criticisms for people who abused wealth rather than those who earned it. His overall economic philosophy here corresponded to an important strain of the early republic’s republican ideology: productive citizens would earn unequal amounts, but in a virtuous society where all men were free to pursue their economic interests, the extremes and political byproducts of inequality could be avoided.<sup>30</sup> In later years, the Republican Party would also condemn the idea of instigating a “war on property” by those seeking to advance their own political agenda. As Abraham Lincoln remarked in an 1864 speech, “Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another; but let him labor diligently and build one for himself.”<sup>31</sup>

As chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, Stevens took a strong interest in financial matters all through his years in Congress. Just as he willingly helped the destitute with free public education, Stevens also supported the wealthy and privileged classes in society; one of the most prominent examples of this was his criticism of a proposed progressive income tax. With the Civil War placing unprecedented financial strains on the U.S. government, Congress passed a law to create the nation's first income tax in 1861.<sup>32</sup> While Stevens was supportive of the idea, he also recognized that it would be unpopular, mainly due to the tax collectors coming to the doorsteps of every American household.<sup>33</sup> "The Committee of Ways and Means are conscious that it is a most unpleasant duty for them to propose such a measure," he said as he reluctantly voted for the tax. In 1862 Stevens supported an increase in the tax rate. However, he balked in 1864 when his colleagues attempted to enact three progressive rates for income taxation.<sup>34</sup>

A fellow Republican, Augustus Frank, proposed income tax brackets of 3, 5, and 10 percent.<sup>35</sup> When the bill came to the floor of the House, Stevens went into a long tirade, defending wealthy individuals and their right to keep their property from the confiscatory arm of the government. Referring to graduated tax rates as "vicious" for rich people, he complained, "It seems to me that it is a strange way to punish men because they are rich. . . . If any man dare go above a certain amount, more than I am worth or any other member, then we should take it all." Stevens held that the government should in no way make any distinctions between people, even if some have greater wealth and incomes than others. He completed his speech by remarking, "the principle of taxing a man worth \$20,000 more in proportion to his wealth is an unjust one. . . . If he is worth over a million dollars we might as well provide that the Government shall take the surplus."<sup>36</sup> Contending that a flat tax rather than progressive brackets was better for the nation, Stevens continued to support the wealthy a year later when Republican Justin Morrill of Vermont presented a bill to make one flat rate of 10 percent for incomes exceeding \$3,000; Stevens supported his proposal.<sup>37</sup>

As the debate on progressive income tax rates continued, many Republicans made similar arguments against the proposition. James Negley noted that "if the poor man has an unquestionable right of equality with the rich . . . so the latter has the same right of equality of the former." A Republican senator pointed to the fact that government should never "create nor tolerate any distinction of rank, race, or color." To Republicans, they were "a party of justice



and equality,” which included treating all men the same regardless of their current economic standing.<sup>38</sup> Despite strong attacks on the progressive rates, the 1864 bill became law until it expired in 1872.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the income tax, Stevens maintained a permanent commitment to high protective tariffs. The tariff, a centerpiece of Henry Clay’s “American System” that supported the industrialization of the United States, was eagerly espoused by businesses to protect their products from cheap foreign goods.<sup>40</sup> Although it was primarily an ideal promoted by Whigs, Republicans developed the tariff into a central philosophy for economic development, believing that it not only helped the wealthy and business community, but also the workers and general population. As Eric Foner pointed out in *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, Republicans argued that the tariff “was designed primarily to advance the interests of labor . . . to protect American workingmen against the competition of cheap foreign labor.”<sup>41</sup> As they explained in their 1872 party platform, their duty as part of a representative government was to shape legislation “to secure full protection and the amplest field for capital, and for labor.”<sup>42</sup> Since they deemed that the tariff benefited both labor and capital equally, it was a worthy proposition for the federal government to defend and implement.

Stevens, as a businessman in the iron industry, consistently backed the tariff. During his first stint in Congress, the Pennsylvanian gave a lengthy oration on the advantages of a high protective tariff, claiming that it would increase manufacturing and economic activities in the great cities of the West and Midwest. Only “barbarian tribes,” he argued, practiced free trade, whereas high protective tariffs had proven over history to be the “true, natural, and wise policy of nations.” He also contended that labor would eventually reap the rewards of a prosperous economy, noting that it was “impossible to benefit labor without aiding capital, and its impossible to benefit capital without aiding labor.”<sup>43</sup>

During the Civil War, Stevens continued his protectionist ways. He supported the Morrill Tariff of 1861 that raised the rates and attacked those who sought to lower the tariff. Free traders were “blind to everything but a theory which is a mere theory, and can never be reduced to practice without crushing all industry of this country.”<sup>44</sup> When in 1866 a congressman from Iowa suggested lowering the tariff to help poor farmers in the West pay for cheaper industrial products, Stevens outwardly rejected the idea, pointing out,

I had hoped the time had arrived for building up in every neighborhood, in every portion of the country, a market for our home products.

We have long enough been tributary to the pauper labor of Europe, and we have long enough been deluded by the idle idea that when we put protection upon articles manufactured in this country we injure consumers here.

Stevens closed his remarks by calling the idea of a low tariff and free trade “erroneous.”<sup>45</sup>

Besides the tariff, Republicans believed government support for railroads was “demanded by the interests of the whole country,” so a national railroad needed to be speedily built.<sup>46</sup> Stevens belonged to the Committee on Pacific Railroads, calling them “one of the greatest enterprises of the age.”<sup>47</sup> In 1862 he proposed a bill to provide Union Pacific \$50 million in government subsidies and 11 million acres of government land to build a national railroad; he stated that the railroad “should be speedily built.”<sup>48</sup> He also wanted a Northern Pacific Railroad to be constructed to help settle the sparsely populated western states. Identifying railroads as the “great civilizers,” Stevens asserted that they would bring the fractured nation together after four years of war and destruction: “we bind together our nation, because by it the countless millions which would soon swarm into the western world would be united by the bonds of interest.” This interest, according to Stevens, was based on mutual economic benefit; industrialized states, such as Pennsylvania, now had the ability to promote their products in the new markets in the West. Stevens wrote several other bills to aid the construction of railroads, including lines from Washington, DC, to New York City and from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean. He hoped to furnish for free public lands to the People’s Pacific Railroad Company. Hans Trefousse noted that Stevens had a “permanent devotion” to the new transportation system that utilized iron (which he manufactured) for its lines, and Miller wrote that Stevens and the corporations “saw eye to eye.”<sup>49</sup>

“We have made no distinction,” Stevens stated during the debate of progressive income tax rates, “between one man and another because one is richer than another.”<sup>50</sup> Stevens neither encouraged the impoverished to blame the wealthy for their predicament nor ignored them when he defended the upper class. Stevens despised distinguishing between the different economic classes, evident in both his antagonism for progressive tax rates and recording the names of poor children in public schools in the state of Pennsylvania. When he backed a bill, he usually argued how it would ultimately benefit everybody. It is a fact that Thaddeus Stevens advocated for a protective tariff in his tenure in Congress and supported the ambitions of big business, such as

railroad companies, but he did so believing that in a strong industrial nation the common laborer and farmer would profit as much as the capitalist. He defended the wealthy class's right to own and maintain property, while also pushing for free public schools to help poor children and for land for the newly freed slaves.

Stevens shared with the new Republican Party a determination to treat all men equally. With its more radical members, he fought diligently to end slavery and grant political equality for African Americans. Likewise, they believed that since the government should make no distinctions between men based upon their skin color, it should not, as well, discriminate based upon wealth. During his entire life and career, Stevens supported economic opportunity for all classes, and doing his best to construct policies to benefit both the rich and poor. We can only wonder how he would have reacted, had he lived another decade, to the trials of the Molly Maguires and the railroad strikes in 1877 where these interests emerged as incompatible.

## NOTES

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**“SHE KEEPS THE PLACE IN CONTINUAL  
EXCITEMENT:” FEMALE INMATES’  
REACTIONS TO INCARCERATION IN  
ANTEBELLUM PENNSYLVANIA’S PRISONS**

*Erica Hayden*

*W*estern State Penitentiary, located in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, received its first inmate on July 31, 1826. Less than a year later, on March 29, 1827, an inmate, Hiram Lindsay, escaped from its confines. It was later discovered that Lindsay was aided by “the coloured woman” who from “feelings of humanity, on the part of her Keeper was not confined that night to her cell.”<sup>1</sup> Only one woman was in the prison at the time: Maria Penrose, twenty-one, born in Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, and described as having a yellow complexion with black hair and eyes, arrived at the Penitentiary on September 6, 1826, to serve a sentence of two years for larceny committed in Bedford County. She would serve a little over one year and be discharged on December 1, 1827.<sup>2</sup> Penrose was a typical female convict in Western State Penitentiary: she was young, African American, born in Pennsylvania, and convicted of larceny. While Penrose may have only been an accomplice in Lindsay’s act of overt resistance to the prison system, her role exemplifies that female

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inmates were not always passive victims of the penal institutions but found ways to react to and challenge imprisonment. Female inmates found numerous ways to make their presence known in Pennsylvania's state and county prisons, ranging from subtle, personal acts to hold onto their identity, to using privileges obtained from prison staff to make their prison sentences easier, to blatant attempts at physical resistance to the oppressive prison system.

Penrose had used the sympathy of prison guards and the privilege of being able to roam the cell blocks to aid another inmate in thwarting prison security. Women were incarcerated in Pennsylvania's penitentiaries alongside men, yet they constituted a small percentage of the overall prison population. As a result, prison guards often neglected the needs of this small inmate population, treated them differently, and were inconsistent in their protocols toward female prisoners. This differential treatment reflected the guards' discomfort with having women in the institution. Especially in the early years of the penitentiaries' existence, female inmates were often given extra privileges, perhaps as a way to assuage the guilt of having them housed with male prisoners.<sup>3</sup>

Some female inmates, like Penrose, used the sympathetic treatment of the guards to their advantage. Her involvement in the escape may not be deemed a form of direct resistance, but she clearly used what privileges she had as the sole female inmate to help Lindsay regain his freedom, a goal perhaps she felt she could not attain herself. Because she was given privileges, it is possible that the conditions of her incarceration were not as bad as those of other inmates. In a place where anonymity and isolation were supposedly the norm, Penrose seemed to have had the freedom to move about the prison as she wished. While we do not know if she used her privileges to help him out of compassion or if her plan was a more general act to hinder penitentiary discipline, her actions indicate that when prisoners had an opportunity to work against their punishers they used it.<sup>4</sup>

Imprisoned women in Pennsylvania's state and county prisons, such as Penrose, resisted becoming lost in the prison systems in numerous ways. Sometimes women's actions were simply forms of protest against a coercive system. These protestations could be subtle, such as writing secret letters or telling their stories of incarceration to the outside world, which can be seen as personal forms of reaction against incarceration—attempts to hold on to their humanity and identity. Other women used privileges given to them from sympathetic prison staff to alleviate the harshness of incarceration, or, in Penrose's case, to help another inmate defy incarceration outright.



Although privileges like those offered to Penrose were not supposed to be given according to penitentiary protocols, when given they provided female inmates with the opportunity to react against penitentiary discipline. In county jails especially, and sometimes in the state penitentiaries, women resorted to overt forms of resistance. These more aggressive, destructive, and sometimes violent outbursts obstructed prison order and discipline at both the state and county level, though they were perhaps more prevalent in the county jails. The use of numerous methods to flout prison rules, protest against poor conditions, or attempt to ease the harshness of incarceration demonstrates that many female inmates were not simply passive sufferers of the prison systems. Women actively made their presence known in the institutions and often caused significant disruptions to the order and discipline of these prisons, while the prisons used anonymity and isolation as tools to break criminals of their past bad behavior in order to rebuild them as rehabilitated, law-abiding citizens.

Women's experiences in Pennsylvania's antebellum prisons are representative of the overall experience of female inmates during the antebellum period, particularly in the northern states. Using Pennsylvania's female inmates as a case study provides a lens through which female reactions to incarceration can be examined. I am not suggesting, however, that only female inmates challenged their imprisonment. Numerous accounts of male inmates in penitentiaries illustrate that all prisoners had the capacity to defy the system. For example, at Eastern State, one male inmate was "cured" with a stint in a straitjacket for being "a little stubborn." Other male inmates at the penitentiary were punished for "ridiculing the minister" and "impudence to one of the keepers." Another man "broke the sky light and made much noise."<sup>5</sup> Some used violence toward the keepers. One prisoner was struck by an employee when the employee heard noise coming from his cell. Upon entering the cell, the inmate was "in possession of a hickory club, about 3 feet long, and an inch or 1¼ in circumference." When asked to hand the club to the guard, the inmate refused, causing a physical altercation.<sup>6</sup> In her analysis of the role of religion in New York's penitentiaries during the antebellum period, Jennifer Graber demonstrates that violent corporal punishment was commonly used to punish inmates for resistance to prison protocols. The violence was viewed as a tool to facilitate inmate obedience and reform.<sup>7</sup>

Although male inmates certainly resisted their imprisonment or protested conditions, women's reactions against incarceration seemed to pose more of a problem to officials because of the small populations of female inmates.

Mark Kann argues that “they were considered worse than male criminals because they were expected to be better than men.”<sup>8</sup> At Ohio’s state penitentiary in the 1840s, the prison’s “nine women gave more trouble than the institution’s five hundred males.”<sup>9</sup>

Focusing on female inmates’ reactions to their imprisonment in Pennsylvania’s nineteenth-century prisons offers an opportunity to more fully understand and analyze women’s daily lives while incarcerated. It is generally known that female inmates constituted a significantly smaller prison population than did male offenders. As a result, women’s experiences in these early prisons are often not deeply explored by scholars. Kann argues that “women’s small numbers in prisons had terrible consequences for the few females residing there. . . . They were often treated as unsalvageable human refuse to be buried rather than human beings to be rehabilitated.” He suggests that because there was such a small population, prison officials could not justify the expense that it would cost to provide separate staff and provisions for female inmates, which “subjected women to institutional neglect.”<sup>10</sup> Kann is not alone in his observations. He and other scholars are correct in contending that the small population of female inmates in most prisons created dire consequences for those individuals. Nicole Hahn Rafter observes that there was “considerable variation in the degree to which inmates of custodial women’s institutions were subjected to rigid discipline.” Some institutions made women follow the same strict protocol that male inmates did, while others “showed little concern for order,” sometimes leading to “chaotic, dangerous, or brutal conditions.”<sup>11</sup>

There was a trend in numerous state penitentiaries for officials to neglect female inmates and not enforce all the prison rules on them. In New York’s Auburn prison, for example, women were simply relegated to an attic room, “consigned to oblivion” where windows were kept shut even in the summer to prohibit communication with male inmates. Officials at Sing-Sing in New York did not want women at the institution and tried to get female inmates incarcerated at other places in the state, but by the early 1840s a separate women’s prison was constructed on the grounds at Sing-Sing. Even so, the female prison was tied to Sing-Sing, and the women in the new prison still faced poor living conditions and no attempt at reformation.<sup>12</sup> In Illinois, women prisoners faced similar living conditions. Prison employees blamed the few female inmates housed at the institutions for all the prisons’ problems.<sup>13</sup>

The state penitentiary in Maryland made more of an attempt at the outset to treat female inmates more equitably. They were housed in a separate

wing of the prison and worked "in a separate yard at spinning, knitting, and laundry" and were not allowed to interact with the male inmates. The women were not, however, subjected to silence and separation at night as was the custom of prisons utilizing the Auburn system of discipline. Women slept up to ten to a room, and two to three to a bed.<sup>14</sup>

In the Pennsylvania case, neglect of this small population and the special treatment many female inmates experienced because officials ignored the penitentiary's discipline program is evident. What took place behind the walls of Pennsylvania jails indicates that officials wanted to or felt they needed to treat these inmates differently, sometimes more leniently. As a result, punishment was inconsistent. There was also little rehabilitation. The women, however, rejected the idea held by most prison officials and some reformers that they were to be ignored or were beyond redemption. An undated letter from Pennsylvania prison reformer Roberts Vaux to Mary Waln Wistar, a woman who spearheaded reform efforts geared toward female inmates, exemplified the common attitude held by most reformers that female inmates presented hopeless cases for reform. Vaux suggested that female inmates were "a circulating medium of poverty & vice" and were, in most cases, "beyond restoration."<sup>15</sup> While the few sources from the female inmate perspective do not mention if they themselves believed they were beyond hope, their varied reactions to incarceration suggest that they were unwilling to be neglected and ignored in the oppressive penitentiary system.

Understanding the environment in which these female inmates were placed in both the penitentiaries and county jails is critical to appreciating the ways in which women responded to their imprisonment. The Pennsylvania penitentiary system was established in the late eighteenth century to address the inadequacy of jails in use at the time. Inmates lived together in one room without classification according to the crime committed and no effort was made to rehabilitate the inmates. Early prisons acted as holding pens for all sorts of offenders, including witnesses held to testify in trials, debtors, vagrants, and those awaiting trial.

Reform groups such as the Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons (later known as the Pennsylvania Prison Society) worked to better the prison systems in the state. These reformers wanted to separate inmates from each other which, they hoped, would create more healthful living conditions. Prisoner separation, reformers believed, would allow for rehabilitation. Forcing inmates to live together precluded reformers from paying individual attention to inmates. Prisoners also

ran the risk of being further corrupted by other inmates' ideas and behaviors. In the Walnut Street Jail in downtown Philadelphia, which later became the state's first penitentiary in 1790, for instance, inmates were grouped together according to the offenses committed. Vagrants were separated from individuals waiting to testify in trials, and defendants waiting to be tried were separated from inmates who had been convicted and were serving a sentence. Separation of inmates was supposed to encourage repentance and rehabilitation. The penitentiary system, beginning with Walnut Street, and continuing with Eastern and Western State penitentiaries, promoted a style of punishment that combined isolation and rehabilitation. This punishment plan was innovative; it attempted to find a more humane way to punish offenders. In practice, however, isolation had negative effects on the inmates.<sup>16</sup>

Reformers disdained the use of corporal and public punishment, arguing that it simply humiliated the criminal and did nothing to change behavior. Reformers hoped the fear of incarceration rather than the forms of corporal punishment used earlier in the eighteenth century would deter future criminals. Although employees were not supposed to, at times they resorted to physical punishment to deal with refractory inmates.

With the opening of Walnut Street, judges from across the state could choose to send convicts to this prison as opposed to holding them in their respective county jails.<sup>17</sup> When Walnut Street Jail became too small to hold convicts from across the state, plans were made for the construction of Western State Penitentiary and Eastern State Penitentiary or Cherry Hill, located in Philadelphia. Western opened in 1826, and Eastern received its first inmate in 1829. These new penitentiaries ushered in a new era of penal discipline. Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont best describe the shift in punishment between Walnut Street Jail and the new penitentiaries on either end of the state:

The principles to be followed in the construction of these two establishments were, however, not entirely the same as those on which the Walnut Street prison had been erected. In the latter, classification formed the predominant system, to which solitary confinement was but secondary. In the new prisons the classifications were abandoned, and a solitary cell was to be prepared for each convict. . . . Thus absolute solitary confinement, which in Walnut Street was but accidental, was now to become the foundation of the system adopted for Pittsburg and Cherry-Hill.<sup>18</sup>

Inmates in these new penitentiaries were subjected to constant isolation and silence in the hopes that it would provide ample time for inmates to reflect on their crimes, realize the errors of their ways, and in turn reform their ways. Inmates who entered the penitentiaries quickly became anonymous members of the prison population. Women especially, due to their small numbers, ran the risk of becoming lost in the system. Women's reactions to their incarceration in these state penitentiaries show that they fought against this danger. They often employed subtle forms of protest against their imprisonment, while some resorted to outright, sometimes violent, acts of resistance. Some women used the privileges given to them by prison employees, like Penrose, to resist prison protocols, and yet others left writings that showed they refused to disappear once incarcerated, using words to resist being forgotten.<sup>19</sup>

It is little wonder that inmates of Eastern State would want to resist their incarceration. Those held at Eastern entered a building that was constructed to "impart a grave, severe, and awful character."<sup>20</sup> The prison was a monument to terror and the unknown. The outside wall was approximately thirty feet high and the walls and floors were made of stone, two feet thick in order to prevent escape. A central hub in the courtyard acted as an observation point of the seven cell blocks that radiated from the hub.<sup>21</sup> The radial design allowed guards "to command a view of every prisoner without his knowledge or observation." For light and ventilation, each cell had a narrow skylight, known as "dead-eyes" or the "eye of God."<sup>22</sup> These skylights tantalized inmates, providing them with only a small sliver of freedom's prospect. Furthermore, the religious connotation of the moniker "eye of God" symbolizes not only God's omnipresent observation of the inmates, but also that of the institution. Each prisoner was also provided with a private area for exercise to enable constant isolation.<sup>23</sup>

Upon an inmate's arrival, the prison physician examined him or her for any health concerns. Then the warden and overseers inspected the new inmate to become "acquainted with his or her person and countenance."<sup>24</sup> After this initial admission process, the inmate was "then clothed in the uniform of the prison, a hood or cap is drawn over his face, and he is conducted to his cell. The bandage is removed from his eyes, and he is interrogated as to his former life." Here the inmate learned the prison rules and was left in silence and isolation.<sup>25</sup> From the moment inmates entered their cells, they were enveloped in anonymity as the admission process stripped them of their identity. Prisoner resistance speaks volumes of attempts to hold on to some level of personal identity and self-worth.

In 1835 the Pennsylvania legislature undertook an investigation of protocols at the penitentiary, which uncovered numerous incidents of female inmates flouting prison protocols. At the time of the investigation, there were only four women in the prison. Amy Rogers, inmate 73, and Henrietta Johnson, inmate 74, were admitted in April of 1831 for manslaughter. Rogers was sentenced to three years, and Johnson was to serve six years. In December 1831 two more women entered Eastern State. Inmates 100 and 101, Ann Hinson and Eliza Anderson respectively, were sentenced to two years each for manslaughter. It is possible these two women worked together to commit the crime since they had the same sentence and entered on the same day.<sup>26</sup> All women were of African descent. Amy Rogers was a washerwoman. Ann Hinson and Eliza Anderson were married and each had children, and Henrietta Johnson and Ann Hinson were noted as being able to read. All four were relatively young, only in their twenties.<sup>27</sup> Aside from their crimes, which were violent (most women were incarcerated for property crimes), these women were typical female inmates. The women's central roles in the testimony given in the investigation indicate a breakdown of prison discipline and demonstrate that the small female inmate population had the power to act against the prison's protocols.

Like Maria Penrose in Western State Penitentiary, the four women incarcerated at Eastern State during its early years experienced special treatment, presumably because of their sex. This differential treatment would eventually lead to the hiring of a matron and the enactment of stricter discipline for the female inmates. The actions of these women, which the investigation uncovered, spoke to their ability to use what privileges were given to them by the keepers to ease the severity of their imprisonment and break prison rules.<sup>28</sup>

Witnesses in the investigation testified to the incarcerated women defying prison regulations. In some instances, female inmates were allowed to drink liquor and attend parties. Inmate 100, "a black woman by the name of Anne . . . a convict, was present when I [employee William Griffith] went down. She appeared to be sitting looking on—dressed in a calico dress with a turban about her head." Griffith later noted that after one of these parties, a different inmate, "a black woman by the name of Eliza . . . was so much intoxicated that she was scarcely able to walk alone." After Griffith had placed her in her cell, she "continued to be a good deal troublesome all the time I stayed up, knocking and crying." The acquisition of liquor by the women seemed to be a continuing problem. Griffith noted that on one occasion Ann was found "lying drunk in the kitchen," stating "there was some stir about this" since

the watchman's wife, Mrs. Blundin, was charged with providing the liquor.<sup>29</sup> Officials appeared to tolerate the women's flouting of prison rules; some employees were often complicit in these transgressions by giving privileges to the women. Little was done to curb the female inmates' behavior or stop the employees from freely giving privileges. The opportunity to defy prison protocols and have privileges allowed these women to have a less severe incarceration than many inmates.

Other instances of Eastern's female prisoner protest show more direct action on the part of inmates. Amy Rogers made complaints about her treatment to visiting inspectors. She told Judge Charles S. Coxe that "she had been compelled to wash clothes of the officers that were soiled with venereal matter, and medical substances, designed for that disease." Rogers was "apprehensive that the disease might be communicated to her—if there was a fracture of the skin while she was washing." She complained that Mrs. Blundin, the watchman's wife who was supposed to be in charge of the washing and appeared to have been informally in charge of the female inmates, went to Amy in her cell "exhibited to her her person with the mark of the disease and asked her to assist her in washing it, and in applying the remedies."<sup>30</sup> These requests went far beyond what should have been expected of the inmates. On a later date, Judge Coxe visited her again. Upon arriving at Rogers's cell, he recalled:

She was very much affected—in tears and crying—she alleged that she had been taken out of her cell, and put into this one without a yard, and that it all arose from her having communicated those facts to me—that two men had come into her washing apartment to put up a stove, that one of them was a first cousin of Mrs. Blundin's, and that they had contrived to make a quarrel with her—had attacked her about the charge she had made—had roundly taken her to task, and so on—that she answered them pretty sharply—they had complained to Mr. Wood, and Mr. Wood had had her locked up in this cell.<sup>31</sup>

Her discussions with Judge Coxe indicate that Rogers knew her rights as an inmate.<sup>32</sup> She seemed aware that what Mrs. Blundin asked of her could be seen as exploitive and used the opportunity to make her claim to Judge Coxe who was charged with making sure that the prison was run in an ethical manner. Clearly, Rogers knew she had the power to complain about her treatment. Rogers initiated action against the prison system by following prison policies, yet was subsequently punished for it.<sup>33</sup>



Women in the penitentiary also subverted prison rules in a blatant manner. They broke tools, made messes in their cells, and disturbed the prison with noise and yelling.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that outright forms of resistance from female inmates at Eastern State became more common after the investigation of 1835, once a matron was hired and there were more female inmates at the prison. It was not until 1835 when the penitentiary consistently had female admissions to the institution. Until this point, the only female inmates at Eastern State were the four who were involved in the investigation. Because there were only four women and because they were often given privileges, it is understandable why these early female inmates reacted to their imprisonment using more subtle forms of protest rather than outright resistance.

Some female inmates did not have to use privileges given to them in order to resist the penal institution. Records of Eastern State Penitentiary's moral instructor, Baptist minister Thomas Larcombe, indicate that some women fought the prison system's attempt at reformation of their personal characters, while others accepted reform efforts. The penitentiaries' daily routine centered on providing inmates with ample time to reflect on their crimes and to seek religious salvation. Silent reflection, isolation, access to Bibles and religious tracts, visits with the moral instructor, and weekly sermons all were meant to facilitate inmate reform. Even Dorothea Dix, famed prison reformer and advocate for the mentally ill who visited each prison around the state of Pennsylvania in 1845, remarked that "the moral, religious and mental instruction" of Eastern State was "more thorough and complete than is supplied to the convicts of any prison in the United States."<sup>35</sup>

While the reform program may have appeared to be thorough to outside observers, inmates did not always welcome the reformation attempts. Inmate Ann Johnson, alias Ann Davis, for example, showed "no promise of awakening conviction." She was, according to Larcombe, "altogether indifferent to religious instruction."<sup>36</sup> It is possible that women like Ann Johnson did not care to become a pawn in the penitentiary officials' attempt to demonstrate that their penal system could restore inmates' morality. At the same time, Johnson's resistance to Larcombe's visits and teachings may have been a small way that she held on to her independence while incarcerated. Another explanation is that she merely did not desire religious teaching.

Other female inmates feigned interest in reformation, perhaps in an attempt to garner privileges in the prison or even a reduced sentence. Larcombe was often skeptical of the inmates' ability to be reformed and became skilled in seeing through the false professions of sincerity and

piety—characteristics of a soul slowly being reformed under the prison's system. Harriet Lane, sentenced to two years for committing larceny, gave "evidence of being old in crime" according to Larcombe. He wrote in his journal that she "seems subdued, wept plentifully during my visit & has seemed deeply concerned for her soul." Later on, he noted that since his previous visit, Lane "has been addicted to falsehood & deceit." Her behavior disturbed Larcombe, who determined that "no confidence can be placed in anything she says."<sup>37</sup>

Mary Ann Rogers presents another such case. She spent a year in Eastern State for robbery. Larcombe wrote that she "feels deeply & bitterly her lost name & liberty and will promise anything to any person who would get her out" and that she "is certain that a complete & perfect reform should take place." When she was released, Larcombe had "not much hope" in her reformation.<sup>38</sup> These entries illustrate instances of inmates who may have tried to manipulate the system or challenge its severity by feigning interest in reform. While it is possible that these women truly did at one point want to reform themselves, it appears that their contradictory behavior gave Larcombe pause. The behavior and statements of Lane and Rogers shows that they were aware of the goals of the prison and tried to use the system for their benefit—but not in the way officials desired. Larcombe sensed the lack of sincerity of some inmates and failed to give in to their manipulation of his reform efforts.

Prison writings, such as letters and poems, became another means by which female inmates challenged the anonymity imposed by the prison system in a deeply personal way. Their writings show an attempt to cling to their personalities and maintain a connection with the outside world.<sup>39</sup> Writings by incarcerated women illustrate that some female inmates pushed back against the system by writing about their experiences, expressing their feelings, and, in some cases, producing creative works.<sup>40</sup>

Few written sources remain from female inmates from Eastern State Penitentiary. Julia Wilt, otherwise known as Julia Moore, is one such woman who left a written record.<sup>41</sup> Although there was not a lengthy trial record in the newspaper (her case is only mentioned briefly in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* on May 19, 1839), a pamphlet, written later, provides a detailed account of her incarceration. The pamphlet discusses the criminal exploits that landed her in the penitentiary. Moore, it points out, was "exposed to temptation" and "proceeded from one vice to another, until hardened in guilt"; she participated "in a cruel robbery, was arrested, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, before she had completed her twenty-eighth year."<sup>42</sup>

Julia is portrayed as a model prisoner: penitent, quiet, thoughtful, and truly thankful for her incarceration. Although most of the pamphlet is written anonymously, it does claim to copy a letter “precisely in her own language,” from Julia to a female visitor of the penitentiary. This letter, dated April 27, 1843, is the closest we get to Julia’s own voice. She wrote the letter “to inform my sincere friend that I am very feeble at present.” Julia was ill and wished to express her gratitude to the visitor for making her incarceration easier. She continued, “I feel thankful that I have been spared to express the sense of gratitude I feel for those benefits you have all been pleased to confer upon me.” Moore found religious salvation in the prison and hoped that in her remaining days “the Lord will give me courage, strength and faith, that my soul may be saved, and his name be glorified.”<sup>43</sup> While Julia’s letter seems to illustrate that she was content with her plight in prison, her written words demonstrate that she wanted to be remembered, even if it was only to the prison visitor she befriended. Even in her dying days, Moore refused to simply fade away; her letter allowed her to be remembered, challenging the prison’s isolationist program.

Although one might question the authenticity of this letter, since there are so few documents from the inmates’ perspectives, one has to think about this letter as being, to some extent, genuine. Since prison records note that she could only read, Julia Moore may have spoken these sentiments to someone who transcribed them into a letter format so as to make it appear she had written the words herself. It is possible, however, that Moore’s statements were reinterpreted in some manner by those who published the pamphlet. Prison policies dictated that “none but the official visitors can have any communication with the convicts, nor shall any visitor whatever be permitted to deliver to or receive from any of the convicts, any letter or message whatever” as enacted by article VII of “Rules for the Government of the Penitentiary,” passed on April 23, 1829.<sup>44</sup> In the 1844 *Annual Report for Eastern State*, however, there is an indication that letter writing in some instances was allowed. The warden reported: “I have frequently witnessed with pleasure the pride and exultation a convict has evinced on handing out his first letter, written to his parents or relations, as a proof of having attained that art [writing] in prison.”<sup>45</sup> This is the first annual report to note that inmates were able to send out letters, indicating that the early rule of prohibiting communication with the outside world was at some point not enforced by prison officials, but the date of this shift is unclear.

Other sources indicate that letter writing may have been more common in the prison than originally intended. Francis Lieber reprinted a conversation

he had with a female inmate whom Charles Dickens had also interviewed for his *American Notes*:

I have been here four years, and shall remain three years longer. I am nearly twenty-one years old, and feel very well here. They treat me with much kindness. I have learned here to read and write, and pray. Every Monday some ladies come to teach us. . . . I have written my first letter to my mother, asked her pardon and permission to let me come home when I get out here. She has written kindly back to me.<sup>46</sup>

This young woman can only be identified as one of three African American women sentenced to seven years for a conspiracy to rob.<sup>47</sup> Through her letter and interview with Lieber, this female inmate ceased to be an anonymous inmate, completely cut off from the free world. Letter writing and working to reform her character allowed this young woman and Julia Moore to resist simply withering away in the isolation of the penitentiary.

Letter writing created a connection with those who were free and thus could undo the strict isolation and anonymity that made the Pennsylvania system of discipline unique. It is likely that officials determined that letter writing may have aided in the reformation process as opposed to hindering it.<sup>48</sup> A more cynical suggestion is that these early letters were allowed to be written and later published because officials wished to promote their prison system. Letters from inmates extolling the virtues of the penitentiary might bolster support for their cause. This may be especially true of the Julia Moore pamphlet because it is a very positive portrayal of prison life featuring Moore as a model inmate. Her story was one that might have quieted Eastern State's critics as it illustrated the acceptance of her crimes and redemption before death. Since the pamphlet was published by a reform organization, it is likely that Moore's experience was detailed in a very specific, intentional way to promote the Pennsylvania system of discipline. Because so few letters from inmates in these early days remain (or ever existed), the appearance of letter writing may be a combination of these possibilities. In any case, those women who were able to write letters or have their stories told to a wider audience refused to disappear into the anonymity of the penitentiary system.

One set of letters and poems from a female inmate at Eastern State illustrates how writing provided a creative outlet for prisoners to help them weather their incarceration and to hold on to their personal identity

in the prison's anonymous environment. Unlike the letters from Julia Moore and the woman Lieber interviewed, this set of writings appears to have avoided interference from reformers. In early 1862 a female inmate, Elizabeth Velora Elwell, wrote a series of letters to another prisoner, Albert Jackson Green. These are valuable sources regarding prison life in the mid nineteenth-century and indicate that Eastern State continued to struggle with prisoner separation and discipline. Writing created a way for inmates to express their feelings about life and incarceration. On April 18, 1862, Elwell wrote: "It is with in my lonseome sell that I take my pen in hand to inform you that my heart was very sad after leaving you to night but hope to see you every day but my dear Albert there is a time coming when we will not have to run when any one is coming." She warned him not to "let them hear you speak of me my dear" and to "be carfull not to let them catch you standing at the gate for they will mistrust us."<sup>49</sup> In another letter penned four days later, Elwell wrote: "Oh dear one if we were out we wood not have but to creep in the holes to talk one minet." Elwell described the hurt she felt at leaving Green in a later letter: "My dear I am most dead every night When I come up to the old Sell and leave you my dear honey . . . may we see the time my dear that we will not have to go to the cole seller to talk one woord."<sup>50</sup>

In addition to these love letters, Elwell composed poems in her cell. One in particular seems to capture her feelings on being imprisoned, and it illustrates how writing provided her with a way to maintain her own personality and keep her mind active:

#### Poetrysies

It is very sad to be so lonley  
And far from friends or home  
But may my love proove to be true  
To cheer my sad hart ever more

It is very hard for me to be so gloomey  
But sad misfortune did me imploore  
My hart was not weeke nor did it falter  
Till I see my sad state in the world so wretched

It makes my hart bleede to think of my place  
And hear from friends most dear so faraway

But one friend I trust I have found who is  
In the captivity with me and many otherse<sup>51</sup>

With themes of loneliness and sadness, the poem demonstrates what are most likely typical emotions experienced by an incarcerated person. Poetry became a way to verbalize her feelings, and the writing of it would also act as a distraction for a few moments from her isolation. The poem shows, along with the letters, that she found solace with her friend Albert. It seems that the relationship was a way for Elwell to have something to keep her emotionally connected to not only herself but someone else during her sentence, especially during periods of homesickness and loneliness. In her letters and poetry, one gets a sense of Elwell as a person, a young woman, who experienced natural human emotions. She does not appear to be a monster or fiend in the way that many people viewed female convicts. The writings portray a young woman with a heart and distinct personality, capable of feeling love and anguish. Her writings allowed her to continue to live as Elizabeth, not merely a numbered inmate.

Prison writings, whether they were single letters from Julia Moore to a visitor or the young African American woman to her mother, or Elwell's poetry and extended correspondence with Green, provided a subtle, yet important way by which some female inmates challenged the power of the penitentiary. The written words permitted these women to hold on to some connection to the outside world; it allowed them to continue to survive and not lose their identities in an institution bent on breaking down individuality in order to reform inmates' character. In addition, the writings gave the inmates the power to shape their stories.<sup>52</sup> The anonymous young woman and Julia Moore may have had their stories interpreted for the purpose of promoting the Pennsylvania penitentiary system since they seem to show how some inmates did benefit from reform efforts and education in prison. For Elizabeth Elwell, her private letters and poetry are evidence that she developed a creative coping strategy for survival during her imprisonment. While her letters and poems may not have ever been meant for a public audience, they show a strong-willed young woman unwilling to become a casualty of anonymity and isolation.

In county prisons across the state women also reacted to their incarceration in multiple ways. The conditions in these jails differed greatly from the two state penitentiaries. Whereas in Western State and Eastern State inmates were subjected to isolation and silence and a regimented daily routine, county

jails did not exact such standards. As a result, inmates in county prisons endured more unorganized, often unhealthy, incarcerations. Women in the Philadelphia County Prison, for example, were subjected to a chaotic environment with a large and fluctuating inmate population and violence. Female inmates in smaller county prisons had to deal with poor, unhealthy conditions and often faced outright neglect from the jailers. In many cases they were allowed to interact with male prisoners, with little regard for their physical health or moral well-being. Female inmates in the county prisons, particularly in Philadelphia's Moyamensing Prison, resisted becoming victims to the turmoil of the institutions. In most cases, their acts of resistance were more visceral in nature. Some women violently fought their incarceration, adding to the bedlam that was endemic to county jails. Such intransigence took the form of vandalism, sassing employees, and sometimes inflicting self-harm. These are the same types of reactions to incarceration utilized by inmates in the penitentiaries. Female penitentiary inmates, during the institution's formative years, had more privileges given to them, resulting in more subtle reactions to their imprisonment. It appears that female inmates in county jails, specifically Moyamensing, had fewer privileges than women incarcerated in the penitentiaries, and thus resorted more often to outright forms of resistance.

Few county jails kept copious records. Sources from the Philadelphia County Prison, Moyamensing, however, provide a glimpse into the daily lives of female inmates in a large county jail setting. Women in this prison, which dealt with a large and fluctuating population, were subjected to neglect and chaos. The records of county prisons both in rural areas and in Philadelphia indicate that these women were treated more like the "human refuse" that Mark Kann suggests.<sup>53</sup> As a result, women's reactions to their incarceration in the county prison system take on a more primal, desperate form when compared to the generally more subtle forms of protest that women in the penitentiaries often employed.

The Philadelphia County Prison, located in the Moyamensing district in South Philadelphia, was originally meant to house inmates who had been sentenced for a period not exceeding one year. They were to "suffer punishment . . . by separate confinement at labour for and during the term of their sentence, and shall be fed, clothed and treated nearly as may be practicable, in the same manner as is provided by law in relation to persons confined in the Eastern State Penitentiary, in solitary confinement at labour."<sup>54</sup> The prison opened on October 19, 1835.<sup>55</sup> By the 1850s, it was receiving 14,000–15,000



inmates yearly. Its stable population, however, remained around 500.<sup>56</sup> From 1835 to 1858, 2,950 white males and 1,530 African American males were admitted to the prison, constituting 65.8 percent and 34.2 percent of the male population respectively. Four hundred and eighteen white females, or 44.4 percent of the female population, were admitted during this period, and 523 or 55.6 percent of the females were African American.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, it was noted by physician Benjamin H. Coates that society's "most miserable blacks" were often "either convicted for lighter offences, or committed for vagrancy," and the punishment in Philadelphia for both was to be sent to Moyamensing. Prison records indicate that this trend of imprisoning individuals for short periods for vagrancy or disorderly conduct offenses was not limited to African Americans but was applied to white offenders as well. Women incarcerated at Moyamensing to serve out a prison sentence for a more serious crime generally had been convicted of larceny.<sup>58</sup> Female prisoner resistance inside Moyamensing appears to have stemmed from both groups of inmates.

The construction and protocols of this prison were to mimic, to some extent, the rehabilitative process used in the penitentiaries. The construction of its cells, each with "a separate flue for ventilation, a separate flue for admitting warm air from the furnace, an aperture for admitting cold air, a hydrant, and a water closet," seemed to push for cells for individual prisoners.<sup>59</sup> Other construction elements allowed for prisoner isolation:

The light is received into the cells through a window 4 inches wide and 4½ feet long, made secure by a cast iron frame glazed with pressed glass, to prevent the prisoner looking out. The casings of the cell doors are made of cast iron. The interior doors are gratings made of wrought iron. The exterior doors are made of wood. The movements of the prisoner may be inspected at any time without his knowledge, through a small aperture made in this door for the purpose, which is ordinarily kept closed.<sup>60</sup>

Visitors also noted the organization and good discipline of the prison in Moyamensing. Dorothea Dix reported glowingly of Moyamensing in 1845. Of the women's department she wrote: "The women's prison, divided by a high wall and intervening garden, is a separate building and establishment, disconnected in all domestic arrangements, from the men's prison. This department is especially well ordered, clean, comfortable, and well managed." Dix noted that she had "visited all the cells in this extensive prison,

and conversed with the prisoners” and that after a “diligent examination of their [the inmates’] condition, and of the general arrangements and the discipline” she deemed the institution to be “conducted in a manner highly creditable to the officers, whose duty it is to govern and direct its affairs.”<sup>61</sup>

Although it appears from reports from prison reformers that Moyamensing treated its inmates in the same manner as Eastern and Western State Penitentiary, prison records from the county jail suggest a completely different atmosphere, one fraught with disorder, not much rehabilitation, and consistent prisoner resistance. A prison diary, which was written by the prison employees, details daily occurrences in the female ward from 1850 to 1860.<sup>62</sup> While many of the entries are mundane, simply noting which employees were on duty, which inspectors visited the prison, or which inmates were ill, some entries uncover the darker layers of female imprisonment in this jail.<sup>63</sup>

In looking at various excerpts from the diary, several things are of interest. One noticeable theme is the level of disorder caused by the inmates in this part of the prison. This disorder was just one type of action denoting female inmates’ resistance. Women were strapped (restrained with straps) and put in dark cells for offenses such as “indecent singing,” for “insolence and abuse,” for “loud talking to the Men,” “talking down the pipes,” and “mutilating their Bibles.”<sup>64</sup> Other women found themselves hauled to the dark cell for “being Disorderly and breaking cell furniture” or more violent acts like “drawing a knife on the keeper.”<sup>65</sup> On April 19, 1850, it was recorded that Catharine Jordin, alias Sarah Smith, was “put in the dark cell for *striking at the keeper* and *abusing the matron* and her *assistant* and *threatening them*.” Prison officials asked the visiting inspector to order Jordin “to be kept locked in her cell and not taken from thence as no kind treatment can subdue the prisoner.”<sup>66</sup>

Some female prisoners were continually troublesome to the prison employees. Margaret Johnston, convicted of larceny in July 1849, occupied much of the keepers’ time with her refractory behavior. In late September 1850 the visiting inspectors were asked to deal with “the abusive conduct” of Johnson because she “has defied all control by the Keepers.” The next day, the diary entry noted that she was “still strap[p]ed” for her bad behavior. A few months later, on December 4, 1850, the diary keeper wrote that Johnson was “chained” and “wishes to see visiting inspector.” On January 22, 1851, Johnson found herself in a dark cell “for Insolence to the Keepers.” The prison staff informed the visiting inspectors that “this prisoner Cannot be subdued unless by this means.”<sup>67</sup> These punishments did not deter some women. Resistance appears, in some cases, to be a daily occurrence.

Johnson was not the only habitual offender of prison rules. On March 5, 1851, Elizabeth Wagstaff was put in a dark cell for insolence. Wagstaff was deemed "a great annoyance to the Prison."<sup>68</sup> In August of that year, the visiting inspectors were called to observe Wagstaff as "her conduct is so bad, she keeps the place in Continual Excitement." In early February 1852, the inspectors were called again to visit Wagstaff because "her conduct is so outrageous that the Keepers cannot do anything with her she has destroyed the discipline of the prison." One month later, Wagstaff spent several days in the dark cell for being unruly and refusing to eat. Throughout 1852, Wagstaff plagued the employees with her behavior and thwarted prison order. She was strapped several times for abusing the matron and noise infractions. Prison officials realized that "good treatment makes her worse" and that "she is so outrageous that she keeps the place in a continual uproar from Morning until night." In April 1853 she was strapped again for "breaking her door by hamering." After such a record of resistance to prison discipline, it is doubtful that prison officials were upset at the expiration of her sentence on August 9, 1853.<sup>69</sup>

These inmates (and these few are by no means the only examples of this type of behavior in the diary!) seemed out of control. They were violent, oftentimes threatening to the keepers. Others broke furniture or stole prison property. These refractory inmates concerned officials, prompting inspectors to make frequent visits to their cells. Such behavior was evidence of blatant resistance to their incarceration. These women openly challenged their imprisonment and refused to become silent victims of the system. They made their presence known to employees and inspectors alike through their repeated defiance of the county prison protocols. The ever-fluctuating inmate population seemed to breed a more frenzied resistance. In the penitentiaries, where order was of the utmost importance, female inmate protest appeared to be more often restrained and subtle, whereas in county prisons where there was seemingly much less control, inmate resistance was more widespread and violent.<sup>70</sup> As a result, officials responded with ever more draconian punishments. Inmates were sometimes restrained by straps; other times they were chained in their cells; and even on some occasions, doused with cold water.<sup>71</sup>

These punishments were contrary to the goals of the larger state penitentiaries, where corporal punishment was not supposed to be used on inmates because officials believed that physical pain discouraged rehabilitation. Evidence has shown, however, that Pennsylvania officials did not always adhere to this rule. The use of physical punishments in the county prison suggests that rehabilitation was not a high priority even though county jails were

ideally supposed to follow the penitentiary plan of discipline. The shorter sentences of inmates at the county jail probably made rehabilitation all but impossible to complete, yet reformers attempted to reach some inmates. The violent punishments appear to have been used out of necessity to keep order, especially in such a transient inmate population. It is quite possible that the use of violent punishments also added to the desire of the inmates to resist rules and employees' control, thus creating a perpetual cycle of violence and resistance.

Female inmates also utilized their physical bodies as weapons of resistance. Refusing to eat was one way they resisted their imprisonment or punishments for breaking prison rules. On August 2, 1855, Mary Bates was put in a dark cell for "throwing out the wicket her tins into the corridor maliciously." During her time in the dark cell, a period of a few days, Bates refused "to take her bread" and dashed "her water out of her pan." Others followed suit.<sup>72</sup> By going on what could be considered a hunger strike, these women demonstrated to their keepers that they still held some means of control over their incarceration. Women used what little they had in their control as mechanisms for resistance, and choosing not to eat provided one way not to become a passive victim of imprisonment. While it is unknown how extensive these hunger strikes were, these few examples show the lengths to which some women were willing to go in order to get attention from the prison keepers, protest their living conditions, and, generally, challenge the prison system's disciplinary regime.

Other women found more extreme ways to use their bodies as tools of resistance. During the night of October 28, 1851, Elizabeth Young made such a commotion in the prison that the next day's entry in the diary noted that she was "very outrageous last night & made an attempt to strangle herself." On November 20, 1851, prison employees found two convicts in a cell; one of them had "attempted to hang herself."<sup>73</sup> The inmate was saved, and the two women were put in separate cells. Caroline Erwin was discovered and cut down by the keepers after she tried to hang herself. For her suicide attempt, she was chained in her cell.<sup>74</sup>

While some entries on attempted suicides are brief, such as the ones above, other cases prompted the diary author to detail the event more closely. In early November 1854, an inmate named Mary Smith "attempted to hang herself" to the window grating by "tearing up her bed quilt into strips." Prison employees found her in time and cut her down. Prison officials deemed that a deep feeling of despondency caused her suicide attempt.<sup>75</sup> A little over a

month later, on December 12, 1854, it was recorded that Ann O'Conner had a fit, causing the matron and assistant "to relieve her." When they arrived at her cell, they "found her face Purple, they tried to resuscitate her, in so doing, they found two cords one on each arm tied very tight also one around her waist stopping the circulation of blood." As a result, O'Conner "was stripped, and she fought manfully to prevent it, but she was overcome and was ordered to a solitary cell."<sup>76</sup> In late August 1856, inmate Kate Murray tried at least twice to kill herself. She was chained for her attempt "to hang herself." She "got a good choke" and was cut down by the prison keeper. In a second diary entry, Murray had "amused herself by choking herself by wrapping strips of blanket around her throat." As punishment she "was put in the shower bath."<sup>77</sup>

These entries point to the pure desolation of prison life, and the need for more specialized treatment and care for these women, especially those inmates demonstrating emotional and mental distress. The cases of self-harm can be viewed as an outright form of inmate resistance, since the women attempted to regain control over their bodies and lives. In these cases where suicides were prevented, the women were promptly punished, indicating that employees may have viewed these actions as a threat to the prison system as opposed to a sign of the inmates' deeper emotional or mental issues. By the 1850s it had become obvious to many in the prison reform movement that isolation had detrimental effects on the emotional and mental capacities of inmates in the state penitentiaries, so it is not surprising to see evidence of mental anguish in Moyamensing. In the cases of self-harm, such inmate actions indicated a need for more individual and specialized care, especially in an institution where inmate rehabilitation could not easily be a main priority due to its large and transient population.<sup>78</sup>

While the records indicate that in the 1850s violent punishments may have been used to correct inmates, this was not the case a decade earlier (1839–41). A punishment register, which reports inmate infractions and punishments, illustrates this trend. As table 1 shows, punishments for female inmates consisted of either time in a dark cell, or something noted as "cell and allowance," likely a combination of being kept in their cells and a reduction of food rations for the duration of the punishment.<sup>79</sup> The infractions for which the inmates were punished ranged from talking offenses, which made up the majority of the offenses, to impudent behavior, to breaking cell furniture, and refusing to work. Although the rule violations in the late 1830s and early 1840s were similar to those perpetrated by resisting

TABLE 1. Philadelphia County jail punishments for female offenders, 1839–1841

Type of Offense	Number of Offenses	Dark Cell	Cell and Allowance <sup>a</sup>	Not Specified
Talking offenses	140	20	120	
Destroying prison property	7	2	5	
Impudence	12	9	3	
Not working	8	4	4	
Indecent language	3	2		1
Stealing	1	1		

<sup>a</sup>This punishment probably entailed being left in their cells with reduced provisions.

females in the 1850s, the punishments were not nearly as violent. Because the majority of the infractions were for talking, it suggests that the county prison tried to emulate the regime of silent penitentiary discipline. By looking at this ledger, and then the evidence in the prison diary a decade later, there is a sense that the county jail failed to approximate the penitentiary protocols and let certain regulations lapse as the years progressed. As a result, there seems to be a marked increase in physical punishments by the time the diary was written in the 1850s. The shift in types of punishment is likely due in part to the rapidly increasing population in the county prison. It is also possible that the shift in types of punishments reflected the more violent levels of prisoner resistance. The treatment of inmates in the county jail by the 1850s seems almost reminiscent of the conditions of the prisons in the eighteenth century—an environment that most prison reformers sought to eradicate.<sup>80</sup>

Female inmate resistance occurred in urban settings and less populated locations as well, but in rural locales usually only serious events were reported in the written record. One example from northern Pennsylvania illustrates the relative ease with which some female inmates in county jails resisted their imprisonment. In Sullivan County, Pennsylvania, in 1855 Anna Maria Veitengruber was imprisoned for her part in the murder of her husband, John. The Veitengrubers were German immigrants and allowed another immigrant, John Kamm, to live with them. John Veitengruber was killed by Kamm with an axe after he discovered Kamm and his wife romantically linked. Mrs. Veitengruber assisted Kamm in burying the body, and the pair was arrested several months later. Mrs. Veitengruber maintained her innocence and accused Kamm of the murder, who was convicted and hanged in the fall of 1856.

Claiming mental instability, Mrs. Veitengruber demanded a separate trial, which only delayed her fate. She remained in the Sullivan County Jail, where the sheriff treated her kindly and "permitted her more liberties than he would have allowed another prisoner."<sup>81</sup> At some point during her incarceration, Mrs. Veitengruber took advantage of her privileges and escaped on November 19, 1858. She was never apprehended. A reward advertisement was placed in the *Sullivan County Democrat* on November 23, 1858, providing twenty-five dollars for the person who returned Anna Maria Veitengruber to the prison. She was described as being "about thirty-seven years of age . . . with strongly marked features, and with light, thin short hair. She has a gray blue eye and a large mouth" and only spoke "the English language but very brokenly."<sup>82</sup> While we have very little information about Anna Maria Veitengruber's involvement in the murder, she must have felt that she would have been found guilty. It could be that she believed that by escaping she stood a better chance of survival. Furthermore, because she was an immigrant and had little experience with English, she may not have trusted her chances of receiving a fair trial. Instead, she chose to take advantage of her situation and flee, unwilling to remain a prisoner.

Official reports on the conditions of the county prisons suggest that many were disorganized and ill-equipped, providing environments conducive to prisoner resistance. There was "no regular code of discipline" used to punish inmates at the Bedford County Jail. In Chester County, the prison was constructed in a way that "criminals and debtors—juvenile and old offenders—have to mingle together both day and night, all having the privilege of the yard from sunrise to sunset," yet men and women were separated. Mifflin County's jail only gave blankets to inmates for bedding, and disorderly inmates were simply locked up and given less food.<sup>83</sup>

Dorothea Dix, in her observations of Pennsylvania's jails, noted that Lancaster County jail used "fettters and collar" for punishment, and the only solitary cells in the prison were damp, in the cellar of the building, and generally disused. In Adams County, Dix found "A young girl, very insane, had not long been removed from the jail, where she was loaded with heavy chains, and endured all the exposures and sufferings incident to a situation in all respects so unsuitable. At times she was very violent." At the Allegheny County jail, Dix reported that inmates had ample time on their hands. Instead of industrious work, inmates conducted "various little works of skill and ingenuity for facilitating oral communication," and they were especially fond of "cutting the doors in pieces, or rather cutting such apertures



through them, as in default of clairvoyance assisted vision and promoted a social feeling, by increasing facilities for conversation." Disorganization and resistance in county jails, then, although endemic to Moyamensing, was not unique to the institution in Philadelphia.<sup>84</sup>

Female inmate reaction to incarceration in Pennsylvania's antebellum prisons manifested itself in a variety of ways. Women acted out against their imprisonment using both subtle forms of protest and outright acts of defiance and resistance. Female inmates in Eastern State Penitentiary in particular used subtle ways to subvert the disciplinary system based on anonymity, isolation, and reform. Letters and poetry written by these inmates allowed them to hold on to their identity as individuals, something that the penitentiaries' system of discipline wished to break down in order to rebuild the inmates as reformed citizens. Other women used privileges given to them by the prison employees to ease their time in prison. Women at Eastern State often were out of their cells to work, participated in social gatherings, and were sometimes given extra food. These privileges alleviated the severity of their incarceration, and female inmates were willing to use the opportunities given to them, even if it went against prison policy. Prison employees were, ultimately, complicit in prisoner defiance of the rules. At Western State, Maria Penrose's privilege to be out of her cell led to an act of outright resistance when she helped another inmate escape. Some women went beyond the use of privileges or subtle protest in their reactions to incarceration. Female inmates at Eastern State made noise, broke tools, and refused to work, thwarting the disciplinary code of the penitentiary. Others simply did not care to become part of the rehabilitation process and refused moral instruction.

The reaction of women prisoners at the county level was much more violent and direct, commonly exercising blatant forms of resistance. The higher levels of physical violence and inmate neglect in the county prisons reflected the disorder inherent in these institutions due to fluctuating populations and, in rural areas, ill-equipped jails and untrained employees. Women inmates, especially in Philadelphia's Moyamensing Prison, found myriad ways to defy prison authority. Physical acts of violence toward the keepers and toward prison property were common. Disruptive noise infractions and attempting to hurt themselves became other means by which women challenged authority. In an institution where reform of the inmates was not much of a priority, prisoner resistance simply threatened the order, tenuous as it may have been to begin with, of the prison. Women in the county prisons might not have felt like they could disappear into the depths of the prison system as women

in the state penitentiaries may have felt, but their acts of resistance suggest a will to survive imprisonment and make their presence known in an otherwise crowded environment.

Many women in Pennsylvania's penitentiaries and county prisons were not willing to become passive victims of their incarceration. Their use of privileges, subtle modes of subversion such as writing, and more direct acts of resistance such as vandalism, threatening, or committing self-harm, demonstrated the lengths to which female inmates went to defy prison authority and protest their conditions. Through their actions, female inmates attempted to take back a measure of control over their incarceration and their lives by refusing to allow the penal institutions and their employees to control them to the extent that prison officials had envisioned.

## NOTES

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1. "Minutes of the Board of Inspectors and Board of Trustees of the Western State Penitentiary," April 2, 1827, Record Group (RG) 15, Department of Justice, Bureau of Corrections, Western State Penitentiary, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (hereafter PHMC). For more on the early years of Western State Penitentiary, see Eugene E. Doll, "Trial and Error at Allegheny: The Western State Penitentiary, 1818–1838," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 81, no. 1 (1957): 3–27.
2. "Convict Docket, 1826–1859" and "Descriptive Register," RG 15, PHMC. Over 70 percent of female inmates admitted to Western State Penitentiary from 1826 to 1860 were African American. The overrepresentation of African Americans in Pennsylvania's early penitentiaries was a consistent problem. See Leslie Patrick-Stamp, "Numbers That Are Not New: African Americans in the Country's First Prison, 1790–1835," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 119, nos. 1/2 (1995): 95–128.
3. Jennifer Janofsky argues that at Eastern State prison guards' allegiances sometimes wavered between the warden and the prisoners. Because many hailed from the working classes, guards sometimes related better to the inmates than they could with middle-class prison reformers. See Jennifer Janofsky, "'There is no hope for me': Eastern State Penitentiary, 1829–1856" (PhD diss., Temple University, 2004), 186–87. If guards sometimes sympathized with male inmates, it is possible that some also felt compassion toward the few female inmates in the prison at any given time. The treatment of Maria Penrose is one example of this. How widespread kind sentiment was toward female inmates is almost impossible to quantify.
4. Another, more lurid story of a woman hatching an escape plan for an inmate at Philadelphia's Walnut Street Jail is the case of Ann Carson. While not an inmate at the time, Carson devised

- several plans to save her husband from hanging in 1816, even planning to blow up the jail if necessary. See Susan Branson's *Dangerous to Know: Women Crime and Notoriety in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 46–50. Ann herself was no stranger to crime and imprisonment, creating for herself an infamous existence.
5. February, June, and November, 1833, "Warden's Daily Journals, 1829–1961," RG 15, PHMC.
  6. Thomas B. McElwee, *A concise history of the Eastern Penitentiary of Pennsylvania, together with a detailed statement of the proceedings of the committee, appointed by the legislature, December 6th, 1834, for the purpose of examining into the economy and management of that institution, embracing the testimony taken on that occasion, and legislative proceedings connected therewith* (Philadelphia: Neall and Massey, 1835), 183–84.
  7. Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Afflictions: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). How to discipline refractory inmates was a continuous problem throughout the northeastern penitentiaries. See also Mark E. Kann, *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy: Liberty and Power in the Early American Republic* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), and Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760–1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
  8. Kann, *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy*, 15.
  9. Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Prisons for Women, 1790–1980," *Crime and Justice* 5 (1983): 145.
  10. Kann, *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy*, 15, 194. Also see Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women in State Prisons, 1800–1935* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985), particularly chapter 1, which provides a brief overview of women's treatment in state prisons before the Civil War.
  11. Rafter, "Prisons for Women," 145. For more on women's experiences in Pennsylvania's prisons, see Jennifer Manion, "Women's Crime and Prison Reform in Early Pennsylvania, 1786–1829" (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2008); Leslie Patrick, "Ann Hinson: A Little-Known Woman in the Country's Premier Prison, Eastern State Penitentiary, 1831," *Pennsylvania History* 67, no. 3 (2000): 361–75; and Daniel E. Williams, "'The Horrors of This Far-Famed Penitentiary': Discipline, Defiance, and Death during Ann Carson's Incarcerations in Philadelphia's Walnut Street Prison," in *Buried Lives: Incarcerated in Early America*, ed. Michele Lise Tarter and Richard Bell (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 203–30. For women's experiences in the Philadelphia Almshouse, see Jacqueline Cahif, "'Those Insolent Hardened Husseys Go on Dispensing All Rule and Order Here': Women with Venereal Disease in the Philadelphia Almshouse," in *Buried Lives*, ed. Tarter and Bell, 85–105.
  12. W. David Lewis, "The Female Criminal and the Prisons of New York, 1825–1845," *New York History* (July 1961): 220–21, 222, 229, 231.
  13. L. Mara Dodge, "'One female prisoner is of more trouble than twenty males': Women Convicts in Illinois Prisons, 1835–1896," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 4 (1999): 909–12.
  14. Wallace Shugg, *A Monument to Good Intentions: The Story of the Maryland Penitentiary, 1804–1995* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 2000), 15, 18, 27.
  15. "Roberts Vaux to Mary Waln Wistar," n.d., Vaux Family Papers, MS 684, Series I, Box 5, Folder 13, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP).
  16. In reality, the concept of total isolation had a detrimental effect on many prisoners. Cases of alleged insanity or temporary mental disturbances litter the journals of Eastern State's warden. One man committed suicide by hanging himself in the cell. His death was ruled a suicide caused by insanity. Other comments by the warden in the journal suggest the issue of mental illness is rampant.

After one man broke his cell's skylight, Warden Wood recorded, “If he is not crazy he acts well.” In another entry, Wood writes of an inmate, “I have some doubt of his sanity.” September 1832, November 1833, January 1834, “Warden's Daily Journals, 1829–1961,” RG 15, PHMC. Perhaps in order to ward off criticisms that the Pennsylvania system of isolation caused mental damage to inmates, when an inmate showed symptoms of mental disturbance after being imprisoned for a period of time, the warden and prison physicians often suggested that the inmate “had been laboring under a bent toward insanity prior to arrival” at Eastern State. Jacqueline Thibaut, “‘To Pave the Way to Penitence’: Prisoners and Discipline at the Eastern State Penitentiary, 1829–1835,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106, no. 2 (1982): 214. See also Janofsky, “There is no hope for me,” particularly chapter 6. As a result, many future penitentiaries in the United States were based on the New York system of silent congregate labor during the day and isolation only at night.

17. Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont, *On the Penitentiary System in The United States and Its Application in France*, trans. Francis Lieber (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1833), 2. For more information on the rise of the penitentiary in addition to Mark Kann's *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy* and Jennifer Graber's *Furnace of Affliction*, see Mark Colvin, *Penitentiaries, Reformatories, and Chain Gangs: Social Theory and the History of Punishment in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Thomas Blomberg and Karol Lucken, *American Penology: A History of Control* (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter, 2000); Thomas Dumm, *Democracy and Punishment: Disciplinary Origins of the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michael S. Hindus, *Prison and Plantation: Crime, Justice, and Authority in Massachusetts and South Carolina, 1767–1878* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Adam Jay Hirsch, *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary in the Industrial Revolution, 1750–1850* (New York: Penguin, 1978); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 2000); Andrew Skotnicki, *Religion and the Development of the American Penal System* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

For works specifically on Pennsylvania prisons, see Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue*; Janofsky, “There is no hope for me”; Harry Elmer Barnes, *The Evolution of Penology in Pennsylvania: A Study in American Social History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1927); Negley K. Teeters, *The Cradle of the Penitentiary: The Walnut Street Jail at Philadelphia, 1773–1835* (Philadelphia: Sponsored by the Prison Society, 1955); Negley K. Teeters, *They Were in Prison: A History of the Pennsylvania Prison Society, 1787–1937, Formerly the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Misery of Public Prisons* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1937); Negley K. Teeters and John Shearer, *The Prison at Philadelphia, Cherry Hill: The Separate System of Penal Discipline, 1829–1913* (New York: Published for Temple University Publications by New York University Press, 1957); and Simon P. Newman and Billy G. Smith, “Incarcerated Innocents: Inmates, Conditions, and Survival Strategies in Philadelphia's Almshouse and Jail,” 60–84, and Jennifer Janofsky, “‘Hopelessly Hardened’: The Complexities of Penitentiary Discipline at Philadelphia's Eastern State Penitentiary,” 106–23, in *Buried Lives*, ed. Tarter and Bell, 60–84 and 106–23 respectively.

18. Tocqueville and Beaumont, *On the Penitentiary System*, 5.

19. Women's resistance in the state penitentiaries and county prisons argues against the social control theory of prisons set forth by Michel Foucault, Michael Ignatieff, and David Rothman of the 1970s. Michel Foucault argues that in the nineteenth century a shift in punishment occurred, focusing on the reformation of the soul as opposed to physical punishment of the body. He argues that the goal of this shift in punishment was "not to punish less, but to punish better . . . to punish with more universality and necessity." While the prison, according to Foucault, "marks the institutionalization of the power to punish," his idea of a carceral society spread the issue of discipline and control beyond the prison walls to other elements of society, such as armies or even schools. Furthermore, these institutions were to create "docile bodies," bodies that were "subjected and practiced." Through these "complete and austere" or total institutions, the individual was rendered docile. In the case of Pennsylvania's female inmates, many refused to become the docile bodies Foucault had predicted. See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 82, 130, 138, 293, and 235. See also Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain*, and David Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum*, works that also subscribe to the social control argument for prisons. One only has to scan the records for the state's penitentiaries and county prisons to see that resistance to prison discipline was common by women as well as men. See also Janofsky, "There is no hope for me" and "Hopelessly Hardened" for many examples of prisoner resistance specifically at Eastern State Penitentiary.
20. George W. Smith, *A Defence of the System of Solitary Confinement of Prisoners Adopted by the State of Pennsylvania: with Remarks on the Origin, Progress and Extension of this Species of Prison Discipline* (Philadelphia: E. G. Dorsey, 1833), 21.
21. McElwee, *Concise history of the Eastern Penitentiary*, 8; Job R. Tyson, *Essay on the Penal Law of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Published by the Law Academy, Mifflin and Parry, 1827), 58.
22. Tyson, *Essay on the Penal Law*, 59, 58. For a detailed architectural plan of the penitentiary in Philadelphia, see John Haviland, *A description of Haviland's Design for the New Penitentiary, Now Erecting near Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Robert Desilver, 1824). This pamphlet provides more specific dimensions and features used in the penitentiary construction.
23. McElwee, *Concise history of the Eastern Penitentiary*, 8.
24. *Acts of the General Assembly relating to the Eastern State Penitentiary and to the New Prisons of the City and County of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: J. W. Allen, 1831), 15–16. The records regarding the procedures of Eastern State Penitentiary are much more copious than those for Western State, resulting in a much more detailed description of daily life in the Philadelphia Penitentiary.
25. *Ibid.*, 13. It is striking that some sources acknowledge the presence of female inmates, while other descriptions use solely the male pronoun. While the female population remained consistently smaller than the male population in both state penitentiaries, the descriptions leaning toward using male pronouns make it appear that female inmates were an afterthought in the prison procedures.
26. It is unclear whether these women were convicted of voluntary or involuntary manslaughter, since the prison records only note manslaughter. Looking at the penal code for Pennsylvania, voluntary manslaughter held the punishment of imprisonment at hard labor for no more than ten years, and involuntary manslaughter was punished by imprisonment at hard labor for no more than two years. It can be deduced, then, that Rogers and Johnson would have committed voluntary manslaughter, and Hinson and Anderson, with a sentence of two years, could have been convicted of either voluntary or involuntary manslaughter. *Report of the Commissioners on the Penal Code, with the Accompanying Documents, read in the Senate, January 4, 1828* (Harrisburg: S. C. Stambaugh, 1828), 122.

27. "Descriptive Registers, 1829–1903," PHMC. During the period 1836 to 1858, admission numbers to Eastern State Penitentiary were as follows: 2,547 white males, or 77.6 percent of the male population, 734 "colored" males or 22.4 percent of the male population, 101 white females or 49.5 percent of the female population, 103 "colored" females or 50.5 percent of the female population. From "PAS Series V—Miscellaneous, Statistics of Black Crime in Philadelphia, 1859," *Pennsylvania Abolition Society Papers*, Series 5.10, HSP. Slavery, Abolition, and Social Justice Database, <http://www.slavery.amdigital.co.uk/Contents/DocumentDetailsSearch.aspx?documentid=262987&prevPos=262987&previous=3&vpath=searchresults&searchmode=true&pi=1> (accessed January 26, 2012).
28. The fact that the only four women incarcerated in the penitentiary were central to the investigation raises the issue of prisoner agency. Because the prison records are written from the keepers' and reformers' perspectives, the documents do not indicate that these four women manipulated the employees into receiving their special privileges. Suggesting this in the records would indicate a failure of the prison system to control the inmates. The written records make it seem that the inmates were treated more like pawns of prison officials as opposed to having power over their own imprisonment. At the same time, however, it is entirely possible that the women did manipulate the system in some way, but that the details of the manipulation never made their way into the written records. Even if they did not manipulate the system to get this special treatment, the women likely would not have complained about their lenient treatment, and used their privileges to resist prison protocols. L. Mara Dodge suggests, in her study of female inmates in Illinois, that "women prisoners were well aware of the ways in which their presence disrupted penal discipline, and they often deliberately exploited that disruption" using a variety of resistance strategies. L. Mara Dodge, *Whores and Thieves of the Worst Kind: A Study of Women, Crime, and Prisons, 1835–2000* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 30. The female inmates in Pennsylvania's state penitentiaries could very well fit into this description considering the numerous, albeit sometimes subtle, ways of resisting the severe disciplinary measures of the penal institutions.
29. McElwee, *Concise history of Eastern Penitentiary*, 172–73, 184. For a more specific account of Ann Hinson, see Patrick, "Ann Hinson," 361–75.
30. McElwee, *Concise history of Eastern Penitentiary*, 190. It was well established in the testimony of the investigation that there was venereal disease present among the employees and that acts of a sexual nature were occurring on prison grounds. What is unclear, due to a silence in the records, is whether inmates were sexually exploited during their incarceration.
31. *Ibid.*, 193–94.
32. The duties of inspectors included weekly visits to prisons where they were to "speak to each person confined therein out of the presence of any of the persons employed therein; shall listen to any complaints that may be made of oppression or ill conduct of the persons so employed, examine into the truth thereof, and proceed therein when the complaint is well founded." *Acts of the General Assembly*, 12.
33. It should be noted that it is also possible that Rogers may have been trying to manipulate Coxe in the hopes of reducing her sentence or receiving extra privileges for her troubles.
34. See Janofsky, "There is no hope for me," 166–67.
35. Dorothea Dix, *Remarks on Prison and Prison Discipline in the United States* (Philadelphia: Joseph Kite, 1845), 60.
36. Thomas Larcombe, "Volume A: Admissions 1830–1839 (#20–1124)," Series I, *State Penitentiary for the Eastern District Papers*, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia (hereafter APS).

37. Ibid.
38. Thomas Larcombe, "Volume D: Admissions, 1845–1850 (#1941–2600)," APS. Mary Ann Rogers was twenty-five at her admission in 1845, was from New Jersey, and was noted as having a swarthy complexion. "Descriptive Registers, 1829–1903."
39. Reformers and prison employees tend to dominate the written records of the institutions, and rules prohibiting letter writing to and from inmates reduces the chance of finding their own words. Scholars are left to glean information about the individuals' experiences through the mediated voices of reformers and prison officials, with the inmate voice being heard only rarely.
40. These few women discussed here were not the only inmates to write about their incarceration. Jennifer Graber argues that former inmates of New York's penitentiary systems shaped their stories of incarceration using the "trope of redemptive suffering" not only to give meaning to their imprisonment—that they had to suffer bodily pain to reform their character—but also to criticize the harsh nature of discipline in the penitentiaries and the prison staff. Jennifer Graber, "Engaging the Trope of Redemptive Suffering: Inmate Voices in Antebellum Prison Debates," *Pennsylvania History* 79, no. 2 (2012): 211. See also Caleb Smith, "Henry Hawser's Fate: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Birth of Prison Literature," in *Buried Lives*, ed. Tarter and Bell, 231–58.
41. One prison record noted that Julia Wilt she was aged forty years at the time of her confinement, had a light complexion with blue-gray eyes and black hair. "Miscellaneous Descriptive Books, 1829–1842," PHMC. Another register adds that Julia could only read, was a servant, got intoxicated occasionally, and had left her husband. "Descriptive Registers, 1829–1903."
42. *An Account of Julia Moore, A Penitent Female, who died in the Eastern Penitentiary of Philadelphia, in the year 1843*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Joseph and William Kite, 1844), 4. There is a discrepancy in Moore's age between the pamphlet and the descriptive registers. I believe the pamphlet made Moore younger in an effort to engage the readers by transforming her into a more sympathetic character.
43. Ibid., 18–19.
44. Richard Vaux, *Brief Sketch of the Origin and History of the State Penitentiary for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, at Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, 1872), 36, 50.
45. *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Inspectors of the Eastern State Penitentiary Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Ed. Harrington and Geo. D. Haswell, 1845), 22.
46. Francis Lieber, *Letter to Mr. Barclay, Honorary Secretary of the Philadelphia Prison Society, September 18, 1843*, reprinted in *Joseph Adshead, Prisons and Prisoners* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1845), 116–17. Again, the discussion of letter writing in this case raises the question of penitentiary policy and what actually occurred in the prison. These two instances indicate that the original act prohibiting writing and receiving letters was not actually upheld. For the original interview that Charles Dickens had with the young woman, see chapter 7 in Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).
47. While it is unclear exactly who this woman is, we do know the three women Dickens and Lieber are discussing. Their names are Louisa Harman, Elizabeth Thompson, and Ann Richards. All are young, either teenagers or in their early twenties upon reception, and all are African American servants. They were pardoned for their crimes in 1844, less than five years after their arrival in 1839. "Descriptive Registers, 1829–1903." A letter from the warden, George Thompson, to the governor,



David Porter, asks on behalf of the "Ladies Prison Society" for the pardon of these three women. According to the warden, the benevolent society vouched for them and promised, once they were released, to find them suitable arrangements outside the prison in order to help them avoid a life of future crime. The governor consented. "Eastern State Penitentiary Outgoing Correspondence, 1839–1850," Thompson Family Papers, MG 654, Series III, Box 5, Folder 27, HSP.

48. While it appears that at Eastern State letter writing was allowed by 1844, in the 1848 Annual Report of Western State Penitentiary, the moral instructor writes, "The privilege of corresponding by letter with absent friends once in three months, has been granted to the prisoners during the year. This favor was forfeited by any violation of the rules of the prison. Whilst then it contributed to make better the heart of the outcast convict, by the softening and humanizing intercourse with beloved objects, it also aided in the preservation of order and good conduct within the prison." *Report of the Board of Inspectors of the Western Penitentiary of Pennsylvania, for the Year 1848, with the Accompanying Documents* (Pittsburgh: Johnson and Stockton, 1849), 20. It appears that prison officials were beginning to see the ameliorating effects on behavior that written correspondence could have on inmates and that cutting them off entirely from the outside world was not necessarily a good plan.
49. "Elizabeth Velora Elwell Correspondence," April 18, 1862, Series III, Folder 1, *State Penitentiary for the Eastern District Papers* (hereafter Elwell Correspondence). Unfortunately, there is little context for these letters, yet they are invaluable because they represent some of the rarest sources, handwritten letters from a nineteenth-century female inmate. Elwell was arrested for larceny of store merchandise and property from the U.S. mail. She was sentenced to eighteen months, entered Eastern State on December 10, 1861, and was discharged on June 10, 1863. Information on Elwell from Elwell Correspondence, Series III, Folder 2.
50. Elwell Correspondence, April 22 and 25, 1862.
51. Ibid., n.d.
52. The notorious Ann Carson also had her story told through a ghostwriter, Mary Clarke. Two publications, *The History of the Celebrated Mrs. Ann Carson*, published in 1822, and *The Memoirs of the Celebrated and Beautiful Mrs. Ann Carson*, published in 1838, were shaped specifically with the intention of targeting a public audience for the purposes of making money. These were scandalous, shocking narratives, creating a persona for Ann Carson that went from being a "wronged woman" in the 1822 publication to being a "simply bad" criminal in 1838. Carson's crimes and exploits were used by Clarke to garner an audience for her written work and to further her career. See Branson, *Dangerous to Know*, 105, 130–32.
53. Kann, *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy*, 15.
54. *Acts of the General Assembly*, 23.
55. *First Annual Report of the Board of Inspectors of the Philadelphia County Prison* (Harrisburg, PA: J.M.G. Lescure, 1848), 6. At this point, the Walnut Street Jail also ceased its function as the county jail.
56. By an inspector, "In and Out of the County Prison," *Journal of Prison Discipline and Philanthropy* 12, no. 2 (1857): 64.
57. "PAS Series V—Miscellaneous, Statistics of Black Crime in Philadelphia, 1859." Presumably these numbers were calculated for those who were *sentenced* to Moyamensing, not those necessarily incarcerated for vagrancy or inability to pay court fines.

58. Coates argues that it is not the “most wretched and most exposed to hardships of our population” who are sentenced to Eastern State, suggesting perhaps a slight difference in class between those sent to the penitentiary and those committed to the county prison. Benjamin H. Coates, *On the Effects of Secluded and Gloomy Imprisonment on Individuals of the African Variety of Mankind, in the Production of Disease* (Philadelphia: John C. Clark, 1843), 94. It seems plausible that the same reasoning that Coates uses for African American incarceration patterns might be applied to immigrants who committed crimes in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, finding numbers to corroborate the incarceration rates of individuals who recently immigrated to Philadelphia is all but impossible. A glance at the surnames of Moyamensing’s prisoners suggests that many could have been recent immigrants, particularly of Irish descent. Because many women in the prison records were committed for vagrancy, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct, it seems that regardless of race or ethnicity, women of the lowest social standing were imprisoned in Moyamensing. See also “Commitment Dockets, Female Department” and “Prisons Convict Docket, Female,” RG 38, Philadelphia Prisons System, Philadelphia City Archives (hereafter PCA). Imprisoning vagrants was a common occurrence in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia as well. See Newman and Smith, “Incarcerated Innocents,” in *Buried Lives*, ed. Tarter and Bell, 61.
59. Pennsylvania Prison Society. *Annual Report of the Acting Committee of the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons January 1, 1833* (Philadelphia, 1833), 6.
60. Ibid.
61. Dorothea Dix, *Memorial Soliciting a State Hospital for the Insane: Submitted to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, February 3, 1845* (Harrisburg: J.M.G. Lescure, 1845), 44, 45.
62. Unfortunately with these sources, the records only give glimpses into the life of the county prison for short periods of time making chronological comparisons all but impossible.
63. “Prison Diary, Female Department, 1850–1860,” March 21, 1850, RG 38, PCA.
64. Ibid., April 2 and 11, 1850; May 20 and 30, 1851; February 15, 1855. Often women who were put in the dark cell only stayed one day. Lydia O’Connor, a black woman who was sentenced for thirty days beginning on March 30, 1850, was put in the dark cell for “insolence and abuse” on April 11 and was returned to her regular cell the next day after promising to obey the rules. “Commitment Docket, Female Department, July 1849 to November 1851,” RG 38, PCA. It is worth noting that it appears that the “strapping” was not a whipping, but actually a type of restraints used to hold down inmates.
65. “Prison Diary,” April 29 and June 8, 1850. Martha Russell, who broke her furniture on April 29, 1850, was a white woman imprisoned for disorderly conduct, and Susan Barber, alias Kelly, who drew a knife on the keeper was incarcerated many times in the 1850s for assault and battery, disorderly conduct, and breaking the peace. “Commitment Docket, Female Department, July 1849 to November 1851.” Martha Russell spent more time in the dark cell beginning on October 17, 1851, when she was punished “for letting the Hydrant run in her cell & using profane language.” “Prison Diary,” October 17, 1851.
66. “Prison Diary,” April 12, 1850 (emphasis in original). Catharine Jordan was imprisoned for disturbing the peace and was sent to prison on July 23, 1849. “Commitment Docket, Female Department, July 1849 to November 1851.”
67. “Commitment Docket, Female Department, July 1849 to November 1851”; “Prison Diary,” September 24 and 25, December 4, 1850; January 22, 1851. Chaining was apparently a common

- practice to punish insubordinate offenders in the nineteenth-century penitentiaries. See Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain*, 198. Furthermore, strapping appears to be another form of restraint used on refractory prisoners.
68. "Prison Diary," March 5, 1851. Wagstaff, a white woman, was imprisoned on June 13, 1850, for larceny. "Commitment Docket, Female Department, July 1849 to November 1851."
  69. "Prison Diary," August 29, 1851; February 3, March 13, 15, 16, April 10, August 26, November 19, and December 4, 1852; April 8, 1853. For further sources on issues of punishment in the Pennsylvania system, particularly in Eastern State, see William C. Kashatus, "Punishment, Penitence and Reform: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Controversy over Solitary Confinement" *Pennsylvania Heritage* 25, no. 1 (1999): 30–39; and Thibaut, "To Pave the Way to Penitence," 187–222.
  70. Nineteenth-century observers often noted that female inmates had a tendency to be considered "incorrigible." Mark Kann notes that officials in some states, including "Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, and Indiana," avoided sending women to penitentiaries because of this trait. Instead, the women were sent to county prisons. In New York prison inspectors were told that women "were 'very refractory' as well as unproductive." Kann, *Punishment, Prisons, and Patriarchy*, 193. See also Lucia Zedner, "Wayward Sisters: The Prison for Women," in *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*, ed. Norval Morris and David J. Rothman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 348. Twentieth-century studies have also shown that female inmates tended to be troublesome, even at times more so than their male counterparts. See Jocelyn M. Pollock, *Sex and Supervision: Guarding Male and Female Inmates* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 28–31, 57–58.
  71. "Prison Diary," December 2, 1854, and August 26, 1856.
  72. *Ibid.*, August 2, 3, 4, 1855, and August 12, 1856.
  73. *Ibid.*, October 29 and November 29, 1851.
  74. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1856. Caroline Erwin was imprisoned for vagrancy on January 22, 1856. "Commitment Docket, August 1854 to December 1856," RG 38, PCA.
  75. *Ibid.* November 6, 1854. It is difficult to identify this particular Mary Smith in the inmate registers. There are multiple Mary Smiths listed, many who were incarcerated multiple times in the 1850s for crimes such as disorderly conduct and breaking the peace. While the Mary Smith in this example may be one of these entries, there is no way to know for sure which Mary Smith this woman might be.
  76. *Ibid.*
  77. "Prison Diary," August 26 and 28, 1856. Like Mary Smith, Kate Murray is difficult to identify in the commitment dockets. Multiple Kate and Catherine Murrays litter the registers. Most of these individuals were imprisoned for drunk and disorderly behavior and vagrancy, suggesting a life on the streets.
  78. Dorothea Dix, in her crusade to improve prisons and help the mentally ill, made it a goal to have a state hospital established so that the insane that were locked in prisons could be removed to a facility that specialized in caring for those who suffered from mental illness. See Dix, *Memorial Soliciting a State Hospital for the Insane*.
  79. "Punishment Ledger, 1839–1841," RG 38, PCA.

80. It is worth considering that the use of more severe punishments on increasingly violent inmates may be an overall reflection of the nation's sectional conflict, which also became more violent in the 1850s.
81. *Williamsport Grit*, April 1931.
82. *Sullivan County Democrat*, November 23, 1858.
83. Secretary of the Commonwealth, *Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, relative to the County Prisons of the State* (Harrisburg, PA: E. Guyer, 1839), 6, 8, 17.
84. Dix, *Memorial Soliciting a State Hospital for the Insane*, 11, 15, 23.

TENDING OUR VINES: FROM THE  
CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITINGS OF  
RICHARD PETERS AND JOHN JAY

*Carol E. Brier*

I believe that you and I derive more real Satisfaction from tending our Vines and Fruit Trees, than most Conquerors do from cultivating their favorite Laurels.

—John Jay to Richard Peters, February 26, 1816

The partnership and friendship of John Jay and Richard Peters reflect two extraordinary individuals who helped to plant the seed of American independence and nurture it in diverse ways for more than half a century through a long and devoted association. Toward the end of their lives, Peters wrote to Jay, “my recollections of the long and sincere love and friendship I have undeviatingly cherished for you afford to me the most gratifying and cordial satisfaction.”<sup>1</sup> Their correspondence reflects two men with many shared interests but two distinct personalities. Both men were well educated and successful attorneys before the outbreak of the Revolution to which both became deeply committed. While their careers took different paths, their friendship strengthened over time and found expression in many unexpected ways as they “tended their vines.”

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Peters was born on June 22, 1744, at Belmont, a stately home outside Philadelphia on the banks of the Schuylkill. His father, William Peters, came to Philadelphia from Liverpool, England, in 1739 and established a highly successful law practice in that city and was a judge in the Court of Common Pleas. Richard Peters was educated at home and later attended the College of Philadelphia, now the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated valedictorian in 1761 and later became an *ex officio* trustee. After studying law, he established a successful law practice and later became Admiralty Register under the colonial government. In 1776 he married Sarah Robinson and they had six children. Peters supported the American Revolution and in 1775 led a company of provincial troops. The following year he was a delegate to the Continental Congress and elected to the Board of War, a special standing committee to oversee the Continental Army's administration and make recommendations to Congress regarding the army. While in this post, Peters discovered that Benedict Arnold was using funds designated for army supplies for his own use. An open feud developed between the two men when Peters tried to stop Arnold. Peters was "not the least bit surprised" when Arnold betrayed his country at West Point. Peters then went on to serve as a delegate to Congress under the Articles of Confederation and he also served in the Pennsylvania General Assembly from 1787 to 1790 and later as Speaker of the Pennsylvania Senate. In 1792 President George Washington appointed him as a judge for the U.S. District Court of Pennsylvania where Peters gained a reputation for his decisions in admiralty law. He served with distinction in that position until his death in 1828.<sup>2</sup>

John Jay was born on December 12, 1745, to Peter Jay and Mary Van Cortlandt Jay at 66 Pearl Street in Manhattan where his family lived. Peter was a wealthy merchant, the son of a French Huguenot, Auguste Jay. Auguste emigrated from La Rochelle, France, to the New World, fleeing religious persecution. John Jay was one of ten children, seven of whom survived, and was raised at the family farm, "The Locusts," in the town of Rye in Westchester County. He was educated at home by private tutors and at a boarding school in New Rochelle. In 1760 he entered King's College, now Columbia University, and in 1764 graduated. He then studied law and after being admitted to the bar of New York in 1768, he established a prosperous legal practice. In 1774 he married Sarah Livingston and they had six children. Before the outbreak of the Revolution, Jay had worked for reconciliation with England, but became a patriot when he realized that American independence was the only solution



FIGURE 1: Judge Richard Peters painted by Philip B. Wallace. Courtesy of the University of Pennsylvania Archives.

possible. He was a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses and later served as its president. At this time, Jay also served New York State as member of the State Provisional Congress drafting its first constitution and later as Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court.

In 1779 Jay was appointed Minister to Spain to secure financial assistance for the Americans, and in 1782 he went to Paris to help negotiate the Treaty of Paris, which established America's independence. Jay is regarded as the major architect of the Treaty and it is considered to be one of his major accomplishments in public life. The new nation was governed by the Articles



of Confederation and Jay served as secretary of Foreign Affairs. Jay, along with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, coauthored the *Federalist Papers* in support of the ratification of the Constitution, drafted at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, with its strong federal government to replace the ineffectual Articles of Confederation. With the ratification of the Constitution, George Washington became the first president and he offered Jay his choice of any position in the new government. Jay chose to become the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. While in that position, Washington asked Jay to go to London and negotiate a treaty with England to try to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Paris. The Jay Treaty of 1794 proved unpopular in America but Jay returned from England to discover that he had been elected governor of the state of New York while not actively seeking the office. After two terms as governor, he retired from public life to his farm in Bedford where he died in 1829.<sup>3</sup>

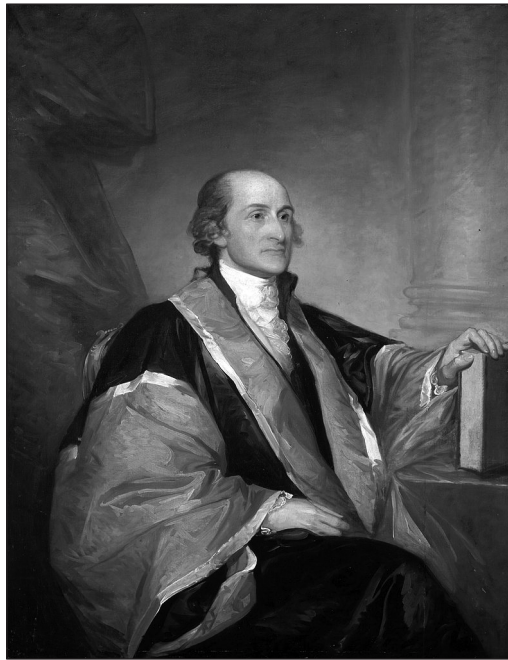


FIGURE 2: John Jay (1745–1829), painted by Gilbert Stuart in his judicial robes as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Courtesy: National Gallery of Art.

Service to his country kept Jay away from his family for long periods of time while Peters remained in Philadelphia and maintained a house in town and at Belmont for his entire life. Belmont, a Palladian-style mansion, was built by Peters's father in the mid-eighteenth century. Surrounded by formal gardens, the mansion is set on a hill above the Schuylkill with views of Philadelphia. It was here that Richard Peters entertained in gracious style and many Founders, including George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the Marquis de Lafayette, were guests. Washington was a frequent guest at Belmont and maintained a close friendship with Peters up to his death in 1799. He loved to escape from his presidential duties for a long walk with Peters in Belmont's gardens among "clipped hedges, pyramids, obelisks and balls of evergreen and spruce."<sup>4</sup> The diarist and neighbor of Peters, Samuel Breck, wrote that "It was here that General Washington, when President, used to seek relaxation from his official labours, and in it would seem to forget all the cares of government."<sup>5</sup>

Francois-Jean Chastellux, a major-general attached to General Rochambeau of the French forces aiding the Americans during the Revolution, kept a journal of his travels in America from 1780 to 1782. He wrote of meeting Peters on several occasions. During a visit in 1780 with Peters at his house on Walnut Street in Philadelphia, Chastellux wrote, "His house is not large, . . . but he possesses what is preferable to all the offices in the world, an amiable wife, excellent health, a fine voice, and a happy and agreeable disposition." Chastellux wrote that at one dinner party in Philadelphia given by Judge James Wilson,

Mr. [Richard] Peters . . . gave the signal for mirth and jollity by favoring us with a song of his own composition, so broad and unrestrained that I shall dispense with giving either a translation, or a selection of it here. This was really an excellent song. He then sang another, more chaste and more musical; this was a very fine Italian *cantabile*.

An enraptured Chastellux also wrote of his visit to Belmont

The tasty little box . . . is on the most enchanting spot that nature can embellish, and besides the variegated beauties of the rural banks of the Schuylkill, commands the Delaware, and the shipping and mounting and descending it, where it is joined at right angles by the former.<sup>6</sup>

Peters dressed in a formal manner and wore knee breeches and silver buckles on his shoes. He wore his hair powdered and dressed in a queue long after it had passed out of fashion. Peters was highly regarded for his wit and storytelling. He had a sharp nose and chin, which became more prominent with age. "A friend observed to him one day that his nose and chin were getting so near they would quarrel. 'Very likely' he replied, 'for hard words often pass between them.'" Another pun occurred when Peters was Speaker of the Pennsylvania State Assembly and a member of the Assembly tripped and fell which elicited laughter from the other members. Peters sternly cried out, "Order! Order, gentlemen, do you not see that a member is on the floor?"<sup>7</sup>

John Jay, on the other hand, was more reserved—circumspection was the hallmark of his character as well as a lawyerly manner. While riding circuit as Chief Justice Jay kept a diary and on two occasions he noted, "heard many anecdotes, not to be written" and "Learnt sundry anecdotes not proper to be written, but to be remembered."<sup>8</sup> During his tenure as Chief Justice, Jay maintained a grand stone house on Broadway in New York where he and his wife, Sarah, frequently entertained the elite of the new federal government. His retirement from public life to his farm in Bedford in 1801 was a dramatic change but one which he and his wife had hoped for, especially Jay, "From early Youth it was my desire and Intention to live in the Country as soon as Prudence and Prosperity would permit me."<sup>9</sup> Jay's farm was on 750 acres that he had acquired through inheritance and purchase. His twelve-room farmhouse with piazza was originally a small house for his farm manager that had been renovated when Jay decided to retire from public life. It was a large and comfortable house, built to Jay's strict specifications for the best materials, including his desire to have the exterior and interior walls lined with brick. There was ample room for his family and friends who visited Jay. His lifestyle was simple but not ostentatious—"Neatness + utility is all I ought or wish to aim at in Dress or Equipage."<sup>10</sup>

The Bedford farm was remote and required a two-day trip by stage from New York or a day's sail by boat up the Hudson River. Mail was delivered once a week from New York. Jay took an active role in the running of his farm and in his family. His son, William, wrote of his father that "When his health and the weather permitted, he spent most of the day in the open air, and no small portion of it on horseback. He disclaimed all intention of converting his farm into what is usually termed 'a seat'"<sup>11</sup> Jay was devoutly religious and

Every morning immediately before breakfast, the family, including the domestics, were summoned to prayers; and the call was repeated precisely at nine at night, when he read to them a chapter in the Bible, and concluded with prayer. At the close of the evening devotions he retired to rest, except when courtesy to his guests induced him to keep later hours; but the presence of company neither postponed nor suspended the family worship.<sup>12</sup>

True to his aim for “Neatness + utility” he wrote to his daughter, Maria, “our love to Nancy—Tell her I have received the stockings she sent . . . and that I wear those of her knitting with more Pleasure than others, because I owe them to her affectionate attention.” In 1802 the dream of a simple life in the country that he and his wife looked forward to was shattered when Sarah Jay died. He later wrote to Peters that “Conversation, Books and Recollections, still enable me, with the Blessings of Providence . . . to glide on placidly towards that ocean, to which the Stream of Time is bearing us all.” In contrast to their different lifestyles, Peters nevertheless had great respect for Jay when he wrote to him in 1808 that “I admire very much your apparently Settled Plan of Life.” True to his ever-probing mind and diverse interests, Peters had to admit that “My mind is too ardent & I must have some Hobby Horse to ride.” Peters shared his pursuits and his numerous “hobby horses” with Jay as the two men corresponded while they “tended their vines.”<sup>13</sup>

One “vine” that both Peters and Jay tended was agriculture. Both men were serious farmers and took an active interest in the management of their properties, yet they pursued farming in different ways. Their letters are replete with discussions about new crops and their success or failure with them. Jay wrote to Peters about speltz, a new grain, “To sow Wheat here, is like taking a ticket in a Lottery—more blanks than prizes—the Fly destroys more than we reap.”<sup>14</sup> Jay had a genuine interest in new farming techniques or a new crop, but it was Richard Peters who was highly regarded as an expert in the field of agriculture delving into new types of machinery, working with new crops, breeding new animal stock and researching different types of fertilizers or manures. Peters also corresponded with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, to name a few of the leading agriculturalists in the country, discussing a wide range of agricultural and horticultural topics. Hamilton wrote to Peters in 1802 for advice in managing his new home, the Grange, located in upper Manhattan. Peters replied, employing both his wit and wisdom, “Spare no Expence to

destroy Weeds. . . . Weeds are the Jacobins of Agriculture. If you do not destroy them, they will certainly ruin you.”<sup>15</sup> Peters’s stature as a leading agriculturalist was international and he corresponded with Sir John Sinclair and Arthur Young of Great Britain, renowned for their efforts in the field of agriculture. Washington had the highest regard for Peters when he wrote to Arthur Sinclair that “Richard Peters Esqr; who is one of the most intelligent, and best practical, as well as theoretical farmers we have.”<sup>16</sup>

Washington engaged in agricultural experiments at his beloved Mount Vernon and stated that “I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country, than by pursuing its agriculture.”<sup>17</sup> Washington also advocated the establishment of a National Board of Agriculture for the gathering and dissemination of information. Many societies devoted to agricultural pursuits were formed throughout the new nation. In 1785 the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture was formed with twenty-three charter members, among them Richard Peters, George Clymer, Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, and James Wilson. The Society’s members consisted of many patriots among whom were signers of the Declaration of Independence, members of the Constitutional Convention who drafted the Constitution, officers in the Revolutionary War, members of Congress, a member of the Supreme Court, and a personal physician to George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.<sup>18</sup> Richard Peters was vice president of the Society and became president in 1805 serving until his death in 1828. George Washington was an honorary member and said of the founding of the society, “No measure in my opinion, will be more conducive to the public weal than the establishment of this Society.”<sup>19</sup>

The Society maintained relations with other American agricultural societies and foreign societies as well and quickly became a highly respected institution throughout America and Europe. The Society established a library and published its findings and activities through its journal, *Memoirs*, with an abbreviated version published as an *Almanac*. Peters was a prolific contributor to the *Memoir*, authoring eighty-seven papers on a wide range of subjects such as from Hoven cattle, peach trees, the thickness of cement, coarse flour, brown bread, trench ploughing, and hemlock for fences, to name just a few of his “hobby horses,” but none was more notable than his work on soil fertility. His *Notices to a Young Farmer* (1818), which was later published as a pamphlet, and *A Discourse on Agriculture: Its Antiquity* (1816) were widely read. In 1811 John Jay ordered six copies of the second volume of the Society’s *Memoirs*—“I mean to place a Set in our Town Library and to distribute others among

certain Persons in the neighbourhood who in my opinion would make proper use of them.”<sup>20</sup> Later that year Jay reported to Peters of the *Memoirs* now in the Bedford Town Library, “I am told that it is read with *great* avidity, and I suspect with proffit.”<sup>21</sup>

During his retirement, Jay maintained an active interest in many organizations eschewing participation. Jay was nominal head of the Westchester Agricultural Society and after his mission to London as U.S. envoy to negotiate the Jay Treaty with the British, Jay became a Foreign Honorary Member of the British Board of Agriculture in 1795. The diploma was signed by John Sinclair, president of the Board, who had entertained Jay many times during his stay in London the previous year.

Peters and Jay, like many farmers of their time, were trying to increase the fertility of soil through the use of new “manures.” It was in this particular area of research that Peters came to international prominence with the publication of his book *Agricultural Enquiries on Plaister of Paris*, which was published in 1797 and continues in print to this day. In the journal, Peters answered letters written to him by farmers from all parts of the country about the effectiveness of using plaister of Paris as a fertilizer. The plaister, which is made from gypsum, is derived from the Greek word for “chalk” or “plaster.”<sup>22</sup> The French were among the first to work the quarries from the Montmartre section of Paris, which furnished gypsum for many uses, hence the name “Plaister of Paris.” Peters was prompted to begin experimenting with plaister sometime around 1783: “I was among the first who began the use of it in Pennsylvania.”<sup>23</sup> It was the practice of many farmers in eastern Pennsylvania to cultivate their land without preserving the soil and to then move westward to virgin lands for new farms. There was also a need for winter fodder for livestock and summer grasses to produce the fodder. In an answer to an inquiry from a farmer about plaister, Peters explained how plaister had altered the cultivation of his farm:

Before I used the planter my land was full of twitch, or what is called blue grass, which afforded but little pasture, scarcely sufficient to fatten cattle for my own use; since the use of it for several years back, I have fattened from forty to fifty each year, besides mowing as much of the fields each year as afforded a sufficiency of hay for my team and family horses, and upwards of twenty cattle; before that my dependence for hay was from bittoms and watered banks, the hay from which was very inferior to that from the fields.<sup>24</sup>

Peters responded to another inquiry about his preference in plaister by stating that

I have in general found the European plaister the best. But I have used the Nova Scotia (the only American plaister I am acquainted with) to equal advantage. I know not whether there has been any chemical analysis of these plaisters, to enable us to judge their relative qualities. The quarries in Nova Scotia may turn out better the more they are worked and explored. There is a variety in the American plaister, some being much better than others.<sup>25</sup>

In his meticulous attention to every detail, which he displayed in all his research, Peters discussed the texture of the plaister he used, "I do not like the plaister ground too fine. It flies away in strewing, and is not so durable as that moderately pulverized, I think it sufficiently fine." His book reveals that Peters was well read on the subject of fertilizers and familiar with the most current research and practices on the subject. He discussed the types of soil that benefit most from the application of plaister, "Light soils, dry and sandy, or loamy"; the time of year for its application, "From the first of March, if the ground is clear of frost, to the first of May"; the amount used, "The quantity of plaister per acre, four and a half bushels, and the redressing about three bushels"; to the crops, "Beneficially to the production of wheat, rye, barley, Indian corn, buckwheat, peas of all kinds, potatoes, cabbage, clover, and all other grasses common amongst us."<sup>26</sup>

In his *Agricultural Enquiries* Peters demonstrated his command of the subject, his eagerness to share his knowledge with others, and the high degree of respect in he was held in the field of agriculture. George Washington replied to Peters that

I have received with much pleasure, your agricultural enquiries on Plaister of Paris;—and thank you for the honor of, and the affectionate sentiments contained in, the Dedication. I shall be obliged by your furnishing me with two or three more copies of them, one of which I will send by the first opportunity to my correspondent of agriculture—Sir John Sinclair.<sup>27</sup>

However, Peters said of Washington's efforts with plaister on clay soil, "The President (whose land at Mount Vernon and in its neighbourhood, are



generally strong clay, or inclining thereto), has frequently told me, that he has always been unsuccessful with plaister.”<sup>28</sup> However, John Jay had success with plaister and with ground shells. The correspondence between the two friends on this subject reveals great interest, efforts, and knowledge on the subject. When John Jay retired to his farm in Bedford in 1801, it was not a fine house, beautiful gardens, and well-tended fields such as Peters had inherited from his father. Jay’s farm had been worked by tenant farmers for many years with not much productivity but nine years after taking up residence at the farm Jay wrote to his daughter that “You would be surprised to see the orchards—they are literally bending and breaking under a prodigious Burthen of Fruits. I do not recollect any former Year in which there was so much.”<sup>29</sup>

Jay was receptive to trying new hybrid crops and eagerly planted new hybrid trees on his property. Many of the seeds were sent to him by Peters as part of a program of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture. Jay purchased other seeds and trees from the William Prince Nurseries in Flushing, NY. The nursery, along with John Bartram’s in Philadelphia, were the premier nurseries in the country introducing many new plants to farmers and both counted George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison as customers. Shortly after their inauguration as president and vice president, Washington and John Adams were accompanied by John Jay to the Prince Nurseries by barge. Jay was also familiar with the work of William Bartram when he wrote to Peters that having received a copy of the *Memoirs* of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture from Peters, he conducted an experiment:

On reading (in the Memoirs) the observations of Mr. Bartram on the Pea Fly, I took particular notice of his Question “whether oyster shells powdered would not be found as to be as good a manure as Plaister or Lime?” I have made a trial of it.

In a Conversation I had last Year, with Judge Miller who is one of my neighbours, respecting certain Fields along the Sound (Long Island Sound), in which formerly abounding in Shells, and continued to be remarkably fertile while those shells lasted, I observed to him that pounded or powdered shells would probably be a good manure. He soon afterwards passed some Shells thro’ his Mill, & sent me about half a Pint of the Powder. I drove four stakes about a Yard distant the one from the other, with some of the poorest Land near my House—it

was light worn out Loam. On this little Square I spread the half Pint of Shell Powder. Toward the autumn a fine Crop of White Clover and Spear Grass came on, and flourished until Winter; This Spring it assumed the same appearance—in order to try whether shell Powder or Plaister would produce the most *durable* effect, of the Plaister soon revealed but did not exceed that of the Shell Powder—both Pieces flourished very nearly alike until lately—as the Dry Weather came on, the little Square became less and less verdant, and is now brown and parched, while the plastered ground, which begins with a Yard of it, remains, green. Judge Miller afterwards sent me about a Peck of this powder which I spread last Spring on another little Spot in the same field, & of the like kind as the former the Effects of it proved to be similar to that of the half Pint used last Year. Altho' Plaister succeeds well here; and I have used much of it for Grass, yet I have neglected to try it on garden esculent Vegetables. You have probably been more attentive—be so good as to inform me to which of them Plaister is useful, and at what Seasons and in what Quantities it should be applied.<sup>30</sup>

Peters wasted no time in responding to his good friend with all the experience and knowledge that had gained him an international reputation as an expert in agriculture during his years of experimenting with Plaister, shells and other manures:

The Shells of Fish & the Materials whereof Plaister is formed, differ much. *Shells* are composed of cratacious Earth & animalized Matter. *Plaister* is calcareous Earth & Oil of Vitriol. Both have lime for their Basis, but one (Shells) have carbonic Acid or fixed Air in the Composition, the other, Sulphuric Acid. Both operate as Manure, but of Shells a more absorbent Quantity must be applied. The Sulphuric Acid has a given Affinity for Water, which it attracts in an uncommon Degree. This accounts for the Lush you mention in your Plastered Spot remaining green, while this very dry Season has parched your other Place of Experiment. Dew will remain on plastered Grass for Hours, after it has left other places. . . . I have discontinued any extensive use of Shells. I have repeatedly perceived the Effect you mention of the Verdure on Plastered Fields, while others were arid & apparently deprived of all Vegetation. I have used Plaister on Garden

Esculents continually. I know of none not benefited by it. But Vines & leguminous Plants, it seems more efficacious. Even young Trees receive Advantage from it.<sup>31</sup>

Jay wrote to Peters commending him for his outstanding work: "Natural interest unites with other Considerations in drawing your attention to agriculture—I think it has greatly improved in our Country since the Revolution."<sup>32</sup>

Peters's work with Plaister of Paris had revolutionized agriculture in America. He had broadened the scope of rotation of crops and the cultivation of crops for various uses, especially as fodder for livestock. Farmers were now able to raise enough food for their livestock to maintain them through the winter, whereas in the past it was very difficult and often expensive to keep a significant number of farm animals due to insufficient fodder. Peters's success with Plaister of Paris, and other factors, allowed for the introduction of new breeds of sheep and their successful breeding in America and enabled Peters to tend yet another "vine"—Tunis sheep.

In the late eighteenth century, sheep were generally imported from England but did not flourish on the East Coast of America. They were kept largely for a small supply of mutton and whatever fleece could be obtained. In a letter to George Washington in 1792, Peters outlined the drawbacks to raising sheep in America:

For some time hence this will not be a great sheep country; the dryness or our seasons burns up the pasture for a great part of the year; we keep too many dogs who destroy them; and our country is intersected with mountains, inhabited by wolves; which cannot be extirpated. . . . Our long winters are inimical to sheep; they render the keeping expensive, and subject the animal to numberless disorders. We have no succulent or green forage; . . . I have tried the English sheep, which soon degenerate, and stand the climate but badly. As to fleece it is scant, but three pounds per sheep being rather an over calculation.<sup>33</sup>

Washington had long advocated the importance of agriculture and the need for improving livestock when he wrote to Sir John Sinclair, "I know of no pursuit in which more real and important service can be rendered to any country, than by improving its agriculture, its breed of useful animals, and other branches of an husbandman's cares."<sup>34</sup> Yet through the efforts of

Peters and others, including Washington, the prospect of sheep raising was transformed and the necessary elements were in place for the importation and cultivation of the Tunis sheep.

In 1799 U.S. Consul to Tunis William Eaton obtained the delivery of ten Tunis sheep as a gift from the Bey of Tunis to George Washington. After a stormy sea voyage during which most of the sheep died, Secretary of State Timothy Pickering had the surviving ram and ewe delivered to Richard Peters for breeding purposes. Tunis sheep, one of the oldest breeds of sheep, are characterized by their cream-colored wool with cinnamon/red head and legs. Their tails are punctuated by fat deposits and the breed is sometimes referred to as the broad-tailed sheep. The breed was prized for its mutton and wool and with other shipments of the sheep to this country, its popularity spread quickly. George Washington used Tunis sheep to rebuild his flock at Mount Vernon, which had suffered during his presidency. Other prominent agriculturalists of the period such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson had Tunis sheep on their farms and Jefferson was known to have Tunis sheep grazing on the lawn of the White House along with other breeds.<sup>35</sup> The sheep were cross-bred with other breeds and produced a new breed—the American Tunis.

Peters set about distributing lambs to encourage the breeding of the sheep, which after some time made him a strong advocate of the breed. In his *Memoir on the Tunis, broad-tailed Sheep*, which was published by the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture, and later in international journals, Peters discussed the merits of the breed. He noted that “I deemed myself bound, though no terms were made with me, to distribute many of their progeny gratuitously, and gave away lambs for several years, with a view to encourage and spread the breed.”<sup>36</sup> Peters then noted the other favorable characteristics of the breed: “I have never seen better homemade cloth than the selected parts of the Tunis fleeces”; “The mutton is known to be among the finest and best in our market. The proportion of flesh to size of the animal is, I think, remarkably great”; “They are hardy, and will bear either cold or heat better than any others within my knowledge”; “They fatten with less food, and much quicker, than any other sheep”; “A tunis tup [ram] couples with a ewe of other breeds with more certainty and effect, than a tup of the common species with a Tunis ewe”; “The Tunis sheep are better set with wool than any others generally known here.” With attention to every detail, Peters also noted that “The tail is the true test of purity of blood,” and in this regard, the Tunis sheep served Peters’s reputation as a gourmand well

when he commented that “Its tail (which I have known, when prepared for cooking, to weigh from six to eight pounds) if properly dressed, is a feast for an epicure. The tail of a young beaver, which I have enjoyed when I dared to indulge in such food, . . . is the only rival I know.”<sup>37</sup>

In his *Memoir* Peters also discussed other reasons for his enthusiasm for the breed and mentioned an important trait of the breed that contributed to its popularity—“Their character is that of gentleness and quietude; and they live in health, vigor, and usefulness, to greater ages than other sheep. I never saw a breachy Tunis sheep.”<sup>38</sup> By “breachy” Peers meant that the Tunis sheep did not wander from their pasture or jump fences, which is something that attracted the attention of many farmers in the country, including John Jay. In an 1810 letter to Peters, Jay discussed the subject of sheep:

I had often heard of broad tailed sheep, and seen some of them, but supposed them to be a rather singular than a useful Breed. You have corrected that Error, and I should, like to have some of them, if they would remain quietly in fields fenced only by Stone Walls.—My farm was, from its first Settlement occupied by Tenants—they left me no Trees fit for Rails; nor can I obtain a supply in this Neighbourhood. The stones they could not destroy—and they are the only Materials I have for Fence. . . . You say the Tunisians are quiet—Tell me whether you think they may be trusted within Stone Walls—if they may—I shall, in case I live till Spring, be inclined to purchase two or three of them to begin with.<sup>39</sup>

Jay had maintained a flock of Merino sheep that rivaled the popularity of the Tunis sheep at the time. Merino sheep originated in the Iberian peninsula and were prized for their fine, superior wool, which continues to this day. In 1802 Chancellor Robert R. Livingston, a noted agriculturist and the American Minister to France, and Colonel David Humphreys, the American Minister to Portugal, were among the first Americans to bring Merino sheep to America. The Spanish prevented the exportation of the breed until Napoleon invaded Spain in 1808 after which the breed was available to American markets. The Americans had previously relied on British sheep but with the War of 1812 and the embargo imposed by President Jefferson on British products, Merino sheep became highly prized and competed with Tunis sheep. Between 1809 and 1811, 3,500 Merino sheep were sent to America due to the efforts of William Jarvis of the U.S. Diplomatic Corps.<sup>40</sup>

Jay ultimately sold the flock of Merino sheep due to their inability to stay in the pastures. The "Otter" breed, which he mentioned to Peters, were the sheep with "crooked legs" and were no "Beauties." The otter or ancon sheep first appeared in the United States in 1791 when a Dover, Massachusetts, farmer, Seth Wright, noticed that one of his newborn rams had unusually short legs. This was later attributed to the lack of cartilage developing between the joints which produced the short legs and dwarf-like appearance in the sheep. Although the breed exhibited other abnormalities, their inability to jump stone fences made them attractive to farmers and Wright developed the breed. The otter breed gained in popularity but other mutations in the animal, particularly poor health, led to a decrease in their popularity.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, Jay was persuaded by Peters's pamphlet on the subject to purchase a pair of lambs: "But for the dogs I shd like to begin with a larger number."<sup>42</sup> The two agreed on the price of \$25 a piece for a ram and a ewe to be delivered to John Jay's son and agent in New York City, Peter Augustus, by water or by land. Upon the sheep's arrival in New York, Peter Augustus had them delivered to Jay's farm. Peters had some advice for his good friend about the care of the Tunis sheep:

You must not pet them too much, as they are a hardy Sheep, but, like others profit ably kept, require some additional Food other than mere Hay thro Winter & especially towards Spring. Shelter is open Sheds is best though they may use it or not at their Pleasure. . . . The Sheep are no Jumpers or Wanderers, & will keep Company with your crooked leg'd.<sup>43</sup>

Dogs still remained a threat to sheep as Peters bemoaned the loss of "my old Selema by a Dog, in perfect Health & Vigour at 10 Years old. Her Fleece was perfect & excellent when she fell Victim." Jay's flock, too, was to suffer the same fate eight years later when he wrote to Peters, "I wish I could give you a good account of my Tunisian Sheep—but the dogs have put it out of my power."<sup>44</sup> Otherwise, Jay seemed very pleased with the Tunisian sheep.

The breed quickly established itself in other parts of the country, especially the southern part of the United States, where the Tunisians readily adapted to the warm climate. Jay had to wait for his pair of Tunisian sheep when Peters informed him "But our Flock is reduced to a mere Squad—and the Carolina People have swept the whole."<sup>45</sup> The Tunisians were all but wiped out during the Civil War and their popularity decreased as the Merino

sheep became the choice of many farmers. It was Peters and his efforts that established the Tunisian sheep as one of the first truly American breeds of sheep and to this day the American Tunis sheep remain an integral part of American agriculture.

Yet another “vine” that these two men cultivated almost to the end of their days with steadfast loyalty was American independence and their admiration for George Washington. Peters and Jay were swept up into a strange national debate that arose about the authorship of Washington’s Farewell Address. Was the document written by Washington, as many people had supposed, or was it written by Alexander Hamilton?

In 1796, toward the end of Washington’s second term as president, he resolved to write a valedictory to the nation. He wrote a draft and sent it to Hamilton for his review. Washington had relied on Hamilton’s judgment and assistance in drafting documents dating back to the Revolutionary War when Hamilton was a member of his staff. On those occasions Hamilton served as an editor and did little to alter the content of the documents. Washington’s instructions to Hamilton about the Valedictory Address left no doubt as to what Washington desired of Hamilton’s input: “all the ideas

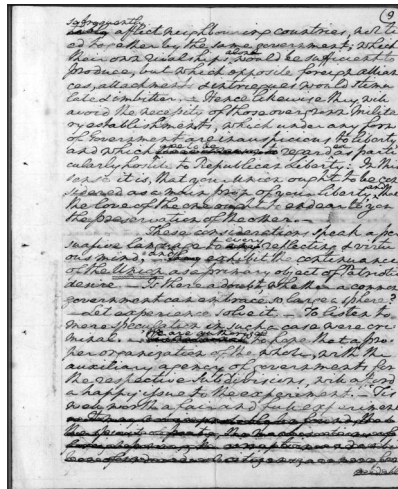


FIGURE 3: A page from the original draft Washington’s farewell address. Alexander Hamilton papers. Courtesy: Library of Congress.



and observations are confined, as you will readily perceive, to my draft of the valedictory Address. If you form one anew, it will of course, assume such a shape as you may be disposed to give it, predicated upon the Sentiments contained in the enclosed Paper." However, Washington had such a high regard for Jay that he instructed Hamilton to meet with Jay and have him review the document as well: "as I have great confidence in the abilities, the purity of Mr. Jay's views, as well as in his experience, I should wish his sentiments on the purport of this letter." Jay and Hamilton did meet in Jay's house on Broadway in New York City to review Washington's draft and another draft that the two men worked on and written by Hamilton to which minor changes were made, which Jay later said "none of much importance."<sup>46</sup> Washington's draft was left untouched by Jay and Hamilton and it was that document, now known as Washington's Farewell Address, which was published on September 15, 1796, in the *American Daily Advertiser* and later in many American and European newspapers and journals. However, the meeting between Hamilton and Jay would later play a central role in the strange debate that was about to erupt.

It was not until Hamilton's death in 1804 that the controversy over the authorship of the Farewell Address arose when one of the executors of Hamilton's Will, Nathaniel Pendleton, came across Hamilton's draft of the document and rumors were being spread by Mrs. Hamilton and her family that Hamilton and not Washington wrote the now famous Farewell Address. Pendleton gave Hamilton's papers to Rufus King, a lawyer, diplomat and fellow Federalist who agreed with Pendleton that Washington had authored the address. Pendleton did not want to compromise his position as one of Hamilton's executors if asked about the content of Hamilton's papers.

Rumors began to circulate about the controversy and would involve many notable Americans, including Peters and Jay. Richard Peters wrote to Jay in 1811 about the burgeoning talk among Hamilton's friends and admirers in New York and Philadelphia:

I am always hurt when I hear anything which tends to break with what remains of the *Charm* his [Washington's] Name once possessed. I would not *lie* to support any Position. But I would not tell mischievous Truths. You see I have glanced at his Farewell Address. It was meant to take off the Edge of the unnecessary *Buzz* that Hamilton wrote it. I do not believe that he did more than *dress* it; & most likely interweave some good Things.<sup>47</sup>

Peters then went on to attribute the “Buzz” to William Lewis, a prominent attorney in Philadelphia and neighbor of Peters and Dr. John Mitchell Mason, a famous orator and Quaker—“Our *Lewis* is constantly blabbing, *as a great secret*, (he had either personally, or from Dr. Mason) the Affair of the Farewell Address. When his [Lewis] Talents were at their best (which they now are not) I never could trust him with what I did not care whether or not all the world should know.”<sup>48</sup> Dr. Mason was writing a biography of Hamilton at the request of Mrs. Hamilton, which he later abandoned due to ill health. Mason admired Hamilton greatly, and had access to some of Hamilton’s papers which he intended to publish.

When Jay read Peters’s letter about the growing controversy he wrote to Peters and began by acknowledging receipt of Peters’s book on Plaister of Paris. He then wrote, “Your letter conveyed to me the first, and only information I have received, that a copy of President Washington’s Valedictory Address has been found among the papers of General Hamilton, and in *his* handwriting, and that a certain gentleman had also a copy of it, in the same *handwriting*. This intelligence is unpleasant and unexpected.” Jay composed a lengthy letter to Peters, in his lawyerly manner, in which he defended Washington’s character and his ability to write a valedictory: “the occasion invites me to take the pleasure of reviewing and bearing testimony to the merits of our departed friend.”<sup>49</sup> Jay then succinctly discussed his meeting with Hamilton and what had transpired. Always circumspect and in his finest legal manner, Jay noted,

Thus much for presumptive evidence, I will now turn to some that is direct. The history, (if it may be called) of the address is not unknown to me, but as I came to the knowledge of it under implied confidence, I doubted when I first received your letter, whether I ought to disclose it. On more mature reflection I became convinced that if President Washington were now alive, and informed of the facts in question, he would not only authorize, but also desire me to reduce it to writing; that when necessary it might be used to invalidate the imputations to which those facts give colour.<sup>50</sup>

Jay did not think that the contents of his letter should be disclosed at this time. He was very concerned that when the appropriate time arrived for disclosure of his letter he might be incapacitated or dead. His high regard and admiration and trust in Peters were obvious when Jay then wrote “I shall

now commit it to writing, and commit it to your care and discretion.”<sup>51</sup> This letter written by John Jay to Richard Peters and dated March 29, 1811, was to become the focal point of the authorship debate as it widened and involved more people.

Upon receipt of Jay’s letter, Peters wasted no time to mention it in the proper circles and circulate the facts of Jay’s involvement in the editing of the Address. Peters was committed to wait for the proper time to reveal the letter publicly and wrote to Jay, “Nothing can be a stronger Bulwark against their Attacks, than your letter. I shall not use it indiscreetly or busily. But when I shall believe that *you* would think it right, I will use it.” Jay was the only survivor of the principals involved in the drafting of the Farewell Address and he was still held in high regard and esteem by many Americans, even by those who may have differed with him on his policies, particularly the unpopular Jay Treaty. His character was beyond reproach, which only strengthened his assertion that Washington was indeed the author of the Valedictory Address. Peters was in a unique position to utilize Jay’s letter and Jay’s instructions for discretion. Peters was a judge in the Federal Circuit Court and a leading citizen of Philadelphia. He knew many influential people in the city and he did not hesitate to ultimately contact Dr. Mason and dissuade him from publishing Hamilton’s papers. Of Dr. Mason Peters wrote to Jay that “his Zeal for Disclosure of anything relating to Hamilton’s Fame, eats up his Discretion” and noted that Mason and William Lewis were as one on this subject. The letters between Peters and Jay from March through the fall of 1811 centered on the controversy and Peters’s success in having quelled much of the gossip with his judicious use of the existence of Jay’s letter in his possession without disclosing the contents of the letter.<sup>52</sup>

In 1818 Mrs. Hamilton visited Jay at his Bedford farm and discussed the Farewell Address with him, stating that she saw Washington’s letter to her husband asking Hamilton to make any *alterations* to the document that Hamilton thought proper. Jay noted in a letter to Peters that “This is certainly is very different from desiring him to compose one.”<sup>53</sup> Later that year, Peters assisted Jay in the ever-widening debate. It seems that Mrs. Hamilton had written to Bushrod Washington, who was not only George Washington’s nephew and executor of Washington’s estate, but also a Justice of the Supreme Court. In her letter, Mrs. Hamilton outlined her position in the matter. Mrs. Hamilton had visited the Justice at Mount Vernon and borrowed many of Hamilton’s letters to Washington for copying. It was after this visit that the Justice was “informed in Phila., by a friend, the authorship

of that address was attributed to Genl. H. in whispers by certain persons in N.York & Phil."<sup>54</sup> Peters was later to facilitate Justice Washington in making a copy of Jay's 1811 letter to Peters after the Justice had been drawn into the controversy.

Peters also used his powers of persuasion on Joseph Hopkinson, a federal district judge and eminent trial and constitutional lawyer to whom Mrs. Hamilton had loaned Hamilton's papers for purposes of writing a biography of Hamilton. Once again, Peters's wise use of Jay's letter enabled him to dissuade Hopkinson from publishing anything that would detract from Washington's reputation.

In 1825 events began to spiral when Mrs. Hamilton filed a suit in Chancery Court against Rufus King to relinquish the letters he had custody of for so many years. The lawsuit became fodder for the newspapers and so alarmed Bushrod Washington that he wrote to Chief Justice John Marshall for advice. Marshall stated that should the letters in question be published, they would agree with Jay's account of the episode and "they [Mrs. Hamilton and her family] must know that the address was written by General Washington and revised by his friends."<sup>55</sup> Marshall was very familiar with Washington's papers. In 1800 Marshall was asked by Mrs. Washington and Bushrod Washington to write a biography of the president and was given access to all of his papers. Marshall saw nothing in those papers to persuade him to doubt Washington's authorship of the valedictory.

The lawsuit brought national attention to the authorship debate and in 1825 the matter was taken up by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Founded the year before, its members were disturbed by the debate that had erupted over the authorship of Washington's valedictory. William Rawle, the first president of the Society who was an attorney and appointed by Washington to the post of U.S. District Attorney for Pennsylvania, met in December of 1825 with David Claypoole, the initial publisher of the Valedictory Address and to whom Washington had given his handwritten draft of the document. Claypoole recounted his meetings with Washington and allowed Rawle to view the draft of the address written in Washington's hand. Claypoole's account of his meeting with Washington was later published and incorporated into the *Memoirs of the Society*.

The Society continued its investigation and on February 6, 1826, an ad hoc committee was formed to pursue the inquiry. The members of the committee were William Rawle, Charles Jared Ingersoll, who was a former member of Congress and author, and Benjamin R. Morgan, the current president

of the Society. Then on February 10, the committee sent letters to Justice Bushrod Washington, Chief Justice John Marshall, Judge Richard Peters, and John Jay—"The interest which has lately been taken by so many in the question whether the Valedictory Address of the venerable Washington was his own composition or the work of another, has extended to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania which has appointed a Committee to make enquiries on the subject."<sup>56</sup> Justice Washington and Chief Justice Marshall, both of whom were familiar with Washington's papers, replied that they saw nothing in those documents to make them believe that anyone other than George Washington had written the address. Peters, who still retained Jay's letter concerning his all-important meeting with Hamilton, deferred to Jay's wishes not to reveal the contents of the letter when he wrote to the Society: "I cannot deliver his [John Jay] letters to any one without his permission."<sup>57</sup> But Peters then added

it is a strange pursuit in Hamilton's family, thus to give trouble to everybody who regards the fame of either the General or Col. H. himself. If he had written the Address, it is perfidy to betray the confidence reposed in him. But as he did not, it is wrong in his family to assert his having done it. In either case his descendants would gain no reputation, but our nation would suffer a serious injury by having the fascinating name of *Washington* taken from the creed of every friend of his country.<sup>58</sup>

Peters's statement is interesting for several reasons. It is a testament to his loyalty and respect for his good friend, John Jay, and pledge of confidentiality in the matter. He focused on the fact that neither Hamilton nor Jay had betrayed Washington's wishes for confidentiality, which gave credence to Washington's authorship of the address. Last, he bemoaned the possible effects on Washington's reputation, which he and Jay had the highest regard for, and upon the nation as well. Politics also colored the reasoning of some involved in the debate. Washington's supporters in this controversy were for the most part Federalists, while Hamilton's supporters were mainly Democratic-Republicans, a party founded by Madison and Jefferson primarily due to their opposition to the Jay Treaty. Washington himself was greatly disturbed by the formation of political factions and it was those very factions that had taken up sides in the debate. To people like Jay, Peters, Bushrod

Washington and John Marshall, their admiration for Washington never faltered through the years and they did not want to see Washington's reputation diminished in any way. Mrs. Hamilton though sought to augment her husband's reputation through the publication of a biography of him which gave rise to the suit she had brought in Chancery Court.

To Peters and Jay the authorship of the document was of grave importance, not just to Washington's reputation and legacy but to the nation as well. By this time Jay was eighty-two years old, an advanced age for that period, and he had suffered several strokes, which left him slightly incapacitated physically. He now deemed the time was right for his letter to Peters of March 1811 to be made public. His reply to the ad hoc committee was brief and direct: "to this request propriety requires from me a candid and explicit answer."<sup>59</sup> He stated that he had first learned of the controversy from Peters in 1811 and that he had written a letter to Peters outlining his meeting with Hamilton to review Washington's draft and that now "I therefore take the liberty to refer you to Judge Peters who will readily communicate to you the contents of that letter. Permit me to add, that should any copies be taken, it is my desire that they may be copies of the *whole*, and not merely of *parts* of the letter."<sup>60</sup>

The ad hoc committee, which was "uneasy and indignant" about the controversy, published Jay's letter of 1811 to Peters later that year along with its letters to Jay, Peters, Chief Justice Marshall, and Justice Washington, and their replies to the committee. The members of the committee stated that the findings

must remove all doubts on the subject. The facts stated in Mr. Jay's letter to Judge Peters well account for the *mistake which had accompanied* this question. The whole address appears to have been copied by General Hamilton, whose affectionate attachment to the President prevented him from thinking any trouble on his account too great, and this copy having been we now know, returned to his possession, was probably the cause of the opinion that he was the original author.

This ended the Committee's investigation into the authorship of the address.<sup>61</sup>

However, Jay was intent that his letter be published for the general public and on October 5, 1826, the *New York American* published Jay's 1811 letter to

Judge Richard Peters in its entirety. The paper issued a statement following the letter:

NEW YORK AMERICAN

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 5, 1826

The letter of Mr. Jay, which we publish this day, on the subject of Washington's Farewell Address, will be read with great interest. It is marked with the characteristic force and elegance of that gentleman's style, and in its facts and reasoning, is conclusive.<sup>62</sup>

Jay's reputation had retained the credibility and high regard that he had enjoyed while in public office, even from his opponents, and now from a newspaper with opposing political views. The course of the debate over Washington's valedictory had been decisively altered. After the publication of Jay's letter, Rufus King returned Hamilton's papers to Mrs. Hamilton, who then withdrew her lawsuit, both of them realizing the effect of Jay's letter. Mrs. Hamilton sold her husband's letters to the government, and they are now in the Library of Congress, but she never wavered in her belief that it was her husband who wrote the Farewell Address. In 1854, when she died at the age of ninety-seven, she attested to her belief in her Last Will and Testament that Hamilton was the true author of Washington's Farewell Address.

Peters and Jay had accomplished their goal and the controversy was resolved. There were several pamphlets published on the subject in later years, but the eventual publication of the papers of Washington and Hamilton ended the debate, which was all but forgotten and passed into history. It was the dedication and resolve of Peters and Jay that led to the publication of the facts surrounding the drafting of Washington's valedictory and all but ended the rumors. Jay was the only survivor of those involved in the drafting of the address and he used his great credibility and his lawyerly approach and skills to advantage. He implicitly trusted Richard Peters, to whom he delivered his letter of 1811 outlining his meeting with Hamilton. Peters respected Jay's wishes with great discretion and the confidentiality that Jay asked for. It was Peters who wisely used his position and reputation in Philadelphia to counter the rumors and innuendo surrounding the controversy. His direct intervention prevented the publication of Hamilton's papers until such time as the debate was resolved. In many ways, it was the perfect partnership between Jay and Peters.



Their friendship lasted until Peters's death in 1828. His home, Belmont, remained in the family until 1867 when it was sold to the city of Philadelphia and is now part of Fairmount Park and houses the Underground Railroad Museum. Jay died in 1829 and his farm remained in the Jay family for another four generations. The farm is now the John Jay Homestead a New York State Historic Site. It is fitting and proper that the two homes remain to perpetuate the legacies of Richard Peters and John Jay. In so many ways, these two men planted and nurtured the seed of American independence and aided in the growth of their nation through their diverse and dedicated efforts. Their efforts were like threads that helped to weave the fabric of the nation they helped to create. Peters wrote to Jay in 1808 about their beloved country, "Old Yates used to tell me in 1776, that if the Bantling Independence, lived out a year, it would last to the Age of Methusalah."<sup>63</sup> Jay wrote earlier in the Federalist Papers no. 2 that "This country and this people seem to have been made for each other,"<sup>64</sup> just as Richard Peters and John were not only friends but were indeed made for this country as attested to by their enduring friendship and accomplishments in tending their "vines."

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*L*ouise V. North, Janet M. Wedge, and Landa M. Freeman. *In the Words of Women: The Revolutionary War and the Birth of the Nation, 1765–1799*. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011) Pp. xxxv, 385. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$90.00. Paper \$39.95.

The editors of *In the Words of Women: The Revolutionary War and the Birth of a Nation* have created a vivid narrative of women's lives in the Revolutionary era. Weaving together short historical summaries, biographical context, and early American women's words, the book is unusually readable and fast-paced for its genre. For a general audience this work will be quite appealing (although the hardcover is priced out of this range, the paperback is only \$39.95) and it will be useful for college teaching.

The documents included in the book offer a wide range of women's voices. The editors have included Native, African American, and Jewish women, in addition to visiting European women and an abundance of loyalist women. The preponderance

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of documents is from the Northeast, which is to be expected, although there are a good number of writings from southern women. The addition of writings by women in the Caribbean and Canada would have added further diversity to this already quite varied collection.

The editors are transparent about their editorial practices, offering a detailed discussion of how they chose documents and what changes they have made. The documents range from the famous to the obscure, drawing on some archival finds but largely on previously published materials (although these have appeared in such a broad array of books that this compendium remains quite useful). For the most part, the editors have retained original spellings, although they have modernized punctuation and spelled out abbreviations. Such changes make the documents much easier to read, but suggest that the materials in this volume may be better used as teaching tools, references, and starting points rather than as original sources for scholarly research.

The editors occasionally explain names and developments mentioned in documents with parenthetical notes, making for a smooth reading experience without having to refer to footnotes. Each document is cited in detailed endnotes, and there is also a comprehensive bibliography of secondary works. A glossary of names accompanied by short biographies also helps readers keep track of the many women whose writings are included.

The book is divided into three sections: the Revolution, daily life, and life after the Revolution. The greatest focus is on the Revolution, with vivid descriptions of women's experiences of political unrest and war. From Hannah Griffitts's saucy poem "The female Patriots" to the Baroness Von Riedesel's vivid descriptions of life with the soldiers, the editors have included a wide range of voices and experiences of the war. Descriptions of political and military developments are interspersed with the documents to provide context.

The section on daily life is richly varied, with sections on healing, marriage, domestic work, and traveling. The entries range from letters and diaries to recipes and household account books. Love letters from women to their husbands are particularly powerful here and are among the most accessible to readers unfamiliar with the period. Many of the letters show the tight connection between social and political life; Cornelia Clinton's love letter to Edmond Genêt declared that "not withstanding your worth I do not think I could have been attached to you had you been any thing but a Republican" (188). It takes very few words to show, in this and many other

letters in the collection, the intimate dimensions of women's connection to politics. For the less-familiar letters, particularly those in the chapter on healing, the editors offer helpful explanations of eighteenth-century life and practices.

The final section on life after the Revolution is the shortest, in part because the previous chapters included plenty of documents from post-1783. The focus is largely on political developments and women's reactions to them, particularly Washington's inauguration and his death. Thus the section focuses more on a traditional narrative than on shifts in women's political roles, though it should be noted that scholars like Rosemarie Zagarri and Susan Branson have found many women's documents to demonstrate the latter.

Carol Berkin's short foreword to the book argues that women's voices "have sometimes been lost in the rush to provide analysis and narration of their roles" (x). She worries, rightly, that publications of women's papers are not keeping pace with the edited volumes of prominent men of the Revolutionary era. Yet analysis enables good interpretation and editing of primary source documents. Greater use of the analytical insights of the past thirty years of gender scholarship, on topics ranging from women's involvement in boycotts to companionate marriage to the professionalization of (and exclusion of women from) medicine, would have enriched the editorial context provided in this volume. Readers should make use of the volume's bibliography, which does highlight some of the rich historiography of women in the Revolutionary era.

This book is a result of the editors' passion for women's writings, and it is a pleasure to read history through the individual women the editors have chosen. Readers outside of academia will certainly enjoy the book and it may spark their interest in reading secondary scholarship on women's history. This book would also be a good addition to undergraduate courses on the American Revolution, exposing students to women's voices when they may be expecting to learn a male-dominated story. Finally, professors who advise senior thesis students or junior graduate students will find the volume helpful for locating easily accessible primary sources for research projects on women.

CASSANDRA GOOD

*Papers of James Monroe, University of Mary Washington*

Richard Newman and James Mueller, editors. *Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia: Emancipation and the Long Struggle for Racial Justice in the City of Brotherly Love*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011) Pp. ix, 260. Notes, index. Cloth, \$39.95.

*Antislavery and Abolition in Philadelphia* offers an interesting collection of essays addressing the city's abolition legacy. The editors set out to provide a "broad survey of themes" that collectively illustrate Philadelphia's central role in the U.S. antislavery movement and they succeeded. Though very useful for undergraduate students and readers with some knowledge of the U.S. abolition movement, the collection might be less suited for the other half of the target audience—visitors to Independence Mall. While some of the essays offer the type of broad coverage befitting a general audience, others are more specialized and will be better appreciated by readers with some background.

The collection is broken into three sections, moving from a more general to a more specialized treatment of Philadelphia abolition. The first section features an overview essay by Ira Berlin that traces Philadelphia's antislavery movement from 1685 to 1861. This chapter gives a valuable background and introduces a number of topics on which the other essays elaborate. For the most part the following essays take up the topics introduced and do a nice job of creating a dialogue that keeps the book flowing and locks the essays together.

The second section offers a number of essays that collectively lay out the framework of Philadelphia abolition. David Waldstreicher explains the origins of the state's abolition movement and draws upon his work on Benjamin Franklin's role in the movement. He also offers a glimpse into the importance of free produce to early abolition efforts. This essay will appeal especially to anyone with some understanding of free produce. Julie Winch's essay traces the role of black activists in the city's freedom struggle generation by generation and explains their efforts in a way that gives a thorough introduction to the subject. Of all the essays in the collection her description of the black abolition and civil rights movements does the best job of keeping the general reader in mind. Gary Nash's essay follows with a thorough explanation of how the Jeffersonian revolution and eclipse of Federalism led to a state-centered republic that left the issue of slavery in the hands of state rather than national authorities and left citizenship beyond the reach of blacks throughout the country. This chapter offers exciting insight into the political climate and racial ideologies of the time. Finally, Richard



Newman's essay provides a nice overview of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, its relevance to the national antislavery movement, and its shortcomings in terms of its failure to include black members.

The one topic Berlin introduced that should have been developed further in a separate essay in this section was the rise of immediate abolition in the city. The first national immediatist organization was founded in Philadelphia and a number of the city's abolitionists, including David Paul Brown (a gradualist mentioned in the book), founded an auxiliary society soon after. Newman and others mention the immediatists, but this topic should have been addressed on its own, perhaps by Ira Brown, the expert in this field.

Other topics that could have further enhanced the collection include the role of women in Philadelphia abolition and an overview of Quaker involvement. Some of the essays mention these issues, but if the book is intended for a general audience they should have been laid out in detail before further analysis of more specialized themes.

The third section is devoted to more specialized analytical treatments that will appeal more to readers with some background in abolition studies. W. Caleb McDaniel places Philadelphia antislavery into the transatlantic context, and Dee Andrews offers a very interesting and thorough look at the role of the various churches in the movement. Heather S. Nathans contributes an analysis of how various theater productions in the city addressed abolition and racial issues. This is one of the most analytical pieces and it will appeal to scholars of history, American studies, and English. One minor issue, however, is her assertion that the "generally respectable and well-dressed" members of the mob that assaulted Pennsylvania Hall were somehow atypical (214). A whole body of work, including Leonard Richards's *Gentlemen of Property and Standing*, shows otherwise. Finally, Elizabeth Varon gives a well-written account of the militant turn abolition took as the city's activists began to help fugitive slaves escape bondage.

The final section of the book will appeal to scholars and enthusiasts but perhaps not as much to general readers who may lack the expertise to fully appreciate them. Perhaps a better way to appeal to interested tourists would have been to include an essay on material culture incorporating artifacts housed in the city's various museum collections. Also, the editors mention that the volume "grew initially out of contemporary debates over the historical memory of slavery, race, and abolition" so an essay on Philadelphia abolition and historical memory would have made a great conclusion (vii).

Overall, however, the collection is very tightly focused, the essays are well written, and the information is useful to anyone interested in abolition, not only in Philadelphia but in the United States in general. Regardless of the intended audience, the best home for the collection would be an undergraduate class on reform or antislavery. It is broad-ranging and would give students much to discuss.

BEVERLY TOMEK

*University of Houston–Victoria*

Andrew Davis. *America's Longest Run: A History of the Walnut Street Theatre*. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) Pp. 424. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$44.95.

On February 2, 1909, Philadelphia's Walnut Street Theatre was midway through a run of a farcical play called *Brewster's Millions*. Despite being the centennial of the nation's oldest continuously running theatre, the milestone went unacknowledged (198). In many ways, Andrew Davis's *America's Longest Run: A History of the Walnut Street Theatre* is a repudiation of such neglect, and an effort to show that "the Walnut has been at or near the center of American theatrical activity since Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States" (1). In this ambitious work, Davis chronicles the history of the titular institution, a history that he asserts "is also the history of the American stage" (5). Ultimately, it is this expansiveness, as well as the nature and handling of his source material, that somewhat limits the appeal of Davis's impressive undertaking.

Over the course of sixteen chapters, *America's Longest Run* moves chronologically from William Penn's prohibition of theatrical productions in 1682 to the present. With the exception of the first (covering 1682–1809), each chapter focuses on between eight and twenty years. These divisions are determined by significant moments in the Walnut's development, major renovations of the building, the appearance of new technologies, or momentous historical events. First conceived and constructed as an equestrian arena for touring circus performances, the building did not host a "legitimate" theatrical production until the beginning of 1812, inaugurating the era of the actor managers, who handled both the creative

and business sides of running a company of actors (32). Their preeminence was short-lived, however, giving way over the next several decades to star performers, who exerted significant control over the theatre's repertory and financial organization. The spread of the railroad facilitated this shift, allowing stars to travel between theatres playing their favorite roles while local resident companies supplied the rest of the cast. In the 1870s the creative and commercial aspects of theatrical management became increasingly separated, and "theatre managers outside [of New York or Chicago] essentially functioned as landlords, booking touring shows into their houses" (160). Briefly taken over by the Federal Theatre Project in 1938, the Walnut was purchased in 1941 by the Shubert Organization, which used it as a venue for trying out shows bound for Broadway (235). Its most recent incarnation began in 1969, when the Walnut Street Theatre Corporation purchased the theatre and converted it into a continually evolving "community-oriented performing arts center," one that would ultimately encompass multiple performance venues and support a theatre education program for children (279).

Davis's narrative is largely structured around a chronology of the stars and productions that appeared at the Walnut, and his index is a veritable "Who's Who" of important American actors (stage, film, and television), playwrights, composers, and producers. Stars such as Edwin Forrest, Mrs. John Drew, and the Marx Brothers all had stage debuts at the Walnut, and important American plays such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) and *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959) saw their first productions at the theatre. Davis's kaleidoscopic study speeds through a dizzying array of personalities, productions, and historical events that all intersect in the property at the corner of Walnut and Ninth Streets. While he vividly describes changes to its architecture, Davis's focus is not the building itself, but rather "the events and productions that have taken place within its walls," which he believes serve an almost sacred function: "Like the Civil War battlefields that are hallowed by the lives of soldiers that were lost there, the Walnut is hallowed by the men and women who have given their lives to the theatre" (4). This emphasis rarely permits Davis to venture outside the Walnut's artistic context; its role in the changing landscape and demographics of the city, its interaction with the social and political upheavals that it witnessed, and its role as a community institution are rarely touched on in any detail until the book's final chapters.

It is in those chapters, however, that *America's Longest Run* comes into its own, as Davis describes the remarkable growth and development of the Walnut over the past several decades. This narrative is among the book's most useful contributions to the institution's history. Another important feature of Davis's chronicle may be found in the way that it documents the central role of the nondramatic in the various activities that took place in and around nineteenth-century American playhouses. While theatre historians have been moving toward more expansive definitions of theatrical performance in early America, there is still a tendency to fall back on a traditional binary that distinguishes between "legitimate" theatre (text-based and generally narrative in form) and other types of "amusements" (e.g., circus and animal acts, magicians, musical concerts, scientific lectures). While Davis still employs such terminology, his work demonstrates that "there was no sharp distinction between circus and theatre. . . . Both forms of entertainment competed for the same audience and borrowed freely from each other" (20).

The breadth of Davis's study, as well as the nature and treatment of his source materials, targets a more general audience. He deftly mines numerous (and lively) memoirs of actors and managers, and the text is peppered with fascinating anecdotes, such as the story of stagehand "Pop" Reed, who bequeathed his skull to the Walnut for use in future productions of *Hamlet* (176). Davis's reliance on dissertations and early theatre histories, none of which receive adequate interrogation, limit the book's usefulness for scholars, however, as does his neglect of much of the important work that historians of the theatre have produced over the past several decades. His treatment of the colonial and antebellum theatre, for example, overlooks the scholarship of Jeffrey Richards, Heather Nathans, and Odai Johnson (among others), whose work has enriched (and corrected) many claims of earlier theatre scholars.

Despite these shortcomings, *America's Longest Run* provides a rare opportunity to survey the development of an important American institution that has borne witness to much of the nation's history. Filled with more than forty illustrations and images, and exquisitely bound in red velvet reminiscent of theatre curtains, Davis's work will be a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of Philadelphia or the American theatre.

AARON TOBIASON  
*University of Maryland*

Harry Kyriakodis. *Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront*. (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011) Pp. 176. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$21.99.

In this overview of the Philadelphia waterfront, Harry Kyriakodis provides a strong basis for local history that will appeal to a variety of audiences. Readers do not have to have a specific interest in the Delaware River to enjoy Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront; the book contains a history of many city neighborhoods and their inhabitants. Written in a style that makes the author and his voice very present, the book is an experience in storytelling. The best part is that even the most surprising details are true.

Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront effortlessly walks through historical time in each chapter, blending the seventeenth century and modern times with ease. Instead of giving a chronological view of the waterfront, Kyriakodis focuses on a more locational history, one that makes for a much more interesting conversation. The book's north-to-south organization is an effective and unusual way to look at the history of the Delaware River. Most books on the history of the Philadelphia waterfront start in the middle of the city, Market Street, and branch out from that point to chronologically follow the city's expansion. Kyriakodis's decision to organize his book by neighborhood offers a fresh understanding of the expansive waterfront. Philadelphians characterize themselves by the culture of the neighborhood in which they were born or reside, not simply a geographical location; Kyriakodis recognizes this and organizes his book appeal to that sensibility. I only wish that the book came with a map or included several maps alongside the text; indeed, I found myself consulting a variety of maps to help determine the exact locations that Kyriakodis describes.

The introduction alone gives a sound background for those with little or no prior knowledge of the waterfront. The front and back cover images are well chosen to show the visual transformation of the river and illustrate the complex changes in this area of Philadelphia from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Winter recreation on the Delaware, construction of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, and the ever-changing purpose of the riverfront are shown through the images. Each brief chapter is focused on a given topic, like topography, military activities, art, and commerce, and all twenty are short enough to easily retain readers' interest. Though Kyriakodis sometimes refers to obscure events or seems to assume that his readers possess a certain familiarity with Philadelphia's maritime history, these moments do not prevent overall understanding. Anyone can learn about the waterfront from this book, from the completely uninitiated to a relative expert. History is about the details and

Kyriakodis assumes, I suspect rightly, that most of his readers will be unfamiliar with much of the material he presents. This wealth of information is one of many reasons why Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront is a worthwhile read.

As with every book, there are a few minor concerns that should be noted. Some of these relate to writing style and editorial choices. Though the chapters tend to be both short and focused on a single subject, in some cases organization breaks down within chapters when there is a certain lack of flow between topics, and this can make the author's train of thought difficult to follow, particularly for those without previous knowledge of the subject. Unfortunately, there are a few spelling and grammatical errors as well. Being a fact-checker and historian, I would have been pleased to see the inclusion of references or footnotes throughout the book. They would have given more backing to the claims expressed and may have helped substantiate certain ideas.

Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront also has some surprising omissions. Some interesting and important aspects of Philadelphia history that were based near the river, such as the Civil War refreshment saloons, are not mentioned. More seriously, while I get the sense that Kyriakodis is graciously skipping over the eventual blight years of the waterfront, this unfortunate part of its history is instrumental to how current Philadelphia leaders view the Delaware River area. While it may not have been a positive theme, it could have been included in a way that provides context for present-day attitudes toward the waterfront. Finally, Kyriakodis's underlying dislike of the I-95 highway is evident, and while this is a sentiment shared (with good reason) by most waterfront enthusiasts and many historians of the area, it also points to a clear bias that may prevent impartial discussions of certain kinds of development.

Despite these observations, Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront is currently the book that encompasses Delaware River history from William Penn nearly to the present day. The riverfront is constantly evolving to the needs of residents, businesses, and communities; just in the past year, the *Philadelphia Belle*, a river boat providing pleasure cruises mentioned in the book, is no longer operating. However, it is a terrific read for a varied audience of students, teachers, genealogists, newcomers to Philadelphia, long-time residents or native Philadelphians, and more. The book combines a social history of the waterfront with city history, technological history, economic history, and more—this is what makes Philadelphia's Lost Waterfront great.

MEGAN E. GOOD

*Independence Seaport Museum*

Denise A. Seachrist. *Snow Hill: In the Shadows of Ephrata Cloister*. (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2010) Pp. xvi, 167. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45.00.

As a native of Franklin County, Pennsylvania, I read Denise Seachrist's *Snow Hill* with great interest. I was surprised to discover a part of my home country's history that I had never known. *Snow Hill* combines two fascinating stories: the history of the Snow Hill Cloister and congregation and the narrative of the author's research and fieldwork at the Snow Hill site during the 1990s.

*Snow Hill* provides a general overview of the history and music of the Snow Hill Cloister and congregation throughout the nineteenth century, particularly during its peak period in the early part of the century. Seachrist demonstrates the ways in which Snow Hill served as a branch of the more famous Ephrata Cloister in nearby Lancaster County while illuminating the differences between the two cloisters as well. While the brothers and sisters of Snow Hill shared doctrines, particularly the insistence on adult baptism, foot washing, and the Love Feast, and even ministers with Ephrata, they also focused more on economic activities, adopted a less rigid organization, and remained more isolated from the outside world than their counterparts at Ephrata. Most important, Snow Hill continued the unique tradition of music and harmony begun by Georg Beissel at Ephrata in the eighteenth century, although the main composer at Snow Hill, Obed Snowberger, added a few distinctive touches of his own. Finally, Seachrist documents the tragedy of Snow Hill's gradual demise during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as its membership dwindled and the remaining members became embroiled in legal battles over the cloister's property.

Interspersed with this history of Snow Hill, Seachrist tells a more poignant story of the professional and personal friendships she formed with the people who have preserved the history and beliefs of Snow Hill into the twenty-first century. The author is the first scholar to gain access to the grounds, buildings, and manuscript archives of the Snow Hill Cloister. In a series of vignettes, the reader meets a cast of fascinating characters who for the past several decades have struggled to keep the legacy of Snow Hill alive. The most moving story is the development of the friendship between the author and George Wingert, the caretaker and protector of the Snow Hill property. The description of the growing friendship between



the young, urban academic from Kent State and the elderly recluse from rural Franklin County is the thread that ties the book together. As the person who grants and oversees Seachrist's access to the cloister's records, Wingert symbolizes the author's link to Snow Hill's past; at the same time, Seachrist's conversations with Wingert while conducting her research reveal the devotion and sincerity of the congregants in the present day. Unfortunately, the more recent stories also end in misfortune, as the author describes the squabbles among the remaining small group of dedicated Snow Hill congregants that led to the auctioning off of the cloister's material possessions in 1997 and Wingert's removal as caretaker of the grounds two years later.

*Snow Hill* is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of the cloister's place in nineteenth-century American history. Instead, the book is designed to tell the story of Snow Hill—the people and the place—then and now. Scholars seeking a deep analysis of the beliefs and actions of the congregation in the context of other early nineteenth-century utopian and religious communities will have to await future studies of Snow Hill. Readers searching for a heartwarming yet heartbreaking story of the people who have struggled to preserve the ideals and legacy of Snow Hill for two centuries, however, will be richly rewarded. What the book lacks in analysis, it more than makes up for in narrative and warmth. Seachrist has successfully combined an introduction to Snow Hill's history and music with a fascinating human drama filled with engaging characters and emotions set in both the past and the present. Indeed, the author's realization of the importance of the human dimension of history, both in the past itself and in the efforts of people in the present to preserve the legacy of the past, could be a model for other young scholars in many academic disciplines.

In the end, Seachrist's greatest contribution is more than simply introducing the world to a little-known segment of Pennsylvania's history. She has helped to preserve the written and musical records of Snow Hill by facilitating their placement in the Special Collections Archive at Juniata College, and she has preserved the memory of George Wingert and others who have cared for Snow Hill for so long. Through Seachrist's efforts, the legacy of Snow Hill and George Wingert will live on.

KEVIN YEAGER

*Oldfields School*

William O'Rourke. *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left*. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012) Pp. 344. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, \$27.00.

Nineteen-seventy-two in Harrisburg? Why, that was Hurricane Agnes, of course, when the Susquehanna crested fifteen feet above flood stage and the region sustained billions of dollars in damage. But there was another inundation just before the June flood, as the national press, FBI agents, and Harrisburg Defense Committee workers descended on Pennsylvania's capital from January to April for the trial of a loose-knit group of opponents of the Vietnam War who became known as the Harrisburg 7. The prosecution of these (mainly) Catholic religious activists, accused by FBI director-for-life J. Edgar Hoover of plotting to kidnap Henry Kissinger and blow up heating tunnels under the nation's capital, was one of several high-profile trials of antiwar activists on conspiracy charges. The Chicago 8 (who allegedly planned to disrupt the 1968 Democratic convention), the Boston 5 (opponents of conscription, one of whom was pediatrician Benjamin Spock), and Daniel Ellsberg (who leaked the "Pentagon Papers") are better remembered today, but the Harrisburg trial deserves recognition as well. As this evocative account by William O'Rourke reveals, it underscores the intersection of the local and the national during this turbulent era.

O'Rourke was a twenty-six-year-old aspiring novelist in 1972, a friend of one of the defense lawyers and immersed—like some of the defendants—in an ambivalent relationship with the Catholic Church. He came to Harrisburg with a small publisher's advance to write about the trial, and the book appeared later that year in the "new journalism" style just becoming popular. For this fortieth-anniversary edition, O'Rourke, now a veteran professor of English at Notre Dame, has added an afterword on the writing and reception of the book, along with a rather cynical synopsis of the trajectory of American politics, dissent, and the Catholic left from 1972 to the present. Though not a historian, O'Rourke is a gifted writer, with a sharp eye for the telling detail and for apposite historical and cultural allusions. His impassioned account, framed around a narrative of the courtroom proceedings, makes for compelling reading.

O'Rourke's sympathies are hardly in doubt. He blames the trial on Hoover's need to justify increased funding for his agency, which led him to fashion a conspiracy from a few offhand conversations and letters by radical priests Philip and Daniel Berrigan (who had previously been convicted for the public destruction of draft board files) and several associates. O'Rourke

draws a devastating contrast between the bungling efforts of the prosecutors and the skill and eloquence of the defense attorneys, a radical dream team that included Ramsey Clark, Leonard Boudin, and Paul O'Dwyer. The longer that Boyd Douglas, the prosecution's main witness, remained on the stand, the more the government's case crumbled. Douglas, a fellow inmate of Philip Berrigan's at the Lewisburg penitentiary who was permitted to take classes at nearby Bucknell University, had won the trust of some of the defendants and other local antiwar activists. However, during seven days of withering cross-examination, the defense caught Douglas in significant discrepancies regarding dates and conversations, and revealed him as a habitual liar. The defense rested without calling a single witness.

On the other hand, O'Rourke also shows the naiveté of some defendants—especially Elizabeth McAlister, a young nun, and Philip Berrigan himself—for trusting Douglas to pass letters in and out of prison, and for assuming, despite their history of civil disobedience, that their discussions of escalating protest would not draw government reprisals. O'Rourke portrays McAlister's bravado in committing such thoughts to paper as intended to impress Berrigan; indeed, the two—by then ex-priest and ex-nun—married a year after the trial. At one public meeting during the trial, McAlister revealed the historical ignorance and self-centeredness of some in the “new Catholic left” when she asserted that repression of dissenting voices was greater in the 1970s than it had been during the McCarthy era. O'Rourke notes in his afterword that his book “was never a favorite . . . of the Berrigan group” (287).

The verdict was a stunning blow to Hoover, with a hung jury on most counts (ten members favored acquittal), and convictions only on the charges of letters being passed to and from prison. But O'Rourke argues that the Catholic left suffered, too, as the revelation of even the contemplation of violence cracked “its pillar of moral superiority” (267). O'Rourke's reflections forty years later include many such astute observations, but they are impressionistic and meandering rather than rigorously presented. For example, his failure to discuss the substantial Catholic opposition to Reagan's policies in Central America and his suggestion that the Berrigans' precedents underlay the Catholic right's attacks on abortion clinics show missed opportunities for more sustained analysis.

Jack Nelson and Ronald Ostrow's *The FBI and the Berrigans* (1972) contains a superior account of the prosecution and of Bucknell's radical milieu. Chapter 14 of Murray Polner and Jim O'Grady's *Disarmed and Dangerous: The Radical Life and Times of Daniel and Philip Berrigan* (1997) is the best

short account of the trial and makes excellent use of archival sources from the FBI and the Berrigans. But O'Rourke excels at bringing Harrisburg into the story. His expansive accounts of jury selection in this conservative region show what the defense had to overcome. O'Rourke poignantly describes several antiwar vigils in the Harrisburg area during the trial, but he also documents the difficulties of the Defense Committee in reaching out to local residents. He makes acerbic asides about local citizens and politicians who found themselves in the national limelight, and he captures the mood of a city struggling with white flight and economic decline.

While one would have hoped that a fortieth-anniversary edition would contain a clearer historical perspective, the republication of *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left* should help introduce a new generation to these important events and to refocus attention on how the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement affected the home front.

ROBERT SHAFFER  
Shippensburg University

Lisa Levenstein. *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) Pp. 320. Illustrations, bibliography, index. Cloth \$47.50.

Tracing the multiple contexts through which African American women endured and subverted racialized poverty in postwar Philadelphia, Lisa Levenstein examines their efforts to create more responsive social welfare policies throughout the city's public institutions. She dismisses the "underclass" thesis, which diminishes African Americans' complex socioeconomic responses to the changing postwar urban paradigm, by framing working-class African American women as proactive agents, who pursued government assistance to support themselves and their families amid structural (namely deindustrialization and racial discrimination) and personal impediments consuming their lives. Levenstein chronicles African American women's daily struggles and their evolving relationships with various welfare and government agencies, initially focusing on their contentious encounters with state-administered welfare and judicial programs and then shifting her attention to their campaigns for greater access to better housing, healthcare, and educational facilities. Quietly

engaged in key struggles with public institutions in the 1950s and 1960s, African American women mobilized not only to enhance their communal and familial conditions, but also to reshape the very foundations of institutional power and entitlements throughout Philadelphia's public entities.

As working-class African American women fled the South's segregationist regime and ventured north in search of dignified employment opportunities in the 1940s and 1950s, they confronted myriad discriminatory patterns not only in Philadelphia's labor market, but also within its government-sponsored welfare programs. Levenstein notes that women questioned and challenged the restraints imposed on them by the Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program, which assisted working-class women only after they had reached the nadir of their economic existence. Moreover, the ADC refused to support women who cohabitated with men, embracing the position that "women who lived with men should give up welfare and get married" (33). Combating the ADC's conservative handling of welfare assistance, African American women and mothers sought to overcome the program's institutional hurdles through various strategies to secure additional welfare funding, even as many worked domestic jobs and lived with male partners. Levenstein points out multiple scenarios in which women fought for increased financial aid from the ADC, as well as the careful balancing act they engaged in to remain on its institutional rolls: "Some viewed domestic work as particularly demeaning and saw little benefit in leaving ADC for jobs that yielded comparable or even lower income. Others insisted on obtaining more money than either welfare or low-wage jobs provided and earned income secretly . . . while receiving ADC" (32).

African American women faced similar encumbrances within Philadelphia's judicial apparatus. The Philadelphia Municipal Court curbed women's access to increased financial support and trivialized domestic violence in African American households. Although women depended on the municipal court's assistance to sustain their families in the 1950s, Pennsylvania welfare officials instituted measures to prevent perceived abuses of the legal structure's benefits. Levenstein also finds that municipal judges dissuaded women from seeking legal recourse in domestic disputes and urged them to resolve their marital differences through other remedies, like domestic counseling. African American women responded to these gendered and state-driven impositions by choosing to press "charges only [when] they believed that legal authorities' strong support for male breadwinning would work in their favor" (86). In redefining the terms upon which the Philadelphia Municipal Court

accommodated their needs, women safeguarded their privacy from further government intrusion while securing much-needed financial and protective assurances from state-administered welfare entities.

Levenstein further contends that African American women confronted widespread class, gender, and racial barriers in Philadelphia's public housing system. They responded to this challenge by forging grassroots initiatives to combat entrenched discriminatory patterns. Following World War II, the NAACP and white liberal reformers compelled the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) to desegregate public housing sites, creating new opportunities for black families to secure residential footholds. The NAACP and PHA envisioned public housing along class and gender lines, making appeals to two-parent African American households while restricting working-class, single mothers from the application process. Persistent efforts by working-class women eventually won them entry to public housing, however, and they fought to transform their living quarters into respectable domiciles reflective of their individual aesthetic tastes. Nonetheless, facing an ongoing backlash from middle-class whites who resented public housing projects in their communities, African American women still resided in predominantly impoverished and segregated neighborhoods and met resistance from housing officials about improving their facilities even as they asserted their rights in housing disputes.

African American women, worried about pervasive discriminatory patterns and segregation measures in Philadelphia's public schools, also mounted campaigns against school administrators, officials, and white residents who deliberately subverted their children's educational aspirations. Disgusted by inadequate academic standards, the tracking system, and understaffed faculties, many women spoke with school administrators and teachers about their concerns. They addressed their children's academic development and even lobbied for school transfers, which ignited further racial schisms with middle-class whites, who removed their children to all-white schools or suburban school districts.

To document African American women's socioeconomic milieu and their role in the struggle for civil rights in the "City of Brotherly Love" during the 1950s and 1960s, Levenstein employs government reports, African American and city newspapers, and oral histories. She also integrates compelling visual evidence and statistical tables into her analysis, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to explain African American women's everyday plights. In bringing together these materials, she unravels the multifaceted

racial, judicial, and social dimensions of postwar African American migratory patterns while also examining postwar liberalism's strengths and limitations in response to the changing demographics of postwar Philadelphia. Moreover, Levenstein dissects the gendered meanings of these broader struggles within the African American community. Her incorporation of oral histories from women offers an invaluable lens for urban historians seeking to comprehend the complex interracial and intraracial tapestries through which African American women defined their lives.

In giving a "voice" to the voiceless, Levenstein accentuates African American female agency and unveils the myriad strategies employed by working-class women to rearrange the terms upon which public institutions responded to their social and economic concerns. Although racial animosities pervaded the city, African American women could overcome the institutional and racial obstacles besieging them at every turn by crafting grassroots legal, domestic, and educational solutions to destabilize the structural boundaries keeping them marginalized. Levenstein's account affords urban scholars a better understanding of how African American women in Philadelphia altered their destinies amid unfolding racial turmoil in postwar America.

MATTHEW SMALARZ

*University of Rochester*

Hayes Peter Mauro. *The Art of Americanization at the Carlisle Indian School*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011) Pp. 184. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$45.00.

Set in the context of America's "Gilded Age," Mauro's visual culture history centers on the trope of the "before and after" portraits used to mark the progress and practice of assimilating Indians into Americans at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. His aim is to show how Richard Pratt, the school's administrator, used photographs to argue that "by means of aesthetic transformation, these groups were to be converted from an assumed state of degenerate Otherness into model 'American' citizens" (1).

To begin his analysis, Mauro builds on the work of Albert Boime in *The Art of Exclusion*, which suggests that the mingling of ideological pre-determination with aesthetic convention has parallels in other media. *The Art of Americanization* also functions as a dynamic correlative to Elizabeth



Hutchinson's argument in *The Indian Craze: Primitivism, Modernism, and Transculturation in American Art, 1890–1915* regarding the mainstream interest in Native American material culture as “art” that spread across the nation from west to east and from reservation to metropolis.

Relying on Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes, Mauro articulates a method that critically analyzes the visual imagery produced at Carlisle to argue that photographs functioned as a way of showcasing the ideal of American citizenship. Yet, what is most striking and important about this work is Mauro's choice of visual evidence, namely the photographs created through the collaboration between Pratt and John Nicholas Choate, a professional photographer from the town of Carlisle, as well as photographs produced (respectively) by documentary photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston and an Indian student, John Leslie.

Mauro begins by framing the work of all three photographers through sociology, noting that the boarding school was a “total institution” akin to other sites known for the management and oppression of people, including mental hospitals, prisons, and concentration camps. Through this postulation Mauro relies on Gramsci to argue that “the intent of the Carlisle photographs was to show this process of rationalizing the body and mind of the worker” (3). Mauro then turns to *panopticism* as theorized by Foucault as another means for understanding the social spaces of Carlisle that required “before and after” portraits, and the *studium* and *punctum* used by Barthes to offer innovative readings of Carlisle's photographs. For example, Mauro suggests that an image titled Croquet, featuring several female students “casually yet conveniently arranged before the camera,” offers the viewer “the feeling of leisure and ease” that is “balanced by the presence of a male groundskeeper on the far right, who is watching over the young women” (111). This “overseer trope,” Mauro notes, was typical of nearly all of Johnston's images. Even more important and evocative is Mauro's claim that such imagery circumscribed the students “neatly into the architectural fold of the campus grounds” and with this representation Johnston offered “no vision of the world *beyond* the campus” (112). Here Mauro draws on Foucault and the work of scholar and curator Barb Landis to note that the school grounds served “as a panoptic architectural device” that Pratt saw as useful for containing students both physically and perceptually (122).

Mauro's story is as much about the production of photographic evidence aimed to manage public perceptions of Carlisle and its successful assimilation of Indian pupils as it is a story about changes in manhood, nationhood,



and technology that marked the end of the nineteenth century in the United States. For instance, the photographs by Johnston that appeared in *The Red Man and Helper* (the school's main literary periodical) illustrate both that Pratt erased Johnston's participation by neglecting to mention her name, "even though by 1901 she enjoyed an international reputation," and how the album she made worked to confirm the methods, aims, *and* results of the school (110). In other words, Mauro suggests that the photographic series created by Johnston but controlled, edited, and circulated by Pratt between 1902 and 1904 sought to represent "The Carlisle Idea" and the promise of successful assimilation of Native children. For Pratt, Indian education relied upon the school's operation as both a site for industrial labor training and a cultural space affording students leisure time. Mauro argues that Pratt's strategic selection and publication of certain images aimed to confirm that Native students were "salvageable" because they could be uplifted "beyond the savagery of their forebears" through systematic exposure to "all things civilized," such as Christianity, the English language, applicable trades, and white bourgeois leisure (111). These hallmarks of white Euro-American civilization, which Pratt sought to represent and celebrate using the medium of photography (a mode that itself signified the critical necessity of technological innovation), were also necessary components of a wider American social agenda aiming to assimilate both Indians and immigrants into properly "modern" citizens.

Chapter 5 attends most specifically to Indian people, not just as objects or subjects for Pratt's propagandist photographs, but as complicated individuals caught in a controlling educational system. In addition to detailing the professional relationship between Pratt and Johnston, Mauro considers a rare sanctioning of student photographic practice by turning to the work of John Leslie. "Native American practitioners of photography were rare in the nineteenth century, and thus Leslie's images offer a potentially uncommon vision of the boarding-school experience" (125). Given that there are other areas of the book where Mauro retraces the well-worn steps of art historians who have read and analyzed photographs produced during this era (especially the work of Johnston), the inclusion of Leslie, a member of the Puyallup tribe in Washington State who attended Carlisle in the 1890s and studied photography as part of the school's outing program in 1894, offers the most original and compelling part of this book. It is surprising that Mauro does not do more with Leslie as an example, which he might have connected to his discussion of the "Imaging of the 'Manly' Native Body" at the end of the chapter (126).

Mauro's conclusion points us to the short-sightedness of Pratt's photographic program, noting that by 1900 "the status of self-consciously mass-produced tourist art was endowed with a talismanic quality by the middle-class northeastern Anglo-Americans who collected the items" and it was in this context that Pratt's "one-sided system of repressing all signifiers of a lingering Indianness lost favor," ultimately resulting in his resignation in 1904 (134). Mauro succeeds in showing that the side-by-side comparison of photographic portraits "projected an aura that could best be appreciated in the nineteenth century," and throughout the book he makes clear that the inspiration and initial "success" of the Carlisle photographs was based on the authority of science and objectivity as exemplified by social expectations regarding photographic technology (134). This book is an important reminder of the power involved in creating and disseminating visual culture when the aim is to chart the aesthetic transformation of an individual from "savage to citizen," and a great addition to the history of American art and culture, Native American studies, the history of ideas, U.S. education, and critical studies of race and gender.

KIARA M. VIGIL

*Amherst College*

Joseph Seymour. *The Pennsylvania Associators, 1747–1777*. (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishers, 2012) Pp. xxiv+280. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover. \$29.95.

From 1747, when Spanish "pirates" (actually, privateers) first appeared on the Delaware River during King George's War, until the state of Pennsylvania established a militia act in 1777, Pennsylvania was defended by volunteers known as Associators. Although some Quakers believed that even permitting others to defend them might bring down the wrath of God on a province that had survived without a military force for sixty-five years, even most members of that sect recognized that once the mid-eighteenth-century wars troubled William Penn's "Holy Experiment," such extreme pacifism was no longer tenable.

Benjamin Franklin played a prominent role in organizing the first Association of 1747, in which inhabitants of the three "old counties"—Bucks, Chester, and Philadelphia—mobilized to defend a threat to their shipping.

But the Associators came into their own during the French and Indian War. No armed forces of any sort protected the Pennsylvania frontier following General Braddock's defeat in 1755, and people in western Pennsylvania had to associate to defend themselves once Indian attacks ravaged the backcountry in the wake of that debacle. Within a year, John Armstrong, Hugh Mercer, and William Thompson were among those who marched from Carlisle to Kittanning in September 1756, surprising a principal Indian base camp. Although it failed to stop the raids, the grateful city of Philadelphia issued the first medal ever coined in the colonies to honor a military achievement.

Pennsylvania Associators also confronted each other. After the Paxton Boys massacred the remaining twenty Conestoga Indians in 1763, they marched on Philadelphia, where they were met by those from the eastern part of the colony, whose show of force persuaded them to turn back with the promise they would be better defended. Pontiac's War, however, proved they were not. In 1765 Associators who met at Mercersburg turned back caravans that were shipping knives and guns to the Indians with the approval of the Pennsylvania authorities and the local British garrison at Fort Loudoun, which they forced to close. This was the first military confrontation between British troops and Americans in the decade preceding the Revolution. (See the essays on the William Smith house published in the Winter 2012 issue of *Pennsylvania History*.)

When the American Revolution began, the Associators' role expanded, given a conservative colonial government that was reluctant to oppose British policies. They raised supplies to aid Boston after the Coercive Acts shut the harbor, suppressed suspected loyalists by making them sign confessions and (if necessary) confiscating their weapons and imprisoning them, and raised troops and materiel for the Continental Army as well as Pennsylvania's own defense. In 1775 military experience of the western Pennsylvania Rifles prior to the Revolution led to the Continental Congress summoning them, along with their counterparts in Virginia and Maryland, as the first units of the newly constituted Continental Army to join the forces Washington was mustering outside Boston. Thompson, Mercer, and Armstrong became their leaders.

When Pennsylvania became independent, the Associators protested that too many people in a state whose eastern region was filled with Quakers, other pacifists, and loyalists were shunning military service. In 1777 they persuaded the state legislature to end their existence by replacing them with a state militia. As both Associators and militiamen, many Pennsylvanians for the first time became involved in local government, enforcement of economic

regulations, mobilization of supplies, and a greater cash economy that flowed from the Revolution's demands. (Frank Fox's article on this subject will appear in the spring 2013 issue of *Pennsylvania History*.)

Joseph Seymour, a historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, DC, has written a fine book. Associators appear here and there in other books, and several articles he cites in his bibliography, but they have never received the attention they deserved for their crucial role in fighting the French and Indian War and bringing about Pennsylvania's Revolution. He concentrates mostly on the nuts-and-bolts of their behavior and its immediate political context. For the larger significance of how such associations, not only in Pennsylvania but elsewhere, were the vital elements that brought the Revolution home to the vast majority of people who had to fight and endure it, readers should consult as well Hermann Wellenreuther, ed., *The Revolution of the People: Thoughts and Documents on the Revolutionary Process in North America* (Göttingen: University of Göttingen Press, 2006).

WILLIAM PENCAK

*Editor, Pennsylvania History; Ohio State University*

## CONTRIBUTORS

MARTIN J. DESHT (see introduction to his photographic essay).

CAROL E. BRIER holds an honor's degree in history from Queens College, City University of New York, and is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society. A former Trustee of the Friends of John Jay Homestead, she is a long-time volunteer at the historic site. She has researched the John Jay Collection at the Butler Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University for the John Jay Homestead. Articles that she has written about John Jay and the China Trade have been published in the 2001 catalogue of the Bedford Spring Antiques Show and the John Jay Homestead History Notes. Her article, "John Jay and George Washington's Valedictory," was published in 2010 by the Supreme Court Historical Society in two issues of the *U.S. Supreme Court Historical Society Quarterly*. Another article she has written, "Joseph Cusno, the Sicilian Immigrant and the Jays of Bedford," was published by the Westchester County Historical Society in the Spring 2011 issue of the *Westchester Historian*; the last two articles published added new information to the documented history of the John Jay Homestead. She is currently writing the first of several books about John Jay and other articles about his descendants.

ERICA RHODES HAYDEN is currently finishing her dissertation at Vanderbilt University on female criminality and punishment in antebellum Pennsylvania. She earned her MA in history from Vanderbilt in 2009, and graduated with a BA in history from Juniata College in 2007. She has contributed a series of encyclopedia articles to *The Social History of Crime and Punishment in American History* published by SAGE in 2012. Her research interests include nineteenth-century social history, antebellum reform movements, and the history of crime and punishment.

CHRISTOPHER SHEPARD received his MA in history from the University of Charleston/Citadel Joint Program. He is the author of *The Civil War Income Tax and the Republican Party, 1861–1872*, and an adjunct instructor of history at Trident Technical College. He currently resides in Mount Pleasant, SC, with his wife and son.

ANDREW T. TREMEL, a native of Glenshaw, Pennsylvania, graduated from Thiel College with a BA in history in 2006 and from Kent State University in 2008 with an MA in history. He worked for the National Park Service in Northern Virginia and is now employed at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

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