

CHARLES DICKENS IN PENNSYLVANIA IN MARCH 1842: IMAGINING AMERICA

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Abstract: Charles Dickens visited the United States in 1842, including a significant amount of time in Pennsylvania. Dickens's travels resulted in a tour book, *American Notes for General Circulation*; a novel containing a harshly critical American segment, *Martin Chuzzlewit*; a vast quantity of letters that were later published; and American-inspired passages in other novels, such as the prison inmate descriptions in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Dickens shocked and angered American readers when the beloved author found much to criticize. In the Keystone State, for example, he noted that the transportation system was primitive, the people's manners and habits abhorrent, and the prison system appalling. Dickens discovered there was no sympathy for authors whose works were being routinely pirated by publishers in an era of virtually no copyright protection. Dickens hoped that his six-month tour of the States could, at the very least, open American eyes to the need for institutional reforms and a copyright law.

This is not the Republic I came to see.
This is not the Republic of my imagination.

—*Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:156

Eager to visit the Republic of his imagination, Charles Dickens, along with his wife Catherine and her maid Anne, braved an often-terrifying two-week North Atlantic crossing in January of 1842 for

a six-month tour of the United States.¹ Having read the travel books of Frances Trollope, Alexis de Tocqueville, Harriet Martineau, Frederick Marryat, and others, Dickens anticipated finding a governmental model that the rest of the world could follow.² However, he was disappointed, shocked, even disgusted by what he found in America, including Pennsylvania.

Just as Dickens eagerly anticipated his tour of America, the American public eagerly looked forward to Dickens's visit, for he was the most admired writer of the nineteenth century, his work having been serialized in America as it had been in Britain—all without benefit of copyright protection, however. Nearly anyone who was a reader, regardless of his or her economic status or social station, read Dickens's work and was convinced the literary genius understood the so-called Common Man. The *New York Herald* describes the author: "His mind is American—his soul is republican—his heart is democratic."³ By the time Dickens arrived in the country, still a young man at twenty-nine years of age, he was truly a celebrity. Nineteenth-century America was obsessed with British celebrities, particularly members of the royal family—much as the country is today—and the American public was determined to treat Dickens as literary royalty, subjecting the author to elaborate dinners held in his honor and endless receptions requiring the famous Boz to endure hours of hand shaking. American newspapers published the fact that Dickens was coming to tour the country; once he arrived, his every move, his every word, and nearly his every meal were faithfully recorded. Just as Americans wanted to know every detail of the life of Queen Victoria, crowned in 1838, and every move of her eighteen-year-old son Albert Edward, who visited America in 1860—seemingly ignoring their own upcoming Civil War—they did not tire of reading the details of Dickens's visit to the States.⁴ He should not have been surprised when mobs descended upon him practically everywhere he went, yearning to see and touch him, some even venturing to snip a segment from his fur coat.⁵ Not only was he the most popular writer of his day, he was perhaps the most popular, most beloved, man of his day.

Dickens had several motives for traveling to America. First, he had been guaranteed by his publishers, Chapman and Hall, of "150 [pounds] per month in advance of royalties" on his own proposed travel book.⁶ Second, seeking relief from the pressures associated with serial writing, he hoped to find inspiration for a novel based on his American experiences. Third, he wished to investigate several American institutions and systems, including the government, the systems of transportation, and the prison system, and compare them to British ones.⁷ A fourth reason Dickens chose to travel to

America was a matter of pure ego. He sought the spotlight of his adoring public—a spotlight assured him by his friend and fellow author Washington Irving.⁸ After all, Dickens had produced some of the most popular writing of the nineteenth century, including *Sketches by Boz*, *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge*.⁹

Finally, Dickens had one more reason to visit the States: he had a personal ax to grind concerning the lack of international copyright, an agreement that would protect him and other authors, including Americans such as Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving, from having their works pirated by foreign publishers. Dickens had been stewing over the fact that his writings had been pirated for years, starting with British writer John Buckstone adapting one of Dickens's stories into a farce without so much as giving Dickens credit, let alone monetary reimbursement, and continuing with American publishers producing copies of his early work, including *Sketches by Boz* and a section of *Oliver Twist*, in 1836 and 1837.¹⁰ To halt the continued pirating of his writings, Dickens believed a simple but eloquent plea by him would touch on the American sense of fair play and thus secure an international copyright agreement that would protect authors from having their work published without financial reimbursement.¹¹

As he explained to his biographer, John Forster, Dickens had established a set of goals prior to his journey. Primarily, he wanted his American travel book to include his immediate personal impressions of America as well as his overall conclusions about the country; a vivid description of the countryside; and a review of noteworthy American institutions. He also planned to take notes on the people themselves, including their manners, their customs, their habits, and their dialect. Above all, he vowed to Forster that he would stick to two rules: he would not use names in his publication, nor would he dwell on the issue that caused him to burn with frustration—the copyright problem.¹² Of course, this last vow he could not, would not, keep. Two weeks into his American tour, on February 1, 1842, Dickens spoke of the value of international copyright at a Boston dinner held in his honor; at this time, there was virtually no reaction by his audience or the press.¹³ But that would change.

During his two-week tour of Pennsylvania, Dickens was sometimes favorably impressed but oftentimes disappointed or annoyed by what he saw. Many of Dickens's post-tour writings—such as *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the novel containing an American section, and *American Notes*, his tour book—include summaries of and reactions to his experiences in Pennsylvania: the state's varied means of transportation, its prison system, and its financial condition; his visits to Philadelphia, York, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh; and his encounters

with Pennsylvania citizens. He was critical of the way canal boats were precariously hauled over the Allegheny Mountains in western Pennsylvania, the tradition of cramming passengers into stagecoaches, the inhumane method of solitary confinement in the state's prisons, the annoyingly regular way towns were laid out, the press's lack of sympathy for him and his concern about the copyright issue, and the people's lack of personal hygiene and their irritating habits, everything from spitting to exaggerating.

After being so eager to meet them, Dickens was disappointed with many of the Americans he met—just as many Americans became disappointed with him. At first reporters only shadowed Dickens and reported on what he said and did, but eventually they started criticizing him, even mocking him, particularly about the copyright issue, a topic Dickens simply would not allow to rest. The problem was that Dickens expected too much of his hosts, and they expected too much of him. Dickens wished to be lionized, yet he relished his privacy.¹⁴ His hosts expected Dickens to attend all their public functions with enthusiasm and gratitude, to allow attendees to question him and to shake hands with him. Finally, Dickens's six-month schedule was extraordinary: he traveled long distances on rather primitive methods of transportation and attended one long engagement after another, frequently to the point of physical collapse and illness.

Dickens crossed Pennsylvania twice during his six months of travel, spending a total of nearly two weeks in the state. After a rough Atlantic crossing, Dickens arrived in Nova Scotia on January 20, 1842, headed south through the New England states, celebrated his thirtieth birthday in Massachusetts on February 7, and visited Boston and New York before finally arriving in Philadelphia on March 5. Leaving Philadelphia on March 9, Dickens toured Washington, Baltimore, and Richmond; then, he returned to Pennsylvania on March 24, stopping at York and Harrisburg before journeying to Pittsburgh via canal boat. After several days' stay in Pittsburgh, Dickens left April 1 on a steamboat bound for Cincinnati, Louisville, and St. Louis.¹⁵

The Philadelphia Experience

You walk down the main street of a large town: and, slap-dash, head-long, pell-mell, down the middle of the street; with pigs burrowing, and boys flying kites and playing marbles, and men smoking, and

women talking, and children crawling, close to the very rails; there comes tearing along a mad locomotive . . . scattering a red-hot shower of sparks . . . screeching, hissing, yelling, and panting; and nobody one atom more concerned than if it were a hundred miles away.¹⁶

Traveling by train from New York to Trenton and then by steamboat to Philadelphia—an arduous six-hour journey complicated by the fact that the Pennsylvania side of the Trenton-Philadelphia line had been closed for repairs—Dickens and his party finally arrived exhausted in the Pennsylvania city.¹⁷ The English visitors were now traveling with George W. Putnam, whom Dickens had hired as a secretary in Boston and who remained with Dickens throughout the rest of his American travels.¹⁸ To ensure a peaceful arrival in Philadelphia, Dickens had promised Putnam to silence regarding the group's itinerary; by now, Dickens was aware of the controversy he had stirred up regarding copyright, having read the newspapers' unflattering reviews of his speeches, the reports frequently mocking him as a "mercenary scoundrel."¹⁹ The press indicated that Dickens should be flattered, even honored, that his work was so well regarded in America, implying that America's appreciation for his literary genius should be reward enough.²⁰ The travelers were met at the Walnut Street wharf and quietly escorted to the United States Hotel on Chestnut Street, across from the "defunct" (since 1837) Bank of the United States, later the Custom House.²¹

By the time Dickens arrived in the City of Brotherly Love, his irritation with the American railroad system had already reached its climax. In a letter to Forster, he states flatly that he would not wish his friend to experience the American railroad, for "that would be an unchristian and savage aspiration." Not only was Dickens shocked that the trains ran right down the middle of the street, but he was also alarmed that there was no physical barrier to keep a traveler out of harm's way: When a person came to a train crossing on the turnpike, notes Dickens, "There [was] no gate, no policeman, no signal—nothing . . . but a wooden arch on which [was] written in great letters 'Look out for the locomotive.'"²²

In the Philadelphia chapter of *American Notes*, Dickens includes a memorable description of a train journey—memorable not because of the train itself or the journey, but because of the habits of the train's male passengers:

My attention was attracted to a remarkable appearance issuing from the windows of the gentlemen's car in front of us, which I supposed for

some time was occasioned by a number of industrious persons inside, ripping open feather-beds, and giving the feathers to the wind. At length it occurred to me that they were only spitting.²³

Dickens was disgusted yet morbidly fascinated by the universal practice of spitting. In a March 6 letter to Forster, he explains that everywhere, even in a court of law, the spittoon received regular use: Everyone in the courtroom had one—the judge had his; the lawyers theirs; the defendant his; and the witnesses, jury, spectators theirs. Spittoons could be found everywhere—in bars and dining rooms, in drawing rooms and hospitals, in steamboats and offices. What particularly disgusted Dickens, though, was the frequent disregard for the spittoon. Dickens noted that one New York gentleman, when not engaged in conversation, simply turned and spat upon the drawing room carpet.²⁴

Before Dickens arrived in Philadelphia, he had become so irritated by people's habits and idiosyncrasies that his focus shifted—from American institutions to the American people. However, Dickens held on to two goals: to meet with Edgar Allan Poe to discuss the international copyright issue, and to visit the Eastern State Penitentiary in order to observe the system of separate confinement.

Poe had also suffered financially because his work was being published in foreign countries without the benefit of copyright protection, a fact that caused him to employ the services of his lawyer friend Henry Beck Hirst and to press influential men like Frederick William Thomas and John P. Kennedy to try to push a copyright bill through Congress.²⁵ Dickens envisioned that England's 1842 Copyright Act, which protected English writers during their lifetime and for several years following their death, could serve as a model for an international copyright law; plus, he had a petition signed by twenty-five American authors, including Washington Irving, which he hoped might persuade the American Congress of the reasonableness of such a law.²⁶ Furthermore, Dickens argued that an international copyright law would do more than protect authors from having their work pirated. Such a law would encourage Americans to embrace writing as a profession; American readers would read more of their own literature, not just European or British literature; writers could actually make a reasonable living through their work; and Americans could take pride in their homegrown literature, not rely on Europe or Britain to give them cultural "legitimacy."²⁷ In fact, Dickens warned that without a copyright agreement, America would not develop a literature of

its own.²⁸ Dickens's argument was similar to Noah Webster's argument that America needed to have a language of its own—American English, a dialect that Webster hoped to standardize.²⁹ America seemed to have two choices: continue to follow the British models of language and literature or create new models—uniquely American ones.³⁰

Two long interviews with Edgar Allan Poe came March 6 at the United States Hotel, ending with Dickens promising to do his best to get a volume of Poe's work published in England, a volume containing the now-famous "Masque of the Red Death." Though he approached several publishers upon returning to England, Dickens was unable to keep his promise—no publisher was interested in Poe's work. The obstacle, most likely, was the condition Poe had set for the publication of his work in England: there would be no publication unless he was guaranteed copyright protection, an assurance publishers were unable to give.³¹

Dickens did find an American publisher he respected: F. Henry Carey, a Philadelphia publisher from Carey, Lea and Blanchard, who sent British writers, including Dickens, token royalties for publishing their work.³² Five years earlier, Carey had sent Dickens "25 [pounds] at four months . . . not as compensation but as a memento" for *Sketches by Boz*.³³ Resignedly, Dickens accepted the money and other small payments from Carey's firm for proofs of his serialized novels; however, he hoped to amend the writer-publisher relationship after a face-to-face meeting with Carey.³⁴ Like other publishers, both in America and in Britain, Carey saw no advantage with an international copyright law, and the great Boz was unable to convince him otherwise. Having failed to make progress in his argument for a copyright law, Dickens focused on his second interest—the state penitentiary.

Dickens's visit to Eastern State Penitentiary was twice delayed—first, by a sightseeing tour of Philadelphia, and then by a reception held at the United States Hotel. Though he found the city to be "distractingly regular," and, after a couple of hours of walking about, complained that he "would have given the world for a crooked street," Dickens also praised several sites. In his travel book, he describes the Philadelphia Waterworks as "no less ornamental than useful, being tastefully laid out as a public garden, and kept in the best and neatest order." He also compliments some public institutions, such as "a most excellent Hospital—a quaker establishment . . . ; a quiet, quaint old Library, named after Franklin; a handsome Exchange and Post Office," and Girard College, "which, if completed according to the original design, will be perhaps the richest edifice of modern times."³⁵

The day following his city tour, March 8, Dickens intended to investigate the penitentiary; however, his visit was postponed for a second time because an unauthorized announcement had been made in the morning edition of the *Public Ledger* that the famous author would shake hands with friends that morning.³⁶ Dickens reluctantly agreed to the unexpected, and unwelcome, reception after being assured by his hotel landlord that a riot would break out should he refuse to attend the levee.³⁷ Having already been skewered by the New York press for his views on the copyright issue and for the over-the-top receptions held in his honor, Dickens realized that the Philadelphia press would not treat him kindly should he fail to attend the reception, an event intended to convince him that Americans could produce an event that was as cultured and refined as any he could attend in England. After a couple hours of being crushed into a corner, where he was introduced to nearly everyone in the room, an exhausted Dickens finally called a halt to the hand-shaking, tired of hearing, "That, sir, is one of the most remarkable men in our country," after each introduction. Exasperated by the constant exaggeration of men's worth, Dickens exclaimed to his hosts, "Good God . . . they are all so! I have scarcely met a man since my arrival who wasn't one of the most remarkable men in the country."³⁸ Certainly, Dickens recognized another common characteristic of Americans—the need to exaggerate people's worth, perhaps caused by an inferiority complex that came with the separation from England, leaving the former British subjects searching for an original, American identity while struggling to replace the royal heads of state with their own national leaders.³⁹ The desire to maintain a link to their British past was the likely reason Americans, certainly then and perhaps now, have been so drawn to English royalty and the reason English imports, including literature, were so valued following the Revolutionary War and well beyond Dickens's lifetime.

Perhaps tiring of the famous author and his whining about the copyright issue, one newspaper reporter charged with covering Dickens composed a brief, untitled article for the *Public Ledger* of March 9, stating with mock sympathy that Mr. Dickens was expected to recover from his ordeal, especially since he had recovered from "the oppressive kindness of the New Yorkers."⁴⁰ Another journalist, however, noting the absurdity of the situation to which Dickens had been exposed, ridiculed the Committee members who had thrust themselves upon the resigned object of their attention and expressed embarrassment on behalf of the city of Philadelphia. The writer also added that he expected to see the scene described in all its outrageous detail in Mr. Dickens's next work.⁴¹ He was right.

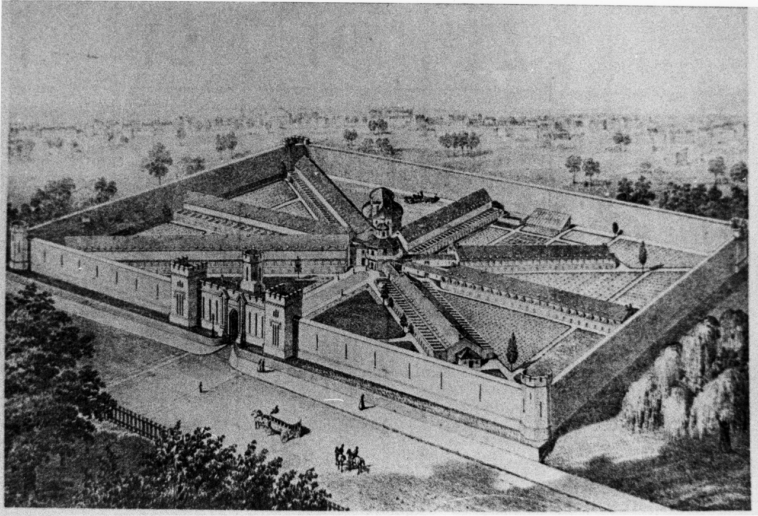


FIGURE 1: Charles Dickens toured the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, accompanied by prison officials who explained to the author the Pennsylvania system of separate confinement. *Source:* Courtesy of Pennsylvania State Archives, RG-15 Records of the Department of Justice, Press Office History File, Oblique Early View of Eastern State Penitentiary.

Following the reception, Dickens finally did tour Eastern State Penitentiary. Also identified as the Prison of Philadelphia and the Cherry Hill Prison, the penitentiary, designed by architect John Haviland, was opened in 1829 about two miles northwest of Philadelphia's Center Square, or City Hall; the prison had the façade of a medieval fortress, its seven wings radiating around a central room.⁴² The penitentiary was part of the Pennsylvania system, a penal method "based on the belief that regimens of silence and penitence would prevent cross-infection and encourage behavior improvement in prisoners."⁴³ The separate system of this institution was not the same as a solitary system, for "separate" did not include "solitude or silence"; the complete technical name from 1842 to 1866, after which overcrowding made it necessary to confine two prisoners to one cell, was "separate method of confinement with labor and moral instruction." This is an important distinction: Dickens seemed to believe that "separate" confinement was the same as "solitary" confinement, even though the separated prisoners could communicate with prison officials, see visitors, work in their cells, and move about in an exercise yard.⁴⁴

Date	Name	Residence
1842		
Feb 28	B. D. Bartlett M. D.	Maine
"	Dr. H. Bond	Phila
"	Thomas Hurthy	"
"	Jacob Bennett	"
March 1	J. J. Summers	Louisiana
"	Edman McKies	Philadelphia
"	Ag. J. Brown Smith	New York
"	M. J. Mylie	Philadelphia
"	Miss P. J. M. Mylie	"
"	Miss S. A. Potts	"
"	Harriet Kibby	"
"	Miss E. Hoadley	Cleveland, Ohio
"	Dr. S. H. Hall	New Haven, Conn
"	Edman Bishop	Philadelphia
"	James S. Chambers	New York
"	Chas. J. Goodwin	Philadelphia
"	John M. Doyle	Philadelphia
"	W. F. Piffel & Wife	Phila
"	Riegan	Phila
"	Aaron Eschbort	Lehigh Co Pa
"	Stephen Fryman	do
"	Miss Piffel & Wife	Albany, N.Y. & Co.
"	M. Siegel & Wife	Phila
"	Sam Williams	Phila
"	John Keen	Phila
"	Mrs. Wm. Bann	do
"	Mrs. Lytle	Groton, Bos
March 7	Fernando de la Cruz	Mexico
"	Dr. Cuesta	Mexico
"	F. de la Cruz	Mexico
"	P. de Thibault	"
"	M. de Thibault	"
"	Benj. F. Leaver	New York
"	J. W. Hermann	Berlin Prussia
8	Charles Dickens	London

FIGURE 2: Dickens signed the Eastern State Penitentiary prison register when he toured the prison on March 8. His signature can be found at the bottom of the page, first column. Source: Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Dickens interviewed several inmates. One was Thomas Parks, who had entered the penitentiary in 1833 after having murdered his wife.⁴⁵ The description of Parks could easily be a description of the long-suffering Bastille prisoner Alexander Manette from *A Tale of Two Cities*, published in 1859: "They called him at the door to come out into the passage. He complied of course, and stood shading his haggard face in the unwonted sunlight of the great window, looking as wan and unearthly as if he had been summoned from the grave."⁴⁶

Another prisoner interviewed by Dickens was a German, Charles Longhamer, a problem prisoner who had served nine terms in Eastern Penitentiary and five terms in other prisons—all for larceny. Early in his incarceration at Eastern, Longhamer tried twice to commit suicide; then he simply refused to work, causing him to be placed in restraints in the "dark cell" for nine hours.⁴⁷ It seems that Longhamer may have recognized Dickens's "weakness"—his tremendous compassion—and played the part of the tortured inmate well. More than a decade after Dickens's death, the *Philadelphia Press* announced the death of "Dickens' Dutchman":

[The German] was a wily, consummate hypocrite. He understood Dickens' purpose in visiting the penitentiary, and was quick to seize the opportunity to intrude himself significantly upon his attention. Affecting an air of deepest misery, he crept with the feigned step of fear and palsy beneath the eyes of the novelist, bemoaning his wicked existence.⁴⁸

The Dutchman was made famous by Dickens, who placed Longhamer's "woeful tale" in his travel book, giving the prisoner the attention he craved.⁴⁹

In a letter to Forster, Dickens claims that he was openly critical of the prison system and had told the prison inspectors, whom he described as "kind and benevolent men," that he thought the punishment could be justified only if it worked to reform the prisoners; he felt long punishment—anything over two years—must work horrors on the human mind. Though he admitted, in the same letter, that the Penitentiary was "wonderfully kept," he thought it was also a "most dreadful, fearful place," for the treatment of the long-term prisoners was "cruel and unjustifiable" and the sentences for minor offenses were "savage."⁵⁰ The prison officials—including past warden Samuel Wood, current warden George Thompson, inspector Richard Vaux (mayor of Philadelphia in 1855), and Board chairman Matthew Bevan—were all stunned by Dickens's criticism; none could recall Dickens uttering anything but praise for the

institution either during or immediately after the tour of the facility.⁵¹ Dickens told Forster that what he saw at the Eastern Penitentiary was forever imprinted on his brain. After he had returned to England, Dickens announced to Forster that he thought the separate prison system in Philadelphia would be a good subject for his travel book.⁵² It was, in fact, an excellent topic: three-fourths of the Philadelphia chapter of *American Notes* is an account of Dickens's experiences at Eastern State Penitentiary.

1842—
 March 7th West Tower was prepared and arrangements made for the accommodation of the men there—the pain prevented him from being removed this evening
 Received from Court of Q and S of Montgomery County
 No 1574. John Brown formerly No 1662. and No 704—
 this prisoner is evidently constitutionally deranged, and was so on both his previous sentences—crime Burglary sentence 3 Years
 No 1575—James McClellan—crime Burglary sentence Four Years
 No 1576—Henry Timber—Crime—Ditto—ditto Four Years
 No 1577—Peter Bandercoffe—Crime Receiving Stolen Goods, sentence One Year—
 No 1518—Karl Coffin—Crime Larceny sentence Three Years—
 X 8 Removed No 1532 engaged a Nurse for him and made every arrangement for his comfort—(Doctor Bauach here and approved of all that was done respecting him—
 Received from General Sessions of Philad County
 No 1579—Charles Lewis formerly No 10—crime Rape; brandy-felony sentence Four Years—
 No 1520—Robert McClellan formerly No 675—Burglary sentence 3 Years
 No 1521—Charles Smith formerly No 1085—Ditto—ditto 5 Years
 X The Prison visited by all the Inspectors and Mr Dickens of England & a number of Gentlemen also visited—Mr D dined with the Inspectors
 Doctor Bauach here—
 visited the small Pox case several times during the day—
 " 9 Received from Court of General Sessions of County of Philadelphia
 No 1522. William English—crime Larceny sentence 3 Years
 No 1523. Samuel Brown—crime Burglary sentence 10 Years
 " 10 No 1524 Asbury Towell—Crime Misconduct sentence 10 Years
 visited the small Pox case three times this day every attention paid
 Doctor Bauach here—
 " 10 Received from Court of General Sessions of Philadelphia County
 No 1525—James Gould—crime Larceny sentence Three Years
 No 1526—Peter Kelly—Ditto—do—do—do—Ditto—
 to the detention business of the Institution visited the small Pox case three times this day—Nurse every attention to him
 Doctor Bauach here—

FIGURE 3: Prison warden George Thompson kept a log of prison visitors. Of Dickens's visit, he states, "The Prison visited by all the Inspectors and Mr Dickens of England[;] a number of Gentlemen also visited—Mr D dined with the Inspectors." Source: Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The night before his departure from Philadelphia, Dickens received an unpleasant surprise—a large bill from his landlord. Not only had he been charged for the reserved rooms he did not occupy when he was delayed for four days in New York—a charge that he could understand—but he was also charged board for the four days.⁵³ Under normal circumstances, Dickens would have protested the extra charge. He was sure, though, should the press get wind of Dickens's refusal to pay his bill, he would have been—in the words of a character from *Martin Chuzzlewit*—"flayed like a wild cat."⁵⁴ Not willing to risk being delayed on his journey south and repulsed by the prospect of another negative press report, Dickens accepted the landlord's explanation that the extra charge was "the custom" and paid his bill.⁵⁵ However, Dickens did not forget the landlord, the smart businessman, using him as a model for Major Pawkins, the "gentleman of Pennsylvania origin" in *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

He had a most distinguished genius for swindling and could start a bank, or negotiate a loan, or form a land-jobbing company (entailing ruin, pestilence, and death, on hundreds of families), with any gifted creature in the Union. This made him an admirable man of business.⁵⁶

Already angry that publishing firms were cheating him by pirating his work, Dickens now realized that individual citizens would do the same every chance they got. What was worse, Americans were proud of their swindling ability, calling it "smart business."

Early Wednesday morning, March 9, Dickens and his party boarded a steamboat and left Philadelphia, via Baltimore, for Washington.⁵⁷ After a two-week tour that took them as far south as Richmond, the group returned to Pennsylvania for the first leg of their journey west.

Up the Susquehanna Valley: From York to Harrisburg

Our road wound through the pleasant valley of the Susquehanna; the river, dotted with innumerable green islands, lay upon our right; and on the left, a steep ascent, craggy with broken rock, and dark with pine trees. The mist, wreathing itself into a hundred fantastic shapes, moved solemnly upon the water; and the gloom of evening gave to all an air of mystery and silence which greatly enhanced its natural interest.⁵⁸

Having completed his tour of the South, where the institution of slavery horrified him, Dickens, along with his companions, left Baltimore the morning of March 24 and traveled by rail sixty miles to York, arriving at the Whitehall Hotel in time for a noon meal of “the best beefsteak he’s eaten in America.”⁵⁹ Alerted by the newspapers that the illustrious Boz was traveling through the town, the citizens of York flocked to the sidewalk outside Whitehall, hoping for a glimpse of the great author of the popular *Pickwick Papers*.⁶⁰

That evening, which was the beginning of a wet, bone-chilling night, a four-horse vehicle that Dickens describes as “a corpulent giant, a kind of barge on wheels” picked up its passengers and headed to Harrisburg, twelve persons fitting tightly inside the coach, and Dickens, he thanked his stars, sitting up on the box in the open air with the driver and another passenger.⁶¹ The first coachman, Samuel Stubbins, later recalled the trip with Dickens, noting that Dickens had asked about General Lafayette, who had traveled the same route from York to Harrisburg seventeen years before, and had expressed an interest in the canal built around the Conewago Falls in 1797 and the grinding of wheat into flour twenty years earlier by using the power of the Susquehanna River. The stagecoach stopped twice between York and Harrisburg—once at the York Haven Hotel, where, according to Stubbins, Dickens had a “nip” of rye, a drink Dickens describes as “the usual anti-temperance recipe for keeping out the cold,” just “to clear his throat.”⁶² The second stop was at Henry Etter’s Hotel, just short of the York County border, where Dickens enjoyed his first Pennsylvania Dutch sauerkraut dinner. Here, while the horses were changed, the guests could view the beautiful “island-dotted Susquehanna.”⁶³

At last, the coach arrived at the Harrisburg bridge, Old Camelback: just “a shingle-roof, clapboard-side barn on nine piers and four abutments, but it was the pride of Harrisburg.”⁶⁴ Dickens found the bridge to be unattractive, uncomfortable, and depressing—in stark contrast to the beautiful river it spanned. That cold, wet night of March 24, the window sashes on the huge, enclosed bridge were closed to keep out the rain, making a particularly gloomy appearance. Dickens relates the crossing of the Camelback:

We crossed the river by a wooden bridge, roofed and covered in on all sides, and nearly a mile in length. It was profoundly dark; perplexed, with great beams, crossing and recrossing it at every

possible angle; and through the broad chinks and crevices in the floor, the rapid river gleamed, far down below, like a legion of eyes. We had no lamp; and as the horses stumbled and floundered through this place, towards the distant speck of dying light, it seemed interminable.⁶⁵

The bridge was “profoundly dark” because of the prohibition against “carrying fire” through the structure, which was seen as a fire hazard.⁶⁶ Tolls were collected for every living creature that crossed the bridge—both humans and animals; the bridge even contained holding pens for animals so that accurate head counts could be made by the toll collectors, who had been instructed to accept only “specie and such notes as were taken on deposit by the banks of Harrisburg.” However, it was not considered wrong to try to pass counterfeit money or in other ways attempt to cheat the collectors, but “smart.”⁶⁷ The toll collected for a carriage was seventy-five cents, probably the charge for Dickens’s coach, and no one was exempt from paying the toll—ever.⁶⁸ In fact, during the Civil War, the Union troops who crossed the bridge to defend it against Confederates who threatened to burn it down were charged to cross



FIGURE 4: Heading into Harrisburg, Dickens and his companions crossed Theodore Burr’s Camelback Bridge over the Susquehanna River the rainy night of March 24. *Source:* Courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.



FIGURE 5: On the night that Dickens crossed the river into Harrisburg, the window sashes of the Camelback Bridge were closed to the cold, wet weather, making the interior dark and gloomy. The author noted the presence of the animal pens within the bridge so that every animal could be counted and charged for passage across the huge wooden structure. *Source:* Courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.

it on their way to protect it! A \$3,028.63 bill, submitted after the Battle of Gettysburg, was paid by the Commonwealth in 1863.⁶⁹

At last, the Dickens party arrived in Harrisburg, “whose feeble lights, reflected dismally from the wet ground, did not shine out upon a very cheerful city.” The travelers were fitted into the Eagle Hotel, located on Market Street; Dickens describes the host, Henry Buehler, as “the most obliging, considerate, and gentlemanly person [he] ever dealt with.” Located on Market Square, the Eagle Hotel, Harrisburg’s oldest hotel, was originally the Golden Eagle Hotel when it was built in 1812, the year Harrisburg replaced Lancaster as the state capital.⁷⁰

The next day, March 25, the town’s officials called upon Dickens before the author had finished his breakfast and hauled him to “a model prison on the solitary system, just erected, and as yet without an inmate.”⁷¹ This was

the Dauphin County prison, the original built about 1790, then “removed” for the new prison in 1838–40. Costing about \$40,000 and finished in 1841, the new structure was designed by John Haviland, the architect of Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia as well as Western State Penitentiary, the Pittsburgh prison Dickens would later visit.⁷² One of the officials who accompanied Dickens on his tour was Eastern’s former warden, Samuel Wood, the “friendly Quaker” from Philadelphia; again, Wood did not recall Dickens making any negative remarks on the Pennsylvania prison system.⁷³

Following his tour of the unoccupied prison, Dickens visited other notable sites of the capital city. He examined the trunk of an old mulberry tree to which John Harris Sr. had once been tied by Indians who intended to roast him alive when he denied them rum and under which he was now buried.⁷⁴ According to the *Harrisburg Keystone* of March 26, 1842, Dickens also visited the Capitol, where he met with Governor David R. Porter in his Executive Chamber. Since Dickens makes no mention of what he discussed with the governor either in his travel book or in his letters, one can only speculate on their topics of conversation. Most likely, they discussed topics that were of personal interest to Dickens, including Pennsylvania’s method of separate confinement. Dickens may have urged the governor to eliminate debt as a cause of imprisonment—something the governor did do with the Act of July 1842. Dickens and Porter may have also reviewed another topic Dickens found both fascinating and appalling—the state’s (and the country’s) troubled financial situation. Two years earlier, Porter had upheld the state’s credit by forcing the banks to resume specie payments, thus avoiding the “stain of repudiation” on Pennsylvania due to the \$40 million debt it had incurred by the construction of public improvements such as railroads and canals.⁷⁵

Dickens recognized that Pennsylvania, with its enormous debt, was in worse financial condition than any other state. In an April 1 letter to W. C. Macready, Dickens criticizes America in general and Pennsylvania in particular:

I have not changed . . . my secret opinion of this country; its follies, vices, grievous disappointments. . . . I believe the heaviest blow ever dealt at Liberty’s Head, will be dealt by this nation in the ultimate failure of its example to the Earth. See what is passing now—Look at the exhausted Treasury.⁷⁶

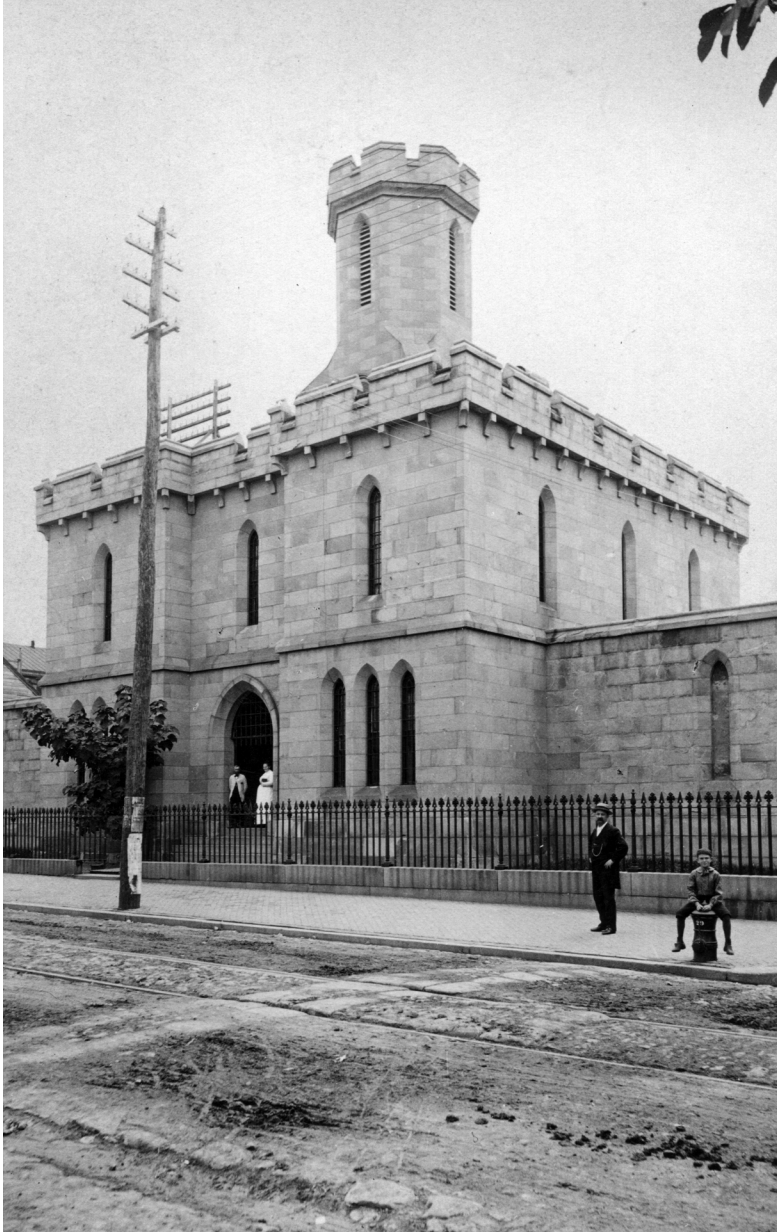


FIGURE 6: Dickens toured the Dauphin County prison, built in 1841 by the foremost prison architect of his time, John Haviland. Dickens, along with several Harrisburg officials, visited the prison on March 25, before any prisoners had been assigned there. *Source:* Courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.

In an April 16 letter to Forster, Dickens makes another comment on the country's poor financial situation:

Consider at your leisure the strange state of things in this country. It has no money; really *no* money. The bank paper won't pass; the newspapers are full of advertisements from tradesmen who sell by barter; and American gold is not to be had, or purchased.⁷⁷

The full title of Dickens's travel book, *American Notes for General Circulation*, has a double meaning. First, because there was no international copyright agreement, Dickens's book would be generally circulated to the whole reading public, without royalties going to its author. Second, Dickens was also poking fun at America's horrible financial situation and the rather common practice of forging "bank paper [that] won't pass."⁷⁸

While touring the Harrisburg Capitol, Dickens examined Indian treaties and the original records of the colony that were preserved in the Secretary of State's office.⁷⁹ He saw several agreements surrendering land claims throughout Pennsylvania by Delawares, Susquehannock, and Iroquois.⁸⁰ Dickens was particularly impressed—and saddened—by the signatures of the Native Americans:

These signatures, traced of course by their own hands, are rough drawings of the creatures or weapons they were called after. Thus, the Great Turtle makes a crooked pen-and-ink outline of a great turtle; the Buffalo sketches a buffalo; the War Hatchet sets a rough image of that weapon for his mark. So with the Arrow, the Fish, the Scalp, the Big Canoe, and all of them.⁸¹

Based on his description of signatures, some of the deeds Dickens must have seen were these: the Iroquois deed of October 11, 1736; the agreement of October 25, 1736; and the deed known as the "Walking Purchase," which completed the sale of the Delaware lands, dated August 25, 1737.⁸²

Dickens was struck by the plight of the American Indians:

I could not . . . help bestowing many sorrowful thoughts upon the simple warriors whose hands and hearts were set there, in all truth and honesty; and who only learned in course of time from white men how to break their faith, and quibble out of forms and bonds.⁸³

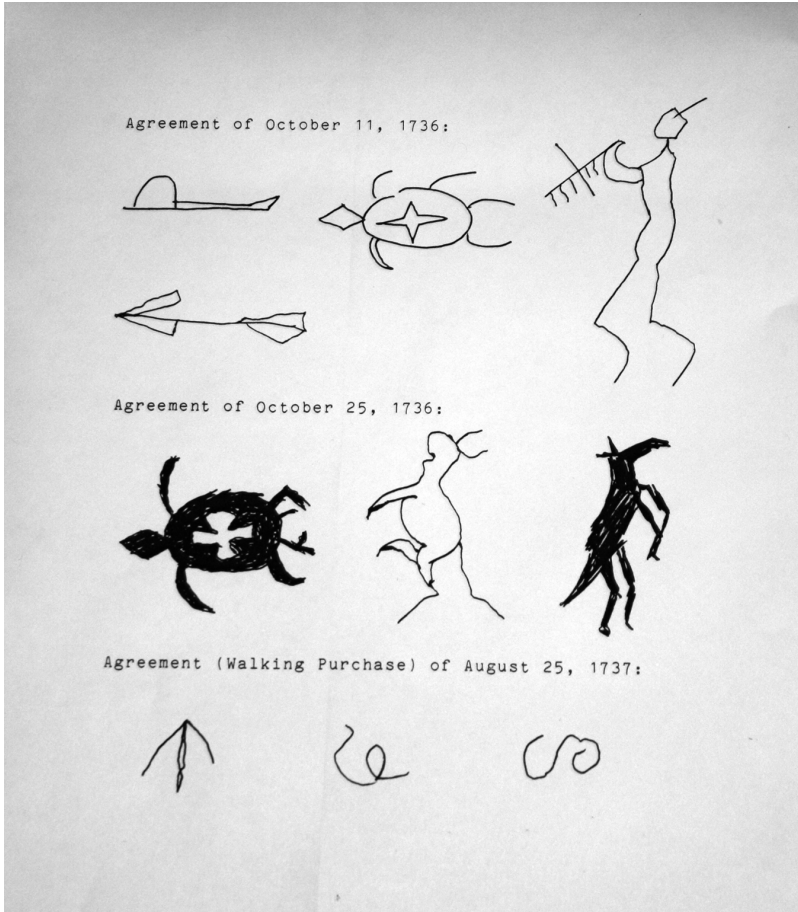


FIGURE 7: While visiting the state Capitol, Dickens had the chance to examine several eighteenth-century treaties signed by Native Americans. *Source:* Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

Historian William Henry Egle reacted to Dickens's comments as many other Americans did—with humor, explaining that it goes "to show how somebody must either have deceived him or his sentimentalism ran away with his better judgment."⁸⁴ Dickens's compassion for Native Americans, like his compassion for prisoners, was seen by many Americans as a weakness—as mere "sentimentalism."

After a busy morning of visiting the Dauphin County prison and the Capitol, Dickens turned down the chance to attend a session of legislature,

for he was uninterested in anything to do with politics and disinclined to give the legislators what he knew they expected—a spontaneous yet eloquent speech from the champion of the Common Man. The disappointed legislators, however, followed Dickens—much to his horror—back to his hotel, where Mr. Buehler, the landlord, reluctantly agreed to a reception as he glanced with “painful apprehension at [the room’s] pretty carpet.”⁸⁵ In a letter to Forster, Dickens explains the reason for Buehler’s look:

Pretty nearly every man spat upon the carpet, as usual; and one blew his nose—with his fingers—also on the carpet, which was a very neat one. . . . This [practice] has become so common since, however, that it scarcely seems worth mentioning. Please to observe that the gentleman in question was a member of the Senate.⁸⁶

It is little wonder that Dickens makes the subject of expectorating a prominent topic in his travel book and in the American segment of his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Finally, Dickens broke away from the reception for an early dinner prior to boarding the canal boat that would carry him to Pittsburgh and the West. The citizens of Harrisburg were hopeful that Dickens felt that his time in the capital city was well spent; an announcement in the March 26 issue of the *Pennsylvania Telegraph* expressed this hope: “We are pleased to state that [Mr. Dickens] was not exceedingly bored during his stay.”⁸⁷ There was no report on Dickens’s visit to Dauphin County in Carlisle’s *American Volunteer*; however, the paper did publish a comment on March 24, the day of Dickens’s arrival in Harrisburg: “‘Boz fever’ has had its season. No town will henceforth get into an uproar in consequence of his presence.”⁸⁸ The author of that comment could not have been more wrong: though it was just “a plain country town,” Harrisburg received Dickens enthusiastically and graciously, introducing him to the town’s officials, proudly showing him its historical sites and institutions, holding a reception for him, and lionizing him to the point of exhaustion.⁸⁹

At 3:00 in the afternoon of March 25, Good Friday of Easter weekend, Dickens and his companions, in a heavy and unrelenting rain, boarded the canal boat for their four-day journey to Pittsburgh.⁹⁰ Once aboard their boat, the Dickens group was not favorably impressed with their accommodations: they had questions about the sleeping arrangements, and they wished there were fewer than thirty-three people crammed into the vessel.⁹¹ Before they

had a chance to voice their concern, however, it was too late for a change of plans; the canal boat was already moving up the Susquehanna River.

The Canal Trip to Pittsburgh

Sometimes, at night, the way wound through some lonely gorge, like a mountain pass in Scotland, shining and coldly glittering in the light of the moon, and so closed in by high steep hills all round, that there seemed to be no egress save through the narrower path by which we had come, until one rugged hill-side seemed to open, and shutting out the moonlight as we passed into its gloomy throat, wrapped our new course in shade and darkness.⁹²

Recently opened in 1842, the Main Line Canal followed five rivers from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh: the Susquehanna, the Juniata, the Conemaugh, the Kiskiminitas, and the Allegheny—all of which provided the canals with their water.⁹³ The canal trip took Dickens through one of the most stunningly beautiful parts of the country. The first evening brought the travelers within sight of the “first range of hills, which are the outposts of the Alleghany mountains, [and] the scenery . . . became more bold and striking.” Dickens describes the impressive sight of the Clark’s Ferry Bridge over the Susquehanna River, north of Harrisburg: “There is an extraordinary wooden bridge with two galleries, one above the other, so that even there, two boat teams meeting, may pass without confusion—it was wild and grand.”⁹⁴

On the canal boat, Dickens lived intimately with Americans for the first time, an experience he found at times interesting and pleasurable and at other times uncomfortable and annoying. He tolerated a number of discomforts and inconveniences: he had to use a tin ladle to scoop cold, dirty water out of the canal for washing; he was forced to sleep on a kind of a shelf, a narrow plank, beneath a corpulent gentleman weighing heavily on the shelf above him; he had to breathe the stale air of the sleeping quarters; he ate at a table elbow to elbow and face to face with tobacco-stained men; he was forced to step warily around the gentlemen who milled about the stove, spitting on the floor; and he was unable to walk comfortably above board because of the helmsman’s frequent warning, “Bridge!”—a call that forced walkers to flatten themselves on the deck or risk being struck a fatal blow to the head, courtesy of a low bridge. Above all, there was no privacy. However, Dickens

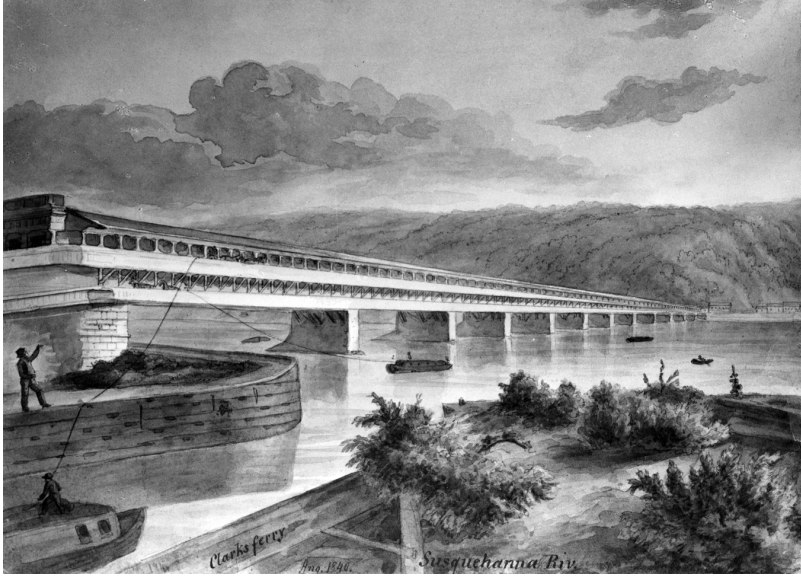


FIGURE 8: Dickens described the Clark's Ferry Bridge over the Susquehanna River, north of Harrisburg, as an incredible sight. *Source:* Courtesy of the Historical Society of Dauphin County.

made the best of the situation, at times even amusing his fellow passengers with his wit.⁹⁵

During the canal journey, Dickens had time to contemplate the multiple uses of the word *fix*, a word frequently used in all of its forms in Pennsylvania: *to fix the table* meant to lay the tablecloth; *to fix the papers* meant to organize them; *to fix oneself* meant to dress; *to be fixed by a doctor* meant to be cured; *to fix dinner* meant to prepare it; and when “a Western man, handing the potatoes to Mr. [Putnam], inquired if he wouldn’t take some of ‘these fixings’ with his meat,” he meant would he like the vegetables.⁹⁶ Dickens observed that American English often bore little resemblance to the dialect of his homeland.

Dickens describes the beauty he observed—a virtual Eden on Earth—and the peace he felt on his canal journey up the Susquehanna Valley and west to Pittsburgh:

The exquisite beauty of the opening day, when light came gleaming off from everything; the lazy motion of the boat, when one lay idly on the deck, looking through, rather than at, the deep blue sky; the

gliding on, at night, so noiselessly, past frowning hills, sullen with dark trees, and sometimes angry in the one red, burning spot high up, where unseen men lay crouching round a fire; the shining out of the bright stars, undisturbed by noise of wheels or steam, or any other sound than the liquid rippling of the water as the boat went on: all these were pure delights.⁹⁷

In this passage, Dickens emphasizes both the untouched beauty of Pennsylvania and its man-made spots of ugliness. Just as the “unseen men” disturbed nature, making her “angry in one red, burning spot,” other men disrupted and destroyed the environment in their quest to civilize the land, causing many spots of ugliness. In his letters to Forster, Dickens highlights not only the natural beauty of the state but also the unnatural scars of civilization:

It pains the eye to see the stumps of great trees thickly strewed in every field of wheat; and never to lose the eternal swamp and dull morass, with hundreds of rotten trunks . . . steeped in its unwholesome water. . . . It is quite an oppressive circumstance, too, to *come* upon great tracks, where settlers have been burning down trees; and where their wounded bodies lie about, like so many prodigal sons.⁹⁸

Dickens develops the above description by personifying the injured elements of nature. This segment appears in *American Notes*:

[There were] hundreds of rotten trunks and twisted branches steeped in its unwholesome water . . . [and the] wounded bodies [of trees] lay about, like those of murdered creatures, while here and there some charred and blackened giant reared aloft two withered arms, and seemed to call down curses on his foes.⁹⁹

Following this segment is another passage from *American Notes* depicting a different kind of journey than the one he had described just a page earlier. Remarkably similar to Dickens’s account of the stagecoach trip from York to Harrisburg and over the Camelback Bridge, the canal journey through an earthly Eden sounds like a descent into Hell:

Sometimes, at night, the way wound through some lonely gorge . . . shining and coldly glittering in the light of the moon, and so closed in by high steep hills all round, that there seemed to be no egress save

through the narrower path by which we had come, until one rugged hill-side seemed to open, and shutting out the moonlight as we passed into its gloomy throat, wrapped our new course in shade and darkness.¹⁰⁰

The Pennsylvania scenery Dickens studied during his canal journey and developed in his travel book is seen in its final form in the American section of *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In the following segment, two characters are traveling by steamboat bound for a small American settlement, ironically named Eden:

On [they] toiled through great solitudes, where the trees upon the banks grew thick and close; and floated in the stream; and held up shrivelled arms from out the river's depths . . . half decaying, in the miry water. On through the weary day and melancholy night . . . on, until return appeared impossible, and restoration to their home a miserable dream. . . . No sound of cheerfulness or hope was heard . . . it might have been old Charon's boat, conveying melancholy shades to judgment.¹⁰¹

In a letter to Forster, Dickens paints a picture of the settlements he saw in the Allegheny Mountains:

We have passed . . . a great number of new settlements, and detached log-houses. Their utterly forlorn and miserable appearance baffles all description. I have not seen six cabins out of six hundred, where the windows have been whole. Old hats, old clothes, old boards, old fragments of blankets and paper, are stuffed into the broken glass; and their air is misery and desolation.¹⁰²

The description of the Eden settlement in *Martin Chuzzlewit* reflects Dickens's experiences in Pennsylvania: first, his view of the United States Bank in Philadelphia, whose "mournful ghost-like aspect [was] dreary to behold";¹⁰³ second, his recognition of the state's financial status, which stood shakily on the abyss of repudiation; third, his observation of the tiny Pennsylvania settlements he passed on his canal journey:

There were not above a score of cabins in the whole [settlement]; half of these appeared untenanted; all were rotten and decayed. The most tottering, abject, and forlorn among them was called, with great propriety,

the Bank, and National Credit Office. It had some feeble props about it, but was settling deep down in the mud, past all recovery.¹⁰⁴

On Easter Sunday, March 27, the canal boat reached Hollidaysburg and the beginning of the most fascinating yet most dangerous part of the journey to Pittsburgh.¹⁰⁵ The boat had come to the Allegheny Portage railroad, a thirty-six-mile stretch over the mountains that required a change of power thirty-three times and employed twelve stationary engines, twelve teams of horses, nine locomotives, and a minimum of fifty-four people.

On each side of the mountain were five inclined planes, each with two tracks of continuous hemp cable traveling up one track then down the other, balancing the cars moving up with those moving down.¹⁰⁶ The canal boats themselves were sectional, so that a westward-bound boat could be taken apart at the Hollidaysburg basin on the eastern side of the mountain and floated onto trucks, or flatbed railroad cars, that were placed on tracks extending into the water.¹⁰⁷ The sections of boats would then be hauled over the mountain to the Johnstown basin on the western side of the mountain, where they would be reassembled.¹⁰⁸ Dickens did not seem to be particularly worried about the obvious dangers—the nearness of the rails to a precipice,



FIGURE 9: The most perilous part of Dickens's journey to Pittsburgh came when his canal boat was hauled over the Allegheny Mountains via a system of inclined planes. *Source:* Courtesy of Pennsylvania State Archives, MG-286 Penn Central Railroad Collection, Conrail Public Affairs Office, Historical Image File, Allegheny Portage Railroad, Lemon House Packet Sketch.

or the strain on the hemp cable. Instead, he was more impressed with the Lemon House, where he dined at the head of inclined plane number 6—the highest point of the Portage railroad at 2334 feet.¹⁰⁹ Dickens gives details of the breathtaking view from near the top of a mountain:

The prettiest sight I have seen was . . . when we . . . looked down into a valley full of light and softness: catching glimpses of scattered cabins; children running to the doors; dogs bursting out to bark; pigs scampering home, like so many prodigal sons; families sitting out in their gardens; cows gazing upward, with stupid indifference; men in their shirt-sleeves looking on at their unfinished houses, and planning work for tomorrow—and the train riding on, high above them, like a storm.¹¹⁰

Most likely, Dickens observed this scene while riding across the Conemaugh Viaduct, “considered the most perfectly constructed arch in the United States.” Built in 1832–33 and saving a distance of two miles, it had a span of eighty feet and rose over seventy-eight feet above its foundation.¹¹¹

After traveling across the Allegheny Portage Railroad, the canal boat took one more day to arrive at its destination; the city, Dickens explained, was entered through “a long aqueduct across the Allegheny River, which was stranger than the bridge at Harrisburg, being a vast, low, wooden chamber full of water.” On Easter Monday, March 28, Dickens and his fellow travelers arrived at their journey’s end—Pittsburgh, a town nicely situated on the Allegheny but smoky, Dickens observed, most likely because of its ironworks. During his three-day visit, Dickens stayed at the Exchange Hotel, which he described as “excellent” and where they were “admirably served.”¹¹²

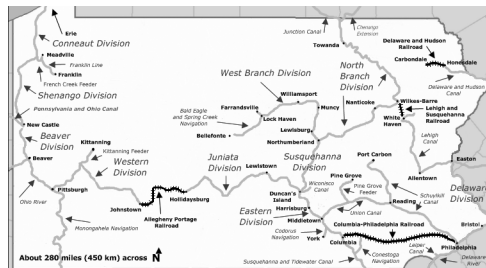


FIGURE 10: Canals of Pennsylvania. *Source:* US Census website modified by Ruhrfish.

Not content simply to rest after the exhausting canal boat journey, Dickens toured a number of sites while in Pittsburgh. He visited an arsenal designed by Benjamin Latrobe, designer of the United States Capitol.¹¹³ As planned, he visited the Western prison designed by Haviland. During this visit, it occurred to Dickens that one of the terrors of the solitary confinement prison might be ghosts. In a letter, he explains to Forster why specters may appear to an inmate of such an institution:

The utter solitude of day and night; the many hours of darkness; the silence of death; the mind for ever brooding on melancholy themes, and having no relief; sometimes an evil conscience very busy; imagine a prisoner covering up his head in the bedclothes and looking out from time to time, with a ghastly dread of some inexplicable silent figure that always sits upon his bed or stands . . . in the same corner of his cell. The more I think of it, the more certain I feel that not a few of these men . . . are nightly visited by specters.¹¹⁴

At Western Penitentiary, Dickens asked one inmate if he dreamed much. Dickens recounts the prisoner's response: "He gave me a most extraordinary look, and said—under his breath—in a whisper—'No.'"¹¹⁵ The man's strange behavior and startled reaction to Dickens's question convinced Dickens that his speculation about nightly visitors was correct.

Instead of placing the portrait of this prisoner in the Pittsburgh section of his travel book—where it belonged—Dickens placed the inmate's description in the section on the Eastern prison found in the Philadelphia chapter. Here, Dickens speculates on the prisoner's mental torment:

At first, the man is stunned. His confinement is a hideous vision; and his old life a reality. He throws himself upon his bed, and lies there abandoned to despair. By degrees the insupportable solitude and barrenness of the place rouses him from this stupor, and . . . he humbly begs and prays for work. "Give me some work to do, or I shall go raving mad!" . . . Every now and then there comes upon him a burning sense of the years that must be wasted in that stone coffin. . . . He starts from his seat, and striding up and down the narrow room with both hands clasped on his uplifted head, hears spirits tempting him to beat his brains out on the wall. . . . Scarcely venturing to breathe, and listening while he thinks, he conjures up a figure with its back towards him, and imagines it moving about.¹¹⁶

Most likely, Dickens used this psychological picture of the condemned Pittsburgh prisoner to develop the character of Alexandre Manette in *A Tale of Two Cities*: Manette suffered the terrors of solitary confinement, for he had been “buried alive” in the Bastille for nearly eighteen years. Like the prisoner described above, Dr. Manette begged for work to keep from going mad; he was given one of the common occupations for prisoners, shoe making. Like the Pittsburgh prisoner, Dr. Manette despaired over the wasted prison years: “I have looked at [the moon] when it has been such torture to me to think of her shining upon what I had lost, that I have beaten my head against my prison-walls.”¹¹⁷ Finally, in his despair, the doctor, like the unfortunate inmate in the Pittsburgh prison, conjured up a ghost—at times a son who would avenge his father’s imprisonment; at other times a daughter who would come to him at night, giving him freedom in his dreams.

While in Pittsburgh, Dickens kept himself busy to the point of exhaustion, not only sightseeing but also enduring several receptions held in his honor. In the *Pittsburgh Morning Chronicle*, dated April 2, the city bragged of the quiet and dignified receptions it had for the author, unlike the extravagant welcomes Dickens experienced in the East, which, the newspaper assumed, were as unpleasant to Dickens as they would be to any reasonable person. During his stay, Dickens was also pursued by phrenologists, cranial examiners anxious to get their hands on Dickens’s magnificent head; whenever he saw them “bearing down upon” him, Dickens fled. Mostly out of curiosity—just to see if he could do it—he magnetized, or hypnotized, his wife Catherine; in another letter, he explains to Forster that he succeeded in his first attempt, “magneti[zing] her into hysterics, and then into the magnetic sleep.”¹¹⁸

Bound for Cincinnati, Dickens and his companions left Pittsburgh April 1 on board the *Messenger*, a steamboat that came highly recommended because it was equipped with Evan’s safety valves, making the vessel less likely to blow up. Dickens was pleased when the landlord of the Exchange Hotel sent him a bottle of wine after they had boarded the steamboat, wine they would drink to toast Forster’s thirtieth birthday and their own sixth anniversary.¹¹⁹ The Dickenses left Pittsburgh, and Pennsylvania, for the remainder of their tour of the States before they departed for England and home.

Conclusion

[America is] . . . like a Bat, for its short-sightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like an Ostrich, for its putting its head in the mud,

and thinking nobody sees it—And like a Phoenix, for its power of springing from the ashes of its faults and vices, and soaring up anew into the sky!¹²⁰

True, Dickens was disappointed with his American visit. Much of his disappointment, however, was his own fault. First, his expectations were too high; for example, he predicted he would be able to resolve the copyright issue easily and quickly simply by making a compelling argument in favor of an international copyright law. Second, though he had resolved to leave the Old World behind him when he visited the New World, he could not help comparing American customs to British ones.¹²¹ Thus, he often objected to something simply because he was unfamiliar with it; for example, he was annoyed by the American habit of exaggeration. In his mind, Dickens had created one America, but he found another, one that could never satisfy the fictional America he had imagined.

Dickens had a list of grievances against America—a list that included complaints against Pennsylvania. He was nauseated by the unrefined culture—the spitting, the poor table manners, and the unorthodox use of the English language, a language where *smart* was a euphemism for *swindle*. Dickens also hated the loss of privacy: he dreaded the frequent receptions held in his honor, and he was unnerved by the press's constant monitoring of his activities and criticizing his comments. In addition, Dickens found it irritating to be pulled into political discussions, especially concerning such issues as the next presidential election, which was still three and a half years away.¹²²

Dickens strongly objected to four Pennsylvania institutions: the transportation system, the press, the prison system, and the government's financial system. First, Dickens was appalled by all forms of transportation—the discomfort of coaches jammed full with passengers, the unsanitary and crowded conditions of canal boats, and the unreliability and danger of trains. Next, he was angered by a press that not only did not support his quest for an international copyright law but also lampooned him for his speaking out on the issue, even though Dickens had warned America that the country would not have its own literature without the benefits of copyright protection. In fact, his frequent comments regarding copyright may have only delayed rather than encouraged the passing of an international copyright law, something that did not happen until 1891—more than twenty years after Dickens's death.¹²³ Also, the Pennsylvania system of *separate* confinement, which

Dickens continued to confuse with *solitary* confinement, depressed and upset him; he called the system “cruel and unjustifiable,” and even “savage.”¹²⁴ It was not until 1913, seventy-one years after Dickens’s visit to Pennsylvania, that the “separate system” of confinement was declared a failure and brought to an official end.¹²⁵ Finally, he was shocked by the poor financial condition of the country: state after state declared repudiation, causing the ruin of a number of British investors. Dickens noted that the Keystone State, more than any other state, was in serious financial straits, having incurred a debt of \$40,000,000.¹²⁶

Just as Dickens did not understand Americans, they did not understand the real Dickens. Basing their understanding of the author only on his work, his fans imagined that Dickens would be a different sort of fellow than he was—polite, appreciative, modest, perfectly British. Instead, they found him to be audacious, avaricious, proud, and all too human. Ruffling American feathers everywhere he went, Dickens lacked the good sense to be more patient and restrained with his American hosts: he would not let the copyright issue rest, and he made it clear that he did not enjoy the levees that were thrown in his honor. Had Dickens found the time to read more Philadelphia newspapers, he would have been disheartened and furious. Some announced new publications by Boz—unauthorized, of course; one paper declared it would publish the sixth and seventh numbers of the complete works of Dickens; and another printed the “touching description of the internment of a young and beautiful child” from *Master Humphrey’s Clock*.¹²⁷ Ironically, one of the unintended consequences of Dickens’s visit to America was an increase in the unauthorized publication of his work.

A topic that Dickens frequently discusses in his letters and satirizes in the American segment of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is the absence of individuality in America. Before his journey to the States, Dickens believed that America would be the model that the rest of the world could follow. The new country held the promise of humanity’s rightful destiny, for America had rejected the values of the Old World and replaced them with the right of every person to determine his or her own destiny.¹²⁸ However, the paradox was obvious to Dickens: though America had overthrown the authorities and the traditions of the Old World, the country was now churning out people without discernible differences. Major Pawkins from Pennsylvania, a *Chuzzlewit* character, was one of many individuals described as “one of the most remarkable men in our country,” a type Dickens met again and again at receptions, such as the levee held for Dickens in the United States Hotel in Philadelphia.¹²⁹

American Notes stirred up ill will between America and England, and caused trouble for Dickens and other writers as well. Americans feared at the time of its publication that Dickens's tour book would discourage British travelers from visiting the States—and perhaps it did. Though it has been more than 170 years since the publication of his travel book, some American readers still criticize Dickens's travel book as petty, unjust, and one-sided. Furthermore, Dickens's complaining about his works being pirated in America may have only encouraged continued unauthorized publication of his and other authors' work—something American publishers of the mid-nineteenth century considered “smart” business.

However, Dickens indicated that, despite its faults, America also had two primary strengths: the country's extraordinary natural beauty—those areas that were untouched by human hands—and the worthiness of individual Americans. Pennsylvania's beauty was something Dickens discovered when he traveled by coach along the Susquehanna River toward Harrisburg and when he crossed the Allegheny Mountains on the Allegheny Portage Railroad; he was deeply impressed by the state's sometimes hauntingly beautiful scenery. Most notably, Dickens did meet many Pennsylvanians whom he liked and respected, men such as Edgar Allan Poe, fellow writer and supporter of international copyright; Samuel Wood, past warden of Eastern Penitentiary and penal system expert; F. Henry Carey, the Philadelphia publisher; David Porter, the governor of Pennsylvania; and Henry Buehler, the landlord of the Harrisburg hotel. Thus, Pennsylvania—like the rest of America—had ugliness and beauty, vices and virtues, ignoble institutions and noble individuals—all of which Dickens recognized in his letters, his travel book, and his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Readers should note, however, that Dickens has included in his writings some rays of hope for America, primarily in the form of individual citizens, indicating that one day the country could become, in fact, the Republic of Dickens's imagination.

NOTES

1. John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, 2 vols. (London: Dent, 1927; reprint 1948), 1:173, 174; Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson, eds., *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 3:156.
2. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:viii; Una Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens* (New York: Howell, 1946), 154.

3. Quoted in Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens: A Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 127.
4. Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3, 30.
5. Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, ed. John S. Whitley and Arnold Goldman (1842; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1985), 302.
6. Norman Page, *A Dickens Companion* (New York: Schocken, 1984), 133; Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 301.
7. Ralph Straus, *Charles Dickens: A Biography from New Sources* (New York: Cosmopolitan, 1928), 168–69; Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie, *Dickens: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 108.
8. Edgar Johnson, *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph* (New York: Penguin, 1979), 194.
9. Charles Dickens, *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, ed. P. N. Furbank (1844; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1984), 8.
10. Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 51, 104.
11. Justin Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 99; Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 15; Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens*, 169; Hervey Allen, *Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Farrar, 1934), 418.
12. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:264, 1:189.
13. Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 130.
14. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:197.
15. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*; Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, vol. 1; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, vol. 3.
16. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:205–6.
17. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:98–99; “Dickens, Charles, in Philadelphia,” *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, 4 vols. (Harrisburg: National Historical Association, 1931–33), 2:580.
18. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 348.
19. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:194.
20. Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 131.
21. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:144–45; “Dickens, Charles, in Philadelphia,” 2:580; Joseph Jackson, “Bank of the United States,” *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia*, 1:226–27.
22. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:205, 206.
23. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 144.
24. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:206–7.
25. Allen, *Israfel*, 419.
26. Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 91, 132.
27. Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9.
28. Kaplan, *Walt Whitman*, 99.
29. Tamarkin, *Anglophilia*, 290.
30. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 44.
31. Allen, *Israfel*, 419, 423, 424, 424n.
32. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:125n.

33. Joseph A. Cuza, "Charles Dickens in Philadelphia," *Philadelphia History* 4, no. 6 (1960): 172; "Dickens, Charles, in Philadelphia," 2:578.
34. Tomalin, *Charles Dickens*, 106.
35. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 145–46.
36. "Local Affairs: Mr. Dickens," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, March 8, 1842, 2.
37. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:75n.
38. Pope-Hennessy, *Dickens*, 172.
39. Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 10.
40. Untitled article, *Philadelphia Public Record*, March 9, 1842, 2.
41. "Mr. Dickens in Philadelphia," *Philadelphia Daily Chronicle*, March 10, 1842, 2.
42. Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, *The Prison at Philadelphia: Cherry Hill; The Separate System of Penal Discipline: 1829–1913* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), xiii, 56, 57; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:110n.
43. Anthony P. Trivisono et al., eds., *An American Prison: From the Beginning . . . A Pictorial History* (College Park, MD: American Correctional Association, 1983), 39.
44. Teeters and Shearer, *Prison at Philadelphia*, 217, 218.
45. *Ibid.*, 124.
46. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 150.
47. Teeters and Shearer, *Prison at Philadelphia*, 118–19.
48. *Ibid.*, 120, 121.
49. *Ibid.*, 121.
50. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:211–12.
51. Teeters and Shearer, *Prison at Philadelphia*, 114; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:124n.
52. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:211, 258.
53. *Ibid.*, 1:211.
54. Dickens, *Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit*, 430.
55. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:211.
56. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 331.
57. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:110n.
58. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 188.
59. *Ibid.*, 185; Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:222; "Charles Dickens Had Beefsteak for Breakfast Here," *York Dispatch*, October 21, 1961, 5.
60. "Boz!" *York Gazette*, March 29, 1842, 3.
61. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 186.
62. Ralph A. Bellas, "Charles Dickens Ate Sauerkraut in 1842—And May Do It Again," *York Sunday News*, February 22, 1953, 15.
63. "Dickens in York: Described Visit," *York Dispatch*, February 7, 1912, 8; Dickens, *Notes*, 188; George R. Powell, "Charles Dickens and His Visit to York in '42," *Reading Eagle*, December 14, 1923, 26.
64. Paul B. Beers, *Profiles from the Susquehanna Valley* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1973), 70. Dickens would probably have been interested to learn that Theodore Burr, the builder of the Camelback Bridge, "suddenly and mysteriously died, with scarcely enough money for a decent burial. Thus,

- one of the greatest Pennsylvania bridge builders lies in some unknown grave somewhere in central Pennsylvania" (William Shank, *Historic Bridges of Pennsylvania* [York, PA: Buchart-Horn, 1966], 11).
65. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 188–89.
 66. William A. Kelker, "The Old Harrisburg Bridge," in *Notes and Queries: Historical, Biographical, and Genealogical, Relating Chiefly to Interior Pennsylvania*, ed. William Henry Egle (Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Publishing, 1970), 1899:41. Ironically, the bridge, which stood where today's Market Street Bridge is located, was demolished March 2, 1902, not by fire, but by a spring flood (Beers, *Profiles*, 71).
 67. Kelker, "Old Harrisburg Bridge," 41.
 68. James Silk Buckingham, *The Eastern and Western States of America* (London: Fisher, 1842), 1:483.
 69. Beers, *Profiles from the Susquehanna Valley*, 72.
 70. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 189; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:167n, 168n; A. Boyd Hamilton, "Short Stories of Harrisburg," *Harrisburg Telegraph*, December 16, 1938, 14.
 71. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 189.
 72. Luther Reily Kelker, *History of Dauphin County, Pennsylvania* (New York: Lewis, 1907), 2:108.
 73. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:124n, 169n.
 74. Beers, *Profiles from the Susquehanna Valley*, 133; Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 189; Buckingham, *States*, 1:481. Friendly Delawares, according to Buckingham, or Shawnees, according to Beers, saved Harris, father of the founder of Harrisburg, John Harris Jr. Though the tree under which Harris was buried (after his natural death) had long since died, the trunk could still be seen in 1842.
 75. "Porter, David Rittenhouse," *Who Was Who in America* (1963), 1607–1896:419; Alex K. McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1905), 1:36.
 76. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:175.
 77. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:245.
 78. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 333.
 79. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:223; Buckingham, *States*, 1:488.
 80. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:168n.
 81. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 189.
 82. William A. Hunter, *The Walking Purchase*, ed. Donald H. Kent and William A. Hunter (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission, 1961), 1; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:168n.
 83. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 189.
 84. William Henry Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania: Biographical and Genealogical* (Philadelphia: Everts, 1883), 319.
 85. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:223; Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 190.
 86. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens* 1:223.
 87. Untitled article, *Harrisburg Pennsylvania Telegraph*, March 26, 1842, 2.
 88. "Correspondence of the Philadelphia Inquirer, Washington City, March 16," *Carlisle American Volunteer*, March 24, 1842, 2.

89. Kelker, *History of Dauphin County*, 610.
90. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:223, 226. The canal path cut through downtown Harrisburg, east of the site of the Pennsylvania railroad station (William H. Shank, *The Amazing Pennsylvania Canals* [York, PA: Historical Society of York County, 1965], 11).
91. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:224. Dickens traveled on the Express line, the more expensive of the two lines, the other being the Pioneer (Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 196). In the March 30, 1842, issue of the *Pittsburg(h) Mercury*, an announcement was made that the fares of the Main Line of the Pennsylvania Canal (from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh) would remain stable: nine dollars was the charge for the Pioneer line; twelve dollars for the Express. For Dickens and his fellow passengers, the fee from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh would have been about seven or eight dollars per person.
92. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 199.
93. William H. Shank, *History of Pennsylvania Transportation* (York, PA: Buchart-Horn, 1968), 2.
94. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 192, 193.
95. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:169n; Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:224.
96. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:226.
97. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 198.
98. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:226.
99. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 199.
100. Ibid.
101. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 440.
102. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:225–26.
103. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 145.
104. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 445.
105. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 199. Dickens was one of many Europeans who passed over the Allegheny Mountains on the Portage Railroad; travelers like him and Harriet Martineau took this path west just to see this railroad, “acclaimed as one of the wonders of the New World” (Shank, *Pennsylvania Transportation*, 2; Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* [New York: Saunders, 1837], 17). Martineau made it a rule that no one in her party could read while on deck after she heard the story of the untimely demise of two young ladies who had been reading and failed to duck when the helmsman shouted his warning, “Bridge!”
106. Shank, *Amazing Canals*, 25.
107. Robert McCullough and Walter Leuba, *The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal* (Martinsburg, PA: Morrisons Cove Herald, 1962), 100; Shank, *Pennsylvania Transportation*, 1.
108. Harry A. Jacobs, *The Juniata Canal and Old Portage Railroad* (Hollidaysburg, PA: Blair County Historical Society, 1941), art. 1:10.
109. “Lemon House,” *Guide to Historical Markers of Pennsylvania*, 4th ed. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission, 1945), 29.
110. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:226.
111. Jacobs, *Juniata Canal*, 11. Jacobs noted that the Conemaugh Viaduct was destroyed by the disastrous Johnstown flood on May 31, 1889.

112. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 200; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:148n.
113. Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh: The Story of a City* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1937), 153. Built in 1814, Allegheny Arsenal manufactured and reconditioned military equipment until after the Civil War. On September 17, 1862, the arsenal laboratory, which contained 10,000 tons of powder, plus hundreds of boxes of finished shells and cartridges, was destroyed by an explosion and fire, killing almost eighty men, women, and children (Sarah H. Killikelly, *The History of Pittsburgh: Its Rise and Progress* [Pittsburgh, PA: Montgomery, 1906], 151).
114. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:231.
115. *Ibid.*, 1:231–32.
116. Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 153–54.
117. Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, intro. by Edgar Johnson (1859; New York: Washington Square, 1957), 18, 234.
118. House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:178n; Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, 229; Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:229–30.
119. Forster, *The Life*, 1:228; House, Storey, and Tillotson, *Letters of Charles Dickens*, 3:178, 178n.
120. Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, 619.
121. Steven Marcus, *Dickens: From Pickwick to Dombey* (New York: Basic, 1965), 242.
122. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:227.
123. Whitley and Goldman, introduction to *Notes*, 14.
124. Forster, *Life of Charles Dickens*, 1:212.
125. Teeters and Shearer, *Prison at Philadelphia*, 92.
126. McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 36.
127. “Boz,” *Philadelphia United States Gazette*, March 9, 1842, 2; “The Burial of Little Nell,” *Philadelphia North American and Daily Advertiser*, March 11, 1842, 2.
128. Marcus, *From Pickwick to Dombey*, 241.
129. Pope-Hennessy, *Charles Dickens*, 172.