

THE QUAKER CUNNING FOLK: THE
ASTROLOGY, MAGIC, AND DIVINATION OF
PHILIP ROMAN AND SONS IN COLONIAL
CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

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For nearly one hundred years, academia has paid considerable attention to those travesties of justice that took place in and around Salem, Massachusetts, in the seventeenth century. Although New England's witch-hunts were decidedly horrific, they alone do not solely demonstrate the complexity of colonial America's love-hate relationship with esoteric ideology. In fact, similar crises of justice and faith were occurring at roughly the same time in colonial Pennsylvania. For whatever reason, the birthplace of liberty has been shamefully overlooked in this decidedly peculiar area of judicial and religious history. Although popular culture has awarded Massachusetts the distinction of being recognized as America's "witchcraft capital," it was Pennsylvania's earliest practitioners of the mystical arts who quietly fostered the archetype of the American "cunning man." Much like their European brethren, these hybrid practitioners of the occult arts often paired the esoteric worldview of the Renaissance magus with the practicality of the traditional sorcerer.

Such a philosophical synthesis was well known to Philip Roman (~1645–January 11, 1730). It was even better known to his two sons, Robert and Philip Jr., who became embroiled in a controversy that would ultimately test the faith of an early Quaker province. As the Christian eschatology of the Society of Friends collided with the importation of various esoteric techniques, the brothers would come to find themselves with a definite reputation of possessing forbidden knowledge. With such gossip reaching a fever pitch, tongues began to wag about Robert's disruption of fellow colonist Henry Hastings's marriage, possibly with the perception of magical interference playing some role. By proxy (at least by Quaker reckoning) all of this led to their father's assumption of a certain, if indirect, guilt. Consequently, both secular and Quaker authorities in colonial Chester County joined forces for a full-fledged inquest.

That inquest began on November 11, 1695. The Friends' Monthly Meeting Minutes record "some friends haveing a concern upon them" in regards to some "young men" who "came amongst friends to their meetings" who stand accused of "following some arts which friends thought not fit for such as profest truth to follow." The concern, in particular, calls attention to matters such as "astrology," geomancy, chiromancy, and necromancy. As a whole, the practices were said to bring "a vaile over the understanding and a death upon the Life."¹ Though "astrology" perhaps requires little explanation, it is noted that the other offenses (real or imagined) run the spectrum of divination—with geomancy being something loosely akin to a Western version of the *I Ching*—palm reading, and holding an audience with spirits. At this time, both common parlance and Quaker philosophy would have equated "necromancy" with something quite close to black magic; indeed, later court records pertaining to the controversy substitute one of the word's well-known variants, *negromancy*, which translates more literally to such.² It should be pointed out that the creation of a link between magic and blasphemy is a recurring theme in certain similar cases during the colonial period, at times those in neighboring states.³

If these accusations seem unusual, then their context might only be described as extraordinary. Lying just beneath the surface of this mystically tinged drama, which was now only beginning to unfold, we find a number of oddly synchronistic circumstances paired with a small sampling of a "who's-who" in early Pennsylvania. In truth, the accusations may owe most of their substance to the identities of the individuals involved, many of whom were

wealthy and well educated. At least some of these names will undoubtedly prove familiar to scholars, but their context here must be considered unique.

Mapping these curiosities requires some background on the elder Roman himself, who, before finding himself entangled amidst accusations of magic, divination, and necromancy in the New World, hailed from Lyneham, Wiltshire (England). Roman was a first-purchaser in colonial Pennsylvania, obtaining 250 acres from William Penn in April of 1681, which was finally surveyed on February 23, 1683.⁴ The land purchased was in Concord Township, Delaware County, appearing in Thomas Holme's Map of the Improved Parts of Pennsylvania.⁵ A shoemaker by trade, he seems not to have resided on the land in question, instead living on a nearby farm along Chichester Creek.⁶ When arriving home sometime in 1682, he was accompanied by his wife Martha and the couple's eight children. Martha and three of the children died that same year, leaving Philip (and five hungry mouths) alone in the fledgling province.⁷

In a testament to the hardiness of the early American spirit, Roman triumphed against these incredible hardships and became a significant figure in early colonial Chester County. We see him involved in municipal development that ultimately furthered the success of the early settlement: for instance, in 1687 he was appointed as supervisor of highway development in the area between Chichester Creek and Namans Creek.⁸ Later, part of his own land ended up involved in a highway construction project, and in 1701 he became a trustee of the land purchased to build a county prison in Chester.⁹ His success afforded him the privilege of becoming known by none other than William Penn himself, being mentioned by Penn in a charter given to the Borough of Marcus Hook in 1701. Here, Roman was appointed as a warden of the annual fair and weekly market.¹⁰

Three years after the death of his wife Martha, Roman married Sarah Coole, the widow of William Bezer. The handling of Bezer's estate seems to have created some problems for Roman: a Chester County Orphans' Court record from 1689 relates that "Phillip Roman was Called 3 times butt making noe appearance it was ordered that a Warrant be Issued out to y^e Shreife to apprehend him and to Carry him before y^e next Justice of y^e Peace for this County in order to give an account why he doe not per forme y^e Order of y^e last Orphans Court." The next morning (following an adjournment of the court), Roman does, in fact, appear. He "was ordered to bring in a Copy of y^e Enventory of y^e Estate of his Prediceasor W^m Beasar to Satisfie this Court

what is Become of y^e Estate of y^e Disceased.”¹¹ Despite the legal maneuvering, Roman seems to have been a decent enough suitor to warrant two more marriages in his lifetime, realizing a grand total of four wives after all was said and done.¹²

The year 1690 saw Roman wed Amy Kingsman, widow of one John Harding. Both Amy and John were “among the first settlers under Penn.”¹³ Amy had a brother, John Kingsman, who, as it will be described shortly, later crossed paths with Roman on somewhat unfavorable terms. It may have been Roman’s marriage to the distinguished Kingsman that propelled both the wealth and stature of the former, giving way to even further accomplishments in what was now a bustling colonial career. Having been described as a “Constable of Chichester” in 1687, and after fulfilling duties in that regard, he ended up becoming involved with politics as an Assembly member in both 1692 and 1695.¹⁴ These early careers in both law enforcement and politics would later see him gravitate toward judicial duties, serving as a justice of the peace in 1698 and 1703.¹⁵ A judiciary career, in particular, seems quite apropos for Roman, as he served as a juror several times between 1688 and 1690.¹⁶ Approximately five years later, in both 1694 and 1695, he graduated to serving as foreman.¹⁷

Personally, Roman went on to acquire further land of his own—in 1701, we see records reflecting the conveyance to him of some 1,000 acres, all of which he received through the family of John Harris, a fellow Englishman from Wiltshire who had purchased 1,500 acres some thirty years prior (in 1681).¹⁸ Such acquisitions were not confined solely to Chester County, as records indicate that Roman also delved into the Philadelphia real estate trade. In 1702 he obtained 170 acres in Philadelphia County, followed by two city lots in 1704.¹⁹ Needless to say, the sum of all of these purchases clearly demonstrates Roman’s significant interest in the development of the early colony. The specific real estate acquired (and the sheer breadth of scope) makes it clear that in colonial times the properties would have amounted to a considerable land portfolio.

Having discussed his secular achievements at length, it should also be noted that Roman held a significant presence in the Meeting Minutes of the Chichester/Concord Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, and also appeared within the Minutes for the Chester Quarterly Meeting.²⁰ Careful examination of the original Minutes reveals an incredibly close-knit Christian community with Roman’s own estate sometimes playing host to the meetings themselves. Perhaps even more noteworthy is the fact that his name

appears at the top (or near the top) of attendance lists transcribed alongside the monthly recaps of local affairs.²¹ The rationale behind Roman's careful placement on these lists is uncertain, but one could speculate that it was linked to his strong socioeconomic standing, or that it reveals a possible inclination toward punctuality. Alternatively, it could have been that Roman (or even a close associate) frequently acted as scribe. No matter the cause, the effect is such that Roman's name is one of the most prominent throughout the Monthly Minutes for the years in question.

When the controversy began on November 11, 1695, Philip Roman was still married to Amy Kingsman, and it was her brother, John, who was one of two men ordered by the Friends on that day to ensure that Philip (and sons Philip Jr. and Robert) would appear at the next monthly meeting. Assistance was to be provided by one William Hughes, who, like John Kingsman, ties back to the Roman family in an interesting fashion. Chester County court records indicate that he (as "William Huews") was involved with Philip Sr. in a real estate transaction also involving John Bezer (Sarah Coole's nephew from her previous marriage to the late William Bezer) on June 10, 1695.²² Also mentioned is a transaction involving John Bezer representing (as counsel) his sister Frances (therein described as "ffrancis Bezer"), in deeding Philip Roman some forty-two acres on 02-09 mo. 1694 (November 2, 1694).²³ In both cases, land seems to have been deeded by these parties to Philip Roman, which raises the question as to what exactly was going on—it is again noted that Roman took William Bezer's widow, Sarah Coole, as his second wife in 1685.

One wonders if these transactions (and Hughes's subsequent involvement in the accusations surrounding the Roman family) had anything to do with a disagreement regarding the handling of Sarah's estate.²⁴ Likewise, John Kingsman's presence seems unusual given his distinction as Roman's brother-in-law. Such speculation aside, there was nonetheless an intricate web of personal and professional proximities between Kingsman, Hughes, and the Roman family. These circumstances afford the possibility that some mixture of these parties comprised the individuals described in the Minutes dated 11-09 mo.-1695 as having "a concern upon them," having already clearly ascertained that Philip Jr. and Robert were at least two of the "young men" that the Friends were so concerned with!

At the next monthly meeting (which ultimately fell on December 9, 1695),²⁵ we see that the efforts of Kingsman and Hughes apparently bore fruit, if only to a certain extent. Philip Jr. and Robert were "spoak to about

those Arts and Sciences” and “seemed to disowne w^t is Mentioned except Astroligy.” To this end, the Minutes indicate that “much was said unto them But it was not Received.” Consequently, the youths pitched the idea (or were perhaps more likely steered) to “Confer wth Nicolus Newlin and Jacob Chandler,” and if this pair “could convince them y^t it was Evill they would Leave it.”²⁶

Like Roman, Newlin also served as a justice of the peace for a time.²⁷ Not unlike Kingsman and Hughes, he also had some involvement in previous Roman family business. An early Orphans’ Court record from 1689 indicates his fostering the children of one William Oborn—children who had previously been under the care of Edward Bezer, presumably the brother of William Bezer.²⁸ Consequently, this links Newlin to William Bezer, and his widow (later Roman’s second wife), Sarah Coole. It was perhaps not wholly by chance that the Oborn hearing took place on the same day that the court chose to address the previously mentioned controversy pertaining to Philip Roman’s interest in the estate of William Bezer. Coming full circle, Roman would go on to marry Dorothy Clayton on February 18, 1714. Not only was she the daughter of one of Roman’s former real estate partners, she was Edward Bezer’s granddaughter, and thus presumably Sarah Coole’s niece.²⁹

Jacob Chandler, for his part, was also involved in the matter concerning William Oborn’s children, tasked by the Orphans’ Court in assisting Newlin with creating an inventory of the Oborn estate. In this case, the goal of the parties in question appears to have been to get the bulk of the property into the hands of its rightful owner, William’s daughter, Mary. Given the considerable set of correspondences outlined above, it is interesting to see Newlin and Chandler (much like Kingsman and Hughes) teaming up just over six years later in regards to the accusations of magic, divination, and necromancy that we find surrounding Philip Roman and sons.

On December 11, 1695 (just two days after Newlin and Chandler were ordered to speak with both Philip Jr. and Robert), we find Robert alone facing formal charges in the Chester County court. He stood accused not only of “practising Geomancy According to hidon and Divineng by A sticke,” but also of “Takeing the wife of Henry Hastings Away ffrom her husband and Children and Convaying her Away.”³⁰ It may be no small coincidence that the bereaved Hastings can be tangentially linked to Salem, Massachusetts. Hastings has been suggested as a probable passenger on one of three vessels arriving in the late 1670s: namely the *Kent*, the *Willing-Mind*, or the fly boat *Martha*. These ships carried numerous members of the Society of Friends,

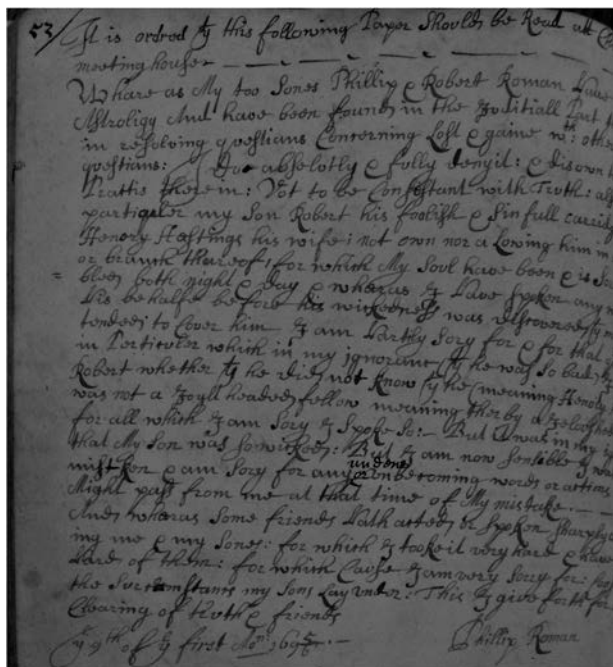


FIGURE 1: Portion of the handwritten Minutes from the Chichester/Concord Monthly Meeting from 09-01 mo.-1695/6 (March 9, 1696), held at the home of Robert Pyle, relaying a formal apology from Philip Roman Sr. for his sons' alleged misdeeds. Photographed by the author at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

some of whom were on their way to Salem.³¹ If Hastings was indeed on board, the connection would provide a shared human element between the incidents at Salem and the Roman controversy. What are the odds that the victim of a “cunning man” like Robert Roman would have traveled alongside those headed toward what later became the site of America’s most infamous witch trials? Some common cultural or physiological basis seems quite possible.

Furthermore, Robert’s company during this initial hearing was particularly curious, for he was presented not alongside his father or brother, but instead with one Ann Buffington—wife of Richard Buffington—a woman who was previously (in 1689) accused of adultery, an accusation that led to her receipt of “10 strips upon her bear backe well laid on and 12 months Imprisonment att hard labor in y^e house of Correction.” Whereas the accusations against

Robert Roman seem to have been based on mostly hearsay, Buffington's earlier trial had the salacious eyewitness testimony of "a man and a Woman lying upon y^e Ground and y^e man lying Upon y^e Top of y^e woman."³² As a curious aside, one of the cases in which Philip Roman Sr. presided over as a juror saw the court rule in favor of Ann's husband, Richard. This case took place on 08-05 mo.-1689, and appears to have involved monies owed to Buffington by one Samuell Baker.³³ Although seemingly unrelated, it bears mentioning if only to illustrate the fact that members of the Roman family were, at least somehow, previously acquainted with the Buffingtons.

Without speculating on whether or not Roman was the "other man" in 1689, the strangeness of his accompaniment by Buffington (paired with the anecdotal evidence above) might not be wholly coincidental. It is worth noting that one Walter Marten served as foreman for both Buffington's adultery matter and Roman's divination case. What Ann Buffington's involvement was with Robert Roman (and by proxy, Henry Hastings) remains uncertain, but it seems clear that there *was* involvement to some extent. Her reputation aside, an appearance with Robert Roman seems to create more questions than answers. This is because the accusations against Roman are more esoteric than mundane. To bolster their case, the "Grand Inquest" even presented works by Reginald Scot, John Heydon, and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (possibly pseudo-Agrippa),³⁴ all of which were evidently culled from a search of the Roman household. Perhaps Buffington's presence was not based on past or present sexual indiscretions, but instead a suspected common knowledge of the occult arts. When Buffington was presented as being "Confederat" with Roman, there is a very real possibility that the court was in the formative stages of framing her as Chester County's first "witch."

What Roman's business was with the wife of Henry Hastings also remains unknown—one could speculate that the accusations of impropriety stemmed from Roman "carrying on" with Mrs. Hastings, or that perhaps the controversy was the result of a preconceived notion that the Roman brothers were privy to occult knowledge on how to disrupt a marriage. In the case of the former, it is easy to see how the suggestion of magical interference may have served to mitigate the shock of plain old infidelity. If the latter was sincerely suspected, it could have been easily attributed to any number of rites or incantations, some of which would have been found in the very books uncovered during the aforementioned search of the Roman estate.³⁵

Following the first portion of Robert's trial, on 13-11 mo. 1695 (by Gregorian standards, January 13, 1696), the Minutes report that Newlin

and Chandler did, in fact, speak to the Roman brothers “according to their proposall.” The long story made short is that Philip seemed quite agreeable, alleging that he had already turned down several individuals who sought him out for his astrological prowess or, in the words of the Friends, those who “came to him to be resolved of their Question already.” For his part, Robert “promised the same but with this reserve unless it was to Doe some great good by it from w^{ch} beliefe of some great good may be Done by it wee could not remove him.”³⁶ In other words, Philip alleged that he had quit astrology altogether, whereas Robert *insisted* on still practicing (at least in those cases in which he felt that he could provide definite help). Reading between the lines, the existence of a cottage industry of magic and occultism in colonial Pennsylvania is essentially confirmed. Not only do we find two “fortune-tellers” in the Roman brothers, so too do we find the existence of a steady customer base.

The next month, on 03-12 mo.-1695 (February 3, 1696), we find a *Testimony* to be read at all Monthly Meetings under the Quarterly Meeting’s jurisdiction.³⁷ The piece unequivocally attacks any and all occult practices, even going so far as to order Friends to “bring in all books that relate to those things,” so that they may be “disposed of as Friends shall think fit.”³⁸ It also draws particular attention to the practice of “Rabdomancy or consulting with a staff,” which may have been an early Quaker interpretation of the practice of dowsing. Biblical allegory is used to suggest the severity of such transgressions, though if the “fear of God” proves not strong enough a deterrent to the local Quaker population, the inference is made that secular, judicial charges in the Chester County court will ultimately result. Although the early county court was Quaker in all but name, we find it being used here for a very distinct type of saber-rattling. More interesting still, it is as if the authors of this decree realized that their religious authority only went so far, but that they could nevertheless send the matter up the chain with very little difference in effect. Even before independence reigned in the Americas, there seems to have been a separation between church and (soon-to-be) state, with one major caveat: the church (or in this case, the Society of Friends) was able to harness the power of the state as desired. Hence, the separation was merely theoretical.

Any doubt regarding the Friends’ stance on astrology, divination, and magic was now laid to rest: such practices were wholly taboo, and legal consequences would be the norm. One might infer that the belief structure within the Society of Friends was more complex than the Society would have cared

to admit, with its mandated doctrines demonstrably modified by the Roman brothers, supplemented by books of ill repute. In particular, the writings that were allegedly discovered during the search of the Roman estate were quite instructional in nature.

For example, the tail-end of pseudo-Agrippa's *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* matches the description provided by the Grand Inquest almost perfectly, and contains explicit directions toward a practice of necromancy.³⁹ While it is possible that only this chapter of the full volume was unearthed, the instructions therein may be counted among the work's most macabre. Seeming to draw upon a repertoire of personal experience, the author explains that "the souls of the dead are not to be called up without blood, or by the application of some part of their relict body. In raising up these shadows, we are to perfume with new blood, with the bones of the dead, and with flesh, eggs, milk, honey, and oil, and suchlike things, which do attribute to the souls a means apt to receive their bodies." He continues to explain that "the souls of the dead are not easily to be raised up, except it be the souls of them whom we know to be evil, or to have perished by a violent death, and whose bodies do want a right and due burial."⁴⁰ Pseudo-Agrippa's musings on necromancy are but one part of a volume that molds the real Agrippa's earlier *Three Books* into a more legitimately workable form,⁴¹ and their appearance here may suggest that Robert Roman was no mere small-time peddler of fortunes.

So too does that of John Heydon's *Theomagia, or the Temple of Wisdome*. Like the *Fourth Book*, Heydon's work also has characteristics that indicate it as the literary output of a practicing adept. For one, the author appears to have been quite well connected, and among the several introductory remarks by his colleagues, we find that even George Starkey (alchemist-extraordinaire of the early Americas) was of some acquaintance.⁴² Truly, Starkey's literary cameo in the work assists in substantiating the spiritual undertones of colonial alchemy as a whole. It also affords an intellectual link between the Romans' and various early American spagyricists.⁴³ Innocent associations such as these may have unwittingly lent a perceived credibility to the early conspiracy theory of Quakers using alchemical concoctions (or "Quaker-Powder") to help ensure success while proselytizing.⁴⁴

Of particular relevance to the accusations at hand, the first main section of *Theomagia* begins with four brief chapters detailing the creation and applied use of geomantic figures, the fifth containing charts demonstrating how Heydon believed those figures might be tied to the "seven Rulers of

the Earth” and their “twelve Genii or Idea’s.” The book’s three sections are equally comprehensive, offering a quite thorough blend of Rosicrucianism, Hermetic Qabalah, and astrology. Keeping with our theme of practicality, instructions on both planetary and astrological talismans are also provided.⁴⁵

Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, also confiscated from the Roman household by the Grand Inquest, was a scathing critique of occult practices in general. Making reference to the methods of torture and execution employed by Inquisitors, he advocated a more balanced approach to dealing with practitioners of magic, whom he saw as “sillie soules.”⁴⁶ Despite his aims, Scot’s attempt at persuasion would become one of the earliest and most exhaustive catalogs of occult rites in existence. The work provides concise descriptions of various charms, lists of spirits, and even methods of conjuration; and enterprising “cunning folk” like the Roman brothers could have easily reverse engineered the material into workable form. Knowing that the early court specifically accused Robert Roman of practicing geomancy along the lines of Heydon, the implications of his possession of the *Discoverie* are even more considerable.

His choice of books notwithstanding, Robert stubbornly refused to stop providing consultations to his fellow colonists on the basis that his services could help, not harm. This raises the question: were the Quakers more concerned with Roman’s mystical practices, or the *implications* of those practices? After all, if people like Robert Roman had a direct line to the divine, then what need be there for a Society at all? The call for books to be destroyed may have been an attempt to ensure that the Society maintained some semblance of control and order over an increasingly inquisitive and literate populace. Extramarital affairs and occult rites represented a great threat to Quaker values, and the Society of Friends now found itself locked in a battle of wits with the very constituents who it had hoped would help solidify its presence.

In response to this perceived threat (and, judging from previous Minutes, at the Chichester Monthly Meeting’s behest), Philip Roman Sr. produced a written statement (or “paper”), dated 09-01 mo.-1695/6 (March 9, 1696), which was ordered to “be read at Chester Meetinghouse.” This statement decries “astrology” and esoteric practice in general, paying special attention to Robert, whose actions are described as “foolish & sinfull.” Here, the elder Roman apologizes and admits to a “mistake.” The wording in this apology seems to *preemptively* reference Robert (the next day) being found guilty by the judicial court, a curiosity that might be attributed to either an error in primary source dating, or perhaps the fact that an unofficial verdict was

steadily making its way through the grapevine. Even at this eleventh hour before Robert Roman's hearing, William Hughes and Jacob Chandler were again tasked with urging him and Philip Jr. "to indeavour in the wisdom of god to bring them to a Sense of their condition and to give forth a paper to condemn their practys therein."⁴⁷

The next day, on March 10, Robert Roman was fined five pounds by judicial authorities and ordered to "never practis the arts but but [sic] behave himselfe well for the future." Ann Buffington, who (as noted) was previously summoned to the bench with Roman, was conspicuously absent, and court records indicate that upon being called, an "Answer was made she was Ill and Could be not be heare."⁴⁸ Although ordered to appear at the next court, the record includes no such return by Ann. Presumably, her involvement was deemed marginal enough to let the matter drop, though it is odd that the court seems never to have followed through with her sentencing.

Although the Minutes indicate that Robert was disowned by the Quakers on 11-03 mo.-1696 (May 11, 1696), the matter remained unsettled. The reference



FIGURE 2: A sundial crafted by Philip Roman, Quaker resident of the Province of Pennsylvania (Chester County), inscribed to Henry Warinton [Warrington]. Photographed by the author at the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

to his disownment is terse, but in effect indicates a spiritual parting of ways. Nonetheless, all of the secondary sources available seem to overlook the chatter within a Monthly Minutes entry dated 08-12 mo.-1696 (February 8, 1697), suggesting that the Chichester Meeting had persisted in a certain hope that Robert would come back to their fold, by way of a written apology not unlike that of his father. The meeting was held (remarkably enough) at the house of John Kingsman, and the Minutes claim that there “was a Paper Presented to this meeting by Robert Roman” and that the Meeting ordered the already discussed Will Hughes and a man named Will Browne to speak with Robert concerning said paper “betwixt this & y^e next monthly meeting.” It remains unclear if this actually happened, as on 08-01 mo.-1697 (March 8, 1697), the Minutes indicate that “Robert Romans paper is refered untill the next m^o meeting.” On 12-02 mo.-1697 (April 12, 1697), it is recorded that “Robert Romans paper being considered; this meeting ordereth Robert Roman to read the paper” with “his being present at the reading there of.” Robert’s level of cooperation thereafter is uncertain, but the Meeting evidently felt these developments significant enough to note in their record.

For his part, it seems that Philip Sr.’s handling of the matter satisfied the Friends, as he was one of six men especially appointed in 1699 to choose a place for the Friends Meeting that ultimately became known as the Middletown Meeting (established in or around 1702, constructed atop what was previously land set aside for Quaker burial). Here, too, we see Roman holding a certain prominence: he is listed before all of the other appointees, and although this was certainly not uncommon for him (as discussed earlier), it does help demonstrate that his standing among the Quakers perhaps remained unscathed following the conclusion of that peculiar controversy, which only a few years earlier seems to have placed Roman in a very uncomfortable position indeed.⁴⁹

At least from a historical perspective, it seems that it was business as usual for Philip Roman. Although the Quakers had remained wholly resolute on getting to the bottom of those accusations that had landed Roman and his sons in hot water to begin with, we might assume that time was perhaps too valuable in early provincial Pennsylvania to waste on holding grudges—and it is quite literally time that seems to have become, in some way, inextricably linked to Roman’s legacy.

It would take hundreds of years for this missing piece of the puzzle to emerge. On November 23 and 24, 1911, the Historical Society of Burlington County presented an exhibit of privately held artifacts in Moorestown, New Jersey.

The exhibit's catalog reveals an item of particular relevance, one that belonged to exhibitor no. 42, Henry W. Moore, of Moorestown, NJ.⁵⁰ The item was described thus:

Sun dial, with name of Henry Warinton and date 1726, made by Philip Roman, engraved on it. Henry Warrington was born in England and came to Philadelphia in 1700, bought 400 acres of land in Chester Township and married Elizabeth Ansten in 1719.⁵¹

What happened to the sundial following the Burlington County exhibit remains uncertain for approximately eighty-one years. In 1992 it appeared at the Chester County Historical Society, where it resides at the time of this writing.⁵² The piece is made of brass with a diameter of some six to seven inches; it is curiously decorated with celestial patterns and, quite fittingly, Roman numerals. It is marked with the name "Henry Warinton" and the year "1726"—both carefully etched in a calligraphic hand within a quadruple-banded ring surrounding an image of the radiant sun. On the farthest edge that points away from the gnomon, we find the inscription "Philip Roman Fecit." The gnomon is highly decorative, with flowing edges in the rear, and the device as a whole is quite remarkable. This is no crude timepiece, and is clearly the work of someone who was quite proficient in the craftsmanship of fine metals.

While that "someone" could have certainly been Philip Roman Sr., it is perhaps more likely the work of his son and namesake. This seems more probable given that Philip Sr. was presumably over eighty years old in 1726. He would pass away approximately four years later, with his last will and testament providing well for his loved ones.⁵³ The timeline is such that although it is not outside the realm of possibility that the elderly Roman could have created the sundial, it seems more likely that the timepiece would be the work of his son.

Although Philip Roman Sr. appears (for the most part) to have remained in the areas surrounding Chichester (after his arrival in Pennsylvania), we know that the younger Philip ultimately made his way back to England. Correspondence from May of 1697 and in April of 1700 suggests that Philip Jr. was there on family business. He went on to become a doctor, being referenced as such by his nephew and in documents pertaining to the estate of his wife, Mary.⁵⁴ He died at the age of sixty in 1730 (the same year as his father), which would have made him approximately fifty-six years old at the

time of the sundial's creation.⁵⁵ Regardless of whether it was father or son responsible for the making of the sundial, the device perhaps reveals itself as the culmination of its maker's interest in astrology, an interest that may have been spurred by the very books that caused such a stir over thirty years prior. If indeed crafted by the hands of a physician like Philip Jr., this particular sundial serves as the crossroads upon which colonial mysticism and early science converge.

At the time of the Roman trial, such roads were yet to be completely mapped out. In 1694 Philip Roman Sr.'s daughter, Martha, married Isaac Taylor, who was a physician and land surveyor, known to be well versed in mathematics.⁵⁶ Like Roman and almost all of the individuals discussed thus far, Taylor also called Chester County home. This, paired with his mathematical expertise, undoubtedly helped ensure his later receiving the title "Deputy Surveyor" of Chester County. One of his most significant achievements was working with Thomas Pierson of New Castle to map out the Chester County border with Delaware. For their work (which was completed on December 4, 1701), the duo was compensated by way of twenty-six pounds, nine shillings. This amount was paid after some debate by Chester County officials, who, on February 24, 1702, ultimately released the funds.⁵⁷

Isaac's brother, Jacob Taylor, was also a land surveyor and mathematician, and it is he who provides us with yet another link to colonial Pennsylvania's esoteric underground. Adding to an already impressive family repertoire, Jacob was a prolific almanacker. The periodicals which he somewhat fervently published seem to have escaped the scrutiny wrought upon his extended family, despite housing content leaning toward astrology and other esoteric doctrines. The volumes were typical for their time, containing (in parts) calculations and poetry penned by Taylor himself, though such was not the entire extent of his literary career.⁵⁸ In 1687 he published his *Tenebræ*, a work that demonstrates a certain interest in astrological matters, serving as a twenty-year calendar for both solar and lunar eclipses.⁵⁹ Given his interests (and evidently close proximity to the Roman family), it may well have been Jacob's influence that led to the Roman brothers becoming what we may safely call "cunning men." Also, in consideration of the processes involved in the surveying of land, the hint of dowsing, seen in the Quarterly Meeting Minutes dated 03-12 mo.-1695 (under the guise of rhabdomancy), seems quite plausible.

We might also attribute the Romans' procurement of works by pseudo-Agrippa, Heydon, and Scot to Taylor's connection with the book trade.

We know, for instance, that he was involved in the sale of hundreds of rare books, perhaps sent to him on consignment from England. There is also evidence suggesting that he was the custodian of an early library.⁶⁰ The few historians who have researched the Roman case seem to have thus far overlooked these crucial links. In order to understand the transmission of any type of esoteric knowledge, one must first trace the steps of those so-called forbidden books. Clearly, Jacob Taylor provides such a link, being involved on all levels of their authorship, production, and distribution. It is even possible that the very books discovered by the Grand Inquest during their search of the Roman estate came from Taylor directly. Books were his business, and the Romans had become extended family just one year prior to the discovery. More specifically, there is an interesting correlation between Taylor's occasional habit of quoting Agrippa in his almanacs with the Grand Inquest's confiscation of works by pseudo-Agrippa from the Roman estate.⁶¹

While it is true that the popular consumption of almanacs such as Taylor's reflects a certain flavor of adventure and mystique common to life in the early province, the Roman brothers' knowledge, understanding, and even procurement of esoteric philosophy far exceeded what one might otherwise expect of the casual observer. Although we don't know if their practices ran the full gamut of those explained in the seized literature, we do know that they stem from a demonstrably shared font of knowledge. For his part, Taylor seems to have eventually grown tired of the public's dwindling perception of the mystical arts. The 1746 edition of his almanac "denounced all occult practices," a considerable revision to his previous approach.⁶² In this way, Taylor shared something in common with many colonial almanac makers: the authors of such publications often demonstrated a certain flexibility of tact as their respective periodicals struggled to incorporate new thought and also compete in the marketplace.⁶³

Martha Roman's marital link to the Taylor family might even serve to explain the existence of the Philip Roman sundial. In his analysis of Taylor's *Tenebrae*, Keith Arbour hinted at the possibility that the metal-line engravings found in the work could have been executed by the author himself.⁶⁴ It should also be noted that the Taylor family ended up in the metal business later on, as Isaac's son, John, opened Sarum Forge in Glen Mills in or around 1740.⁶⁵ There is also an indication that none other than Jacob Taylor himself lived at the forge later in life.⁶⁶ Even though Sarum Forge was not yet open for business at the time the sundial was created, we can

probably assume that the family knowledge of metalworking would have been sufficient to create the piece, or that the Taylors may have somehow passed along bits of their metallurgic knowledge to Philip Roman Jr. (or perhaps even his father).

However, the minutiae surrounding the question of whether father or son was responsible for the artifact's existence is a red herring for its more significant cultural context. Ironically, it is the passing of time itself that could most distinguishably claim credit for the piece's very existence. Noting the philosophical evolution of popular culture in eighteenth-century America, Peter Eisenstadt observed that many early Americans "remained attached to some forms of magic, while at the same time proclaiming their allegiance to the principles of the Enlightenment."⁶⁷ In the end, the sundial itself serves as a sort of daguerreotype for the slow development of colonial America's mainstream demystification. Even in the absence of a windowsill and a clear sky, this colonial clock "tells time" with a certain profundity that its maker presumably never even intended—and therein lays its true charm.

The Roman brothers themselves also possess a certain unique hallmark that makes them a rare breed among even the more magically minded of their colonial peers. Their familiarity with the work of various earlier and then-contemporary "adepts" being duly noted, the young men defy academic characterization.⁶⁸ Even if one assumes that our subjects were self-taught, the historical record demonstrates the careful implementation of a classically trained yet practically minded occult regimen. Perhaps above all else, it is this sense of nonconformity that makes the case so very intriguing.⁶⁹

Although such a praxis might otherwise be dismissed as mere curiosity (or perhaps a youthful rebellion against the colony's primary religious establishment), a connection to Jacob Taylor shows that they were not mere "dabblers" in the magical arts. Likewise, an analysis of the meticulous records kept by their Quaker brethren reveals that the Roman family contained at least two of America's very first "cunning folk." In great contrast to the stereotype of the early American witch trial, we find no women accused of poisoning wells, no vigilante justice, and much to the Quakers' credit, no "burning at the stake." What we do find is that same brand of stubbornness that helped ensure the success of the early settlement at Chester County, and which less than a century later would contribute to the birth of a nation.

NOTES

The author wishes to express his gratitude to those who provided commentary on early revisions of this article; in particular Dr. Jonathan Seitz, Shanna Fanelli, and others wishing to remain unnamed. Thanks are also in order to the staffs of W. W. Hagerty Library (Drexel University), the Chester County Historical Society (West Chester, Pennsylvania), and the Friends Historical Library (Swarthmore College). Friends Library curator Christopher Densmore graciously provided access to original handwritten Quaker documents, one of which is pictured herein. A good portion of the research conducted for this paper was supported by a Humanities Fellowship provided by Drexel University's College of Arts and Sciences.

1. See J. Smith Futhey and Gilbert Cope, *The History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, with Genealogical and Biographical Sketches* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts and Co., 1881), 413; also Concord (formerly Chichester) Monthly Meeting Minutes 11-09 mo.-1695. November 11 was the eleventh day of the ninth month by Quaker rationale, which at the time considered the "new year" to begin on March 25.
2. The Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, *Record of the Courts of Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1681-1697* (Philadelphia: Patterson and White Company, 1910), 364 (hereafter *RCCC*).
3. See Jon Butler, "Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage, 1600-1760," *American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1979): 344.
4. Craig W. Horle et al., *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: 1710-1756*, vol. 2 of *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 652-54. Although this work suggests that Roman was also known as "Philip Rakeing" in England, careful examination of early colonial source material points to "Roman" as being the correct surname.
5. Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 209. Thomas Holme was the surveyor-general of William Penn, and this map is the earliest in existence of the Province of Pennsylvania (or Pennsylvania Colony) in British America.
6. For an exhaustive, if curiously placed, account of the Roman family tree, see Joseph S. Harris, *The Collateral Ancestry of Stephen Harris, Born September 4, 1798 and of Marianne Smith, Born April 2, 1805* (Philadelphia: George F. Lasher, 1908).
7. *Ibid.*, 174.
8. 3d day in the 2d Weeke of ye 2nd moth 1687: "ffrancis Chadsey Supervisor of ye High wayes between Chichester Creeke and Namans Creeke returnd all well whereupon Phillipp Roman was ordered in his roome for ye ensuing year," *RCCC*, 90-91.
9. Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 37, 351.
10. Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 173.
11. Excerpted from events transpiring on October 3 and 4, 1689; *RCCC*, 168-69.
12. For a complete list of Roman's wives (along with his date of marriage to each), see Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 174-78. In brief: 1: Martha Harper (~1669); 2: Sarah Coole, widow of William Bezer (January 5, 1685); 3: Amy Kingsman, widow of John Harding (June 26, 1690); 4: Dorothy Clayton (February 18, 1714). Harris notes that Ms. Clayton was "quite a young woman," and the niece of Sarah Coole, Roman's second wife.

13. Gilbert Cope, ed., "William Hitchcock to John and Amy Harding, 1687," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 4, no. 1 (1907): 72.
14. 3d day in the 2d Weeke of ye 2d moth 1687: "Phillip Roman Constaple of Chichester returned all well whereupon Nathaniell Lamplue was ordered Constaple in his roome for the ensuing year"; *RCCC*, 90–91.
15. John B. Linn and William Henry Egle, eds., *Pennsylvania Archives* (hereafter *PA*), 2nd ser., vol. 9: *Record of Pennsylvania Marriages, Prior to 1810*, vol. 2 (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, 1880), 676, 683.
16. *RCCC*, 126, 186, 192, 203, 207.
17. *Ibid.*, 334–36, 354, 358.
18. William Henry Egle, ed., *PA*, 2nd ser., vol. 19: *Minutes of the Board of Property of the Province of Pennsylvania*, vol. 1 (Harrisburg: E. K. Meyers, 1890/1893), 299.
19. Egle, ed., *PA*, 3rd ser., vol. 3: *Old Rights, Proprietary Rights, Virginia Entries, and Soldiers Entitled to Donation Lands, with an explanation of Reed's Map of Philadelphia* (Harrisburg: Clarence M. Busch, 1894/1896), 6–7.
20. These minutes are currently held in both microfilm and manuscript at the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College; Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. Prior to 1686, the monthly sessions took place solely in Chichester. However, on 02-06 mo.-1686 (August 2, 1686) it was mandated by the Chester Quarterly Meeting (which post-1800 has been known as the Concord Quarterly Meeting) that the meetings would henceforth alternate between Chichester and Concord on a monthly basis, until switching permanently to the latter in 1729. See Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 232.
21. See Concord (formerly Chichester) Monthly Meetings Minutes dated 09-12 mo.-1690 and 09-10 mo.-1695 (among others) for an example of meetings held in Philip Roman's home. Even prior to the controversy in question, the majority of Meeting attendance lists falling between these dates (and even others around the same time) give Roman's name a greater prominence than most, if not all, others.
22. William Bezer had a brother named John Bezer who died in 1684, leaving behind four children. Two of those children (John and Frances) are the parties here. For more biographical details, see Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 176.
23. Both transactions appear in sequence within the *RCCC*, 352.
24. "Sarah lived but a short time after her marriage to Philip Roman, and dying, about 1688, left her children to his care." Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 174.
25. 09-10 mo.-1695 under the Quaker dating scheme.
26. Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 413.
27. Linn and Egle, eds., *PA*, 2nd ser., vol. 9: *Record of Pennsylvania Marriages*, 675–76, 744.
28. 3d day in ye 1st weeke of ye 8th moneth 1689: "Ordered att ye request of Robert Pile that Nicholas Newland doe Succed Edward Beasar Disceast in ye gaurdionship of William Oborns Children and that ye said Nicholas and Jacob Chandler Doe vew and make up an account of ye Estate of ye aforesd Diceast Wm Osborne in order to Render unto the Disceaseds Daughter Mary Osborne (who is now arrived to age) the Just proportion of her sd Disceast ffathers Estate And that ye sd Jacob Chandler and Nicholas Newland in persuance Hereof have Power to call Anne ye Reliquit of ye

- Disceat Edward Beasar to an account in order to take ye effects of ye Disceat Wm Oborns out of her hand," Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, *Record of the Courts of Chester County*, 169.
29. Roman's name appears on a piece of land in Philadelphia County alongside one "Wm. Claiton," presumably William Clayton Jr. See 16-09 mo.-1703 in *Old Rights, Proprietary Rights*, 13. Dorothy Clayton's connections to Bezer and Coole are outlined by Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 178. The reader is cautioned as some of Harris' dates pertaining to the Clayton family remain inconsistent with those of Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 498.
 30. *RCCC*, 363. Note that "hidon" presumably refers to John Heydon, a seventeenth-century proponent of Rosicrucian philosophy.
 31. Also thought to be aboard one of these ships (in this case, the *Kent*) was William Clayton, father to William Clayton Jr., Philip Roman's future real estate partner and eventual father-in-law. See Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 16, 498.
 32. *RCCC*, 157-58.
 33. *Ibid.*, 186-88.
 34. For this distinction in particular, see David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 528, and Butler, "Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage," 333.
 35. December ye 11th 1695: "wee the Grand Inquest by the kings Authority Presents these ffollowing Books Hidons Temple of wisdom which Teaches Geomancy And scots Discovery of whichcraft And Cornelias Agrippas Teaching negromancy: Walter Martin fforeman: The Court orders that as many of sd books as can be found be Brought to the next Court"; Colonial Society of Pennsylvania, *Record of the Courts of Chester County*, 363-64.
 36. Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 413.
 37. Chester (Concord) Quarterly Meeting Minutes dated 03-12 mo.-1695 (actually February 3, 1696).
 38. This resembles the practice of the Inquisition, one decree of which insisted that "all written incantations existing in the Holy Office should be burned; and if the trials have been terminated, mention should be made of the combustion." See John Tedeschi, *The Prosecution of Heresy: Collected Studies on the Inquisition in Early Modern Italy* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1991), 229-30.
 39. Despite bearing an attribution to Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, the proper authorship of the full volume (a compendium of sorts) remains uncertain. Although the real Agrippa authored an included tract on geomancy, the portion of the volume self-designated as the *Fourth Book* proper carries no such provenance. Other appendixes are known to be drawn from other sources altogether. See Henry Cornelius Agrippa, *The Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy*, trans. Robert Turner and ed. Donald Tyson (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 2009), 1-3.
 40. *Ibid.*, 103.
 41. The distinction is a substantial one, not lost on the author of the work itself, which states that "the reader is informed that by the study of the *Occult Philosophy* he will acquire knowledge of occult matters, but by the study of the *Fourth Book* he will learn how to actually apply them to his triumph." *Ibid.*, 118.
 42. For more on Starkey, see William R. Newman and Lawrence M. Principe, *Alchemy Tried in the Fire: Starkey, Boyle, and the Fate of Helmontian Chymistry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 92-205.

43. Such as the storied New England colonist John Winthrop Jr., who was known to combine alchemy with the practice of medicine. Winthrop's circle "understood alchemy to be a progressive, intellectual, immensely utilitarian but simultaneously spiritual undertaking of the utmost importance," Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero's America: John Winthrop, Jr., Alchemy, and the Creation of New England Culture, 1606–1676* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 16.
44. See comments regarding the volume *Dissertatio Historico-Theologica de Philtres Enthusiasticus Angelico Batavis* by Amelia Mott Gummere, *Witchcraft and Quakerism: A Study in Social History* (Philadelphia: The Biddle Press, 1908), 32–33. Here, Gummere indicates that one such substance was said to induce a "trembling or quaking state."
45. See John Heydon, *Theomagia, or the Temple of Wisdome in Three Parts: Spiritual, Celestial and Elemental* (London: Henry Brome, 1664), 11–15, 205–72.
46. Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: Elliot Stock, 1886), xxv.
47. Concord (formerly Chichester) Monthly Meetings Minutes dated 09-01 mo.-1695/6. Mentioned only in passing within secondary sources, the record of Philip Sr.'s "paper" is pictured as figure 1.
48. RCCC, 369–71; also summarized in Gummere, *Witchcraft and Quakerism*, 42–43.
49. See 06-09 mo.-1699 transcribed by Futhey and Cope, *History of Chester County*, 233: "The ffriends of John Bowaters meeting Lay their Intentions of Building a meeting house. This meeting constitutes & appoints Philip Roman, Robert Pyle, Nathaniel Newlin, George Robinson, John Hood & John Wood to determine the place for that service and make report to ye next Quarterly meeting under all their Hands that it may be entred in this meeting Book." Futhey and Cope are more thorough in listing these "six Friends," who are also referenced in Charles Burr Ogden, *The Quaker Ogdens in America: David Ogden of Ye Goode Ship "Welcome" and His Descendants, 1682–1897, Their History, Biography, and Genealogy* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1898), 42.
50. This catalog, which was originally sold for twenty-five cents, is currently available in digital format via the Internet Archive. See *Catalogue: Loan Exhibition of Historical Objects under the Auspices of the Historical Society of Burlington County–Moorestown, New Jersey, November 23d and 24th, 1911*, <http://www.archive.org/details/catalogue00hist>.
51. Ibid., 22.
52. *Sundial, circa 1726*, "Owned by Henry Warrington, Gift of Anna and Deborah Warrington," exhibit no. 1992.645, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, Pennsylvania.
53. A summary of the will appears in Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 178–79. Robert Roman's absence therein is presumably only because he passed away in January of 1718, some twelve years before his father's death. He was approximately forty-six years old.
54. Ibid., 180–83.
55. Philip Jr. was born "about 1670" and died on October 10, 1730. Ibid., 179.
56. Ibid., 180.
57. For more on Isaac Taylor, see George Smith, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania: From the Discovery of the Territory Included Within Its Limits to the Present Time, with A Notice of the Geology of the County, and Catalogues of its Minerals, Plants, Quadrupeds and Birds* (Philadelphia: Henry B. Ashmead, 1862), 206, 506; also Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 86–87.
58. Smith, *History of Delaware County*, 506.

59. For a thorough examination of what survives of this fascinating manuscript, see Keith Arbour, "The First North American Mathematical Book and Its Metacut Illustrations: Jacob Taylor's *Tenebræ*, 1697," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 123, nos. 1/2 (1999): 87–98.
60. See references to the Taylor papers in Harris, *Collateral Ancestry*, 84.
61. Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, 82.
62. Butler, "Magic, Astrology, and the Early American Religious Heritage," 340.
63. Regarding the latter point, one finds that "Almanac makers were sensitive to readers' complaints, for they knew readers could evaluate an almanac's accuracy through the evidence of their own senses." Sara S. Gronim, "At the Sign of Newtown's Head: Astronomy and Cosmology in British Colonial New York," *Pennsylvania History* 66, *Explorations in Early American Culture* (1999): 62.
64. Arbour, "Jacob Taylor's *Tenebræ*," 98.
65. Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: L. H. Everts and Co., 1884), 255.
66. See correspondence "For Jacob Taylor living at Sarum Forge," from *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 21, no. 1 (1897): 130.
67. Peter Eisenstadt, "Almanacs and the Disenchantment of Early America," *Pennsylvania History* 65, no. 2 (1998): 145.
68. Eisenstadt suggests that "Learned magic tends to be highly symbolic, while popular magic is often pragmatic and result-oriented." *Ibid.*, 150.
69. The Roman brothers are presumed to have been quite familiar with esoteric symbology, despite employing a very pragmatic *modus operandi*.