



No. 1. Bed Coverlet printed by John Hewson of Philadelphia, 1774-1810. Attached thereto is a paper, bearing in the handwriting of a grandson, the history of its origin.
Owned by Jos. B. Hodgson, Jr. (Photographed by Pennsylvania Museum.)



No. 2. Bed Coverlet of John Hewson of Philadelphia.
Owned by Miss Ella Hodgson. (Photographed by Pennsylvania Museum.)

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No. 2.

CALICO AND LINEN PRINTING IN PHILADELPHIA.

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As the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, thereby spreading its brilliancy on the intervening country, so have many of the high lights of our civilized world today had their origin in Eastern Asia, been used and improved upon by the people of India and Western Asia, as the knowledge thereof spread Westward, until we of the Western Hemisphere are inclined to take many things for granted in the most matter of course way. Six thousand years before Christ the Chinese had means whereby different periods of the day were indicated by the shadow of the sun on some marked object; these were the ancestors of our sundials, and clocks and watches soon came into vogue.

History fails to reveal to us the origin of printed textile fabrics which were coloured in various patterns. From time immemorial the Chinese are known to have used wood-blocks for printing cloths; centuries before the art was known in Europe, and this knowledge gradually spread to India, and thus Westward. The early Egyptians are known to have printed cloths in the first century of the Christian era, as indicated by Pliny in his writings. At the time of the Spanish invasion of America in 1519 they found the Incas of Peru, Chile and Mexico used textile fabrics which were printed in different designs and colouring. By the middle of the

seventeenth century what we know as printed linens and cotton fabrics, or calico, had been produced in Europe and the knowledge thereof was soon spread to the British Isles. Many of these were called *calicoes*, the name being taken from those printed cotton fabrics imported from and which were known to have been produced in Calicut, India.

In the second decade of the eighteenth century cotton goods were supposed to have been printed in the Massachusetts colony by George Leason and Thomas Webber of Boston, who, according to their advertisement in the *Boston News Letter* of April 23, 1712, advised its readers that they had "set up a Callendar Mill and Dye-House in Cambridge-Street, Boston, near the Bowling-Green: Where all Gentlemen Merchants and others may have all sorts of Linnens, Callicoes, Stuffs or Silks Callender'd; Prints all sorts of Linnens; Dyes and Scowers all sorts of Silks, and other things, and makes Buckrams; and all on very reasonable Terms."

The earliest record of such a textile printing industry being established in Philadelphia is derived from a Baltimore letter printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of January 30, 1772, which reads partly as follows;—

"We learn that a person who has for many years been a master in several large manufactories for linen, cotton and Calico printing, likewise cutting and stamping of copper plates for same, intends sometime this month to leave England for America with six journeymen and all machinery for carrying on the same business, which unknown to the English manufacturers, has been shipped."

This is believed to have referred to John Hewson.

Benjamin Franklin did so much for the good of Philadelphia and its institutions, that to him might be given credit for the foundation of our textile printing and bleaching industry, if not for all our great textile growth. In February 19, 1758, he wrote to his wife that he had purchased—"fifty-six yards of cotton, printed curiously from copper plates, a new invention, to make

bed and window curtains, and seven yards of chair bottoms, printed in the same way, very neat."

Soon after this Franklin met a London calico printer and bleacher, one John Hewson, whom he induced to go to Philadelphia, and gave him "letters of Address" to General Roberdeau and others in that city and New York. Hewson set sail in Captain Sutton's ship, with his wife and four small children as well as his personal belongings; arriving in the Quaker City September 1773. He lost no time in establishing his business, for in the following Spring he opened his Calico Print Works in Kensington, on "Beach Street near the Glass-House." This was on the West side of Beach Street, between what are now East Montgomery Avenue (formerly Warren Street) and East Berks Street.

From our earliest colonial period the English authorities did everything to discourage manufacturing in this country; hoping thereby to stimulate the trade of the British merchants and manufacturers. Those hardy settlers thought differently. They had left Europe to become free and more independent and many would not trade with the homeland unless greatly to their financial advantage. The weaving of woollens and linens in the homes was a common practice, and the women of the country soon learned to dye their own yarns and in some cases to print their cloths. This state of affairs was soon known to the English workmen; and venturesome craftsmen, with the spirit of travel and adventure in their blood, saw the opportunity offered to set up various forms of manufacture in America. Many of them took advantage of conditions here, sold out their plants and emigrated Westward. In some instances the tools and utensils were smuggled into the country, and in other cases the journeymen indentured themselves for a period of time, to pay their passage money, and thus aid in building up the manufacturing industries, as well as bettering their own condition and that

of their families. Prosperity in the colonies soon brought the desire for luxuries in wearing apparel as well as for better furnishings for the homes, hence the growth of the textile printed fabrics industry, for clothing as well as bed furnishings and hangings.

JOHN HEWSON—above referred to—was most practical in the establishment of his Print works in Kensington on “Beach Street near the Glass-House.” He secured ample space where the bleaching and drying could be done out of doors in the sunlight,—as was the custom in those days—and chose land close to a fresh-water stream. His plant was near where Gunners Run (later Aramingo Canal) empties into the Delaware River; thus assuring him an ample supply of pure fresh water; a commodity so necessary in the business.

Ten months after his arrival in Philadelphia the following notice appeared in the July 20, 1774, issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*—

A CALICOE PRINTING MANUFACTORY, and BLEACH-YARD, is just opened, near the Glass-House, at the upper end of Kensington, about one mile from the city of Philadelphia;

J O H N H E W S O N,

The Proprietor thereof, begs leave to inform the public, that he has, at a considerable expence, imported prints from London, and compleated works sufficient for carrying on the above business to perfection; should the public encourage him in his present undertaking, he hopes to merit their favour, as well in the execution as price, being brought up regularly to the business, at Bromley-Hill, near London, one of the most considerable Manufactories and Bleach-yards in England. He engages his work shall be equal in colour, and will stand washing, as well as any imported from London or elsewhere, otherwise will require no pay. Linen sent for bleaching, from one yard to a thousand, shall be punctually returned in three weeks, compleatly finished, at 4d. per yard. The different colours that may be ordered, renders his publishing the prices of printing impossible, or he would insert them here; such as he has done, he has the pleasure to find have given general satisfaction; his present sett of prints consists of patterns for printing calicoes and lineps for gowns, &c. coverlids, handkerchiefs, nankeens, janes and velverets, for waistcoats and breeches, &c. Orders from town or country are taken in at the Manufactory, or by the following gentlemen, in Philadelphia, who have been pleased to encourage the work,---Mr. Jonathan Zane, Mr. Sharp Delany, Dr. William Drewet Smith, in Second-street; Joel Zane, between Race and Vine-streets, in Second-street; Jonathan Zane, jun. in Vine-street, between Third and Fourth-streets, and at the New-Ferry. Patterns of the different prints may be seen at the Manufactory, or on notice he will do himself the pleasure, to wait on any person with them. §

Note that he refers to his former place of employment in London as "at Bromley Hall, near London, one of the most considerable Manufactories and Bleach-yards in England," and that he prints "Calicoes and linens for gowne, &c. coverlids, handkerchiefs, nankeens, janes and velverets, for waistcoats and breeches"—also that "He engages his work shall be equal in colour, and will stand washing, as well as any imported from London or elsewhere, otherwise will require no pay." Could any one ask more?

Within a year of his arrival, Hewson was to suffer a great loss. While he was on a business visit to New York, and no doubt presenting some of Franklin's "Letters of Address," his wife died, leaving him with four young children (a son and three daughters), who had accompanied the parents from England. In the autumn of 1775, seeing the necessity of proper care for his youthful offspring, while he was attending to the newly established and necessary business, Hewson married a second time. He chose as wife Zibiah Smallwood of Burlington County, New Jersey, a niece of Richard Cheesman and sister of Lieutenant Smallwood of the patriot army.

Hewson became so imbibed with the patriotic spirit of the colonists that in 1775 he enrolled in the first Grenadier company of Philadelphia, and in the next year was commissioned an officer in the Philadelphia County Militia. Five years later, the 4th Company of the 2nd Regiment of Foot, of that militia, had as their Captain, "John Hewson of Kensington." His military career was beyond reproach. He was captured by the British in 1778, at the mouth of the Rancocas Creek below Burlington, New Jersey, confined in the old Walnut Street prison until the British evacuated Philadelphia; when he was transferred to New York and kept on Long Island. From here he escaped by rowing—at night—across the bay to Sandy Hook, and later

made his way back to Philadelphia and immediately started in to restore his printing establishment which had been destroyed by the orders of General Howe, who was quite incensed to find that a London gentleman, in this city but four years, had joined the patriot army.

One reads in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* of April 1, 1778—"This day several prisoners were brought in from the Jersies, one of whom is John Huston (*Hewson*), a calico printer, and lieutenant in the rebel militia."

After the British forces had evacuated the city, Hewson appears to have taken in as a partner one William Lang—also of London—who evidently was the designer of patterns and cutter of plates for the printing of linens and calicoes; for in the issue of November 9, 1779, of the *Pennsylvania Packet* appears the following advertisement—

LINE N PRINTING.

THE subscribers beg leave to inform the public, that they have removed to Kensington, on purpose to carry on the business at the original factory, joining the glass-house. The savage foe of Britain have made such destruction of their works and materials, that renders them unable to carry on the business in all its branches. The branch of business they mean to carry on, is the printing of blue handkerchiefs, with deep blue grounds and white spots; also very neat gown-patterns of the same colour, which they will warrant to be as durable in their washing and colour, as any imported from Europe or elsewhere, or they will have nothing for doing them. Little need be said as to the abilities of the subscribers, as there are numbers of yards now in wear, done by them, equal to any done by the boasted Britons. The works will be ready this week, and work received at the factory, by **HEWSON and LANG.**

N. B. A quantity of Pot-ash is wanted.

It is quite evident from the phraseology of this notice that there was a most bitter feeling towards their former countrymen who so wantonly destroyed the youthful industry of this Linen Printing establishment

of Kensington. As in other post-war periods, Hewson's business did not flourish as he had hoped for, as we find he appealed to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania for financial assistance. This was eventually granted him; as one reads in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, No. 2345, April 15, 1789, that the sum of two hundred pounds, without interest, for seven years, was loaned "to the said John Hewson, for the purpose of assisting and enabling him to enlarge and carry on the business of calico printing and bleaching within this state."

Calico Printing.

THE Business of Calico Printing is carried on by the subscribers at their Factory in Kensington, in the Northern Liberties of the city of Philadelphia, where Merchants and others may have Work done in that art elegantly and with expedition—They also, upon moderate terms, preserve Sailcloth, without injuring its texture, from the destructive effects of mildew, though used upon the longest voyages.

The subscribers were always averse to mentioning performances which existed but in a newspaper: they however think it proper to mention, that such proof of their abilities have been exhibited to the Legislature of this State, as met the approbation of, and induced that Honorable Body to grant a small encouragement to the performers; and as a further proof of having excelled in their line of business, the Board of managers of the Manufacturing Society of the city of Philadelphia, adjudged to John Hewson the Plate of Gold proposed as a premium for the best Specimen of Calico Printing done within this State.

A favourable opportunity now presents itself for carrying on the Business of Calico Printing in this country extensively, and with great advantage, particularly to those concerned in the East-India trade, who have it in their power to reap many and great benefits that are peculiar to those only.

Any person or persons, willing to enter into the above-mentioned branch of business in an extensive manner, may have further information on the subject by applying to

March 23. 3112aw JOHN HEWSON & CO.

The Pennsylvania Society for the Encouragement of Manufactures of the Useful Arts (organized 1787, General Thomas Mifflin, President) held their first sale of printed cottons, corduroys, federal rib, &c. in 1789 and

made John Hewson the Calico Printer of that body. In March of the following year Hewson's notice in the *Pennsylvania Packet* (March 24, 1790) advises the readers that the Board of Managers of said Society had "adjudged to John Hewson the Plate of Gold proposed as a Premium for the best specimen of calico printing done in the State."

This "Plate of Gold" evidently was a medal of award, for in his will, Hewson bequeaths "my gold medal" to his eldest son John.

Note in the same advertisement how he calls attention of "those concerned in the East India trade" to the product of his plant, and that they "have it in their power to reap many and great benefits that are peculiar to those only." Surely this notice would indicate a market in the East, in competition with the Indian Palampores and other printed fabrics, from which Europe had copied many years before, and which Hewson had reproduced in this city.

On July 4, 1788, a "Grand Federal Procession" took place in Philadelphia. "The Manufactory Society" had the 29th section of this parade; and on a float, drawn by eight horses, were "Captain John Hewson printing muslins of an elegant chintz pattern, and Mr. William Lang (from London) designing and cutting prints for shawls and other chintz figures; on the right were seated Mrs. Hewson and her four daughters, pencilling a piece of sprigged chintz; all dressed in cotton of their own manufacture."

Hewson must have prospered in business and amassed considerable property, as he retired in 1810, leaving the Print-works to his son John Jr. In the city directories of 1811 his residence is given as 122 North Fourth Street, which was above Race Street at that time. In later directories the son is listed as *John Hewson, Calico Printer, Beach Street near Warren Street, Kensington.*

Captain John Hewson died October 14, 1821, and was buried in the old Palmer Street Burying Ground, Kensington. His will signed May 2, 1820, was proved October 22, 1821 (No. 152, page 352, Book 7), wherein he left "My Printing utensils at the Printing Manufactory, where I formerly resided and carried on said business" to his oldest child John Hewson Jr.; also his gold medal (probably that given by the Manufactory Society), silver coffee-pot and mahogany writing desk. The five "mahogany bedsteads with carved foot-posts," bureaus, tables, dressing stands, sideboard, and "a pair of kidney tables," with many other pieces, all of mahogany, were willed to other children;—there were eight living at the time—as well as forty pieces of solid silver and several pairs of "plated silver candlesticks." Chintz curtains and chintz bedquilts were bequeathed to daughters, and to Ann Hodgson, wife of Robert Hodgson—the largest bed quilts were bequeathed. It is to her grandchildren, Mr. Joseph B. Hodgson and Miss Ella Hodgson we are indebted for the privilege of here reproducing the two bed coverlets; their cherished possessions, which were made by Captain John Hewson, in his, the first linen and calico print works in Pennsylvania, at "Kensington near the Glass-House."

The bed coverlet—No. 1—is about 2 yards 31 inches square, of a soft creamy background, with a ten inch conventional border of flowers and leaves in soft browns and subdued red. A second border follows this for ten inches, enriched with graceful bunches of bright flowers alternating with bushes, on which brilliantly hued birds are perched. A third border, five inches wide (enclosing the central design) bears bunches of dull red flowers with bright green foliage and soft brown wreaths encircling them in a graceful pattern. In the center of the coverlet is a tall vase, nine inches high, of Egyptian influence, with masques on either side,

from which rise graceful handles. From this vase extends a bunch of gay, deep red flowers, on the top of which is a butterfly. In each corner and side of the centre square is a set design of pinks in natural colours, with numerous birds and brilliant butterflies scattered throughout. Museum experts have differed as to whether this coverlet is of linen or of cotton. "Who shall decide when doctors disagree &c?" Attached to this is a paper, bearing in the handwriting of a grandson, a statement of its origin and that it was printed by John Hewson.

Illustration No. 2 has a nine inch border of gaily coloured flowers, within which, at the base, is a mound of rocks and moss, on which are groups of deer, rabbits and foxes, as well as birds. From the centre of this mound, rises the well known "Tree of Life," with its mottled brown trunk, the branches of which bear large and brilliant reddish pink flowers. Numerous gay plumaged birds perch on these branches and a small animal can be seen in the upper center. On the lower left hand side arises a date palm tree in full fruit, at the base of which is a large pheasant type of bird. The background of this coverlet is white, and both are in excellent condition, having been well taken care of by the owners, and cherished for the historic origin. Like most bed coverlets which have come under the writer's observation, these are made of two pieces of goods, carefully stitched in the centre.

Hewson's notices appeared in the Philadelphia newspapers at various times for the next sixteen years; during which period the printing of calicoes was not confined to the Kensington plant alone. The "six journeymen" mentioned in the printed letter of 1772, may have ventured into business for themselves soon after their arrival in the city, for we find others advertising in the journals of Philadelphia. It is possible that these might have been other immigrants to the Land of Freedom.

JOHN WALTERS and THOMAS BEDWELL advertised in the *Pennsylvania Packet* of March 13, 1775—"LINEN PRINTING In all its Branches, performed by the subscribers, at their Manufactory near the Three-Mile Stone, on Germantown Road." This was about where the Fairhill Friends Meeting house now is, at Germantown Avenue between Cambria Street and Indiana Avenue.

Walters and Bedwell also showed their goods "every Wednesday and Saturday from eleven o'clock till two . . . at Mrs. Krider's at the Golden Swan, in Third Street." This tavern was above Arch Street, and it was here—in January 1803, that the first public meeting was held of those interested in the Lehigh Coal Mining Company.

They too printed linens and muslins for curtains, chair bottoms and bed furniture, handkerchiefs and for men's waistoats. All so popular at the time. Still further in their notice one reads—"As the subscribers have been at great expense in bringing this manufactory to America, they hope they shall meet with encouragement, as the prices they print for will make what they do considerably cheaper than what comes from Europe."

Walters and Bedwell did not remain long near the Third-Mile Stone on Germantown Road; as we find them on May 30th of the same year advising the readers of the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* that they had removed "to the White House on Mrs. Master's Plantation, left hand of Fourth-Street Road, one mile from Philadelphia." What became of Thomas Bedwell the papers of the time tell us not, for we again find John Walters alone, advising the public September 28, 1776, of his removal "to the house of the late Mr. Shipley's in Spring-Gardens." The "Spring" from which Spring Gardens took its name, is said by John Fanning Watson, in his *Annals of Philadelphia* to have been on the

North side of Pegg's Run, about 100 feet East of Ninth Street, near to the street called "Garden Street." Hence our present Spring Garden Street. Alas for their venture in the new country. We find on June 5, 1777—about two years after starting in business, John Walters notifying the public that he has "entirely quitted the linen stamping business" and asking that goods left with him be taken away. The troublesome times of the war then going on were not conducive to business prosperity and the housewives of the day evidently spent little money for such luxuries as gaily printed linens and calicoes; so all trace of this firm is lost.

NATHANIEL NORGROVE. In the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* of March 1, 1777, we read that "Nathaniel Norgrove, from Kensington, begs leave to inform the public that he has opened a manufactory for printing linen, cotton, calico and velverets . . . at the house of Widow Myers, four doors above Poolsbridge in Front Street, Northern Liberties." In Watson's *Annals* one reads that the First Grand Jury held in Philadelphia (January 11, 1682) reported "That Coquenakar Creek, at the North end of the city be made also passable for footmen." This creek was later called Pegg's Run, over which Pool's Bridge was built, and was North of the present Callowhill Street.

It is to be assumed that "from Kensington" in Norgrove's notice means he had left the employ of John Hewson and ventured in business on his own account, as it is unlikely that during the war he had come from Kensington, London. No other advertisements appear and we assume that with Howe's occupation of the city in September of that year his linen printing venture was abandoned. It is to be hoped he joined the Continental forces.

HENRY ROYL & CO. On September 18, 1784, the Philadelphia readers of the news journals were ap-

prised of the fact that the above firm "began a Calico Printing Manufactory on the Germantown Road, two miles from Philadelphia, at the place commonly known by the name of Bakeovens Place" and that "The undertakers of this work having been regularly brought up to the business, they flatter themselves capable of giving entire satisfaction." Perhaps they were too pleased with themselves and did not please the public, as we hear no more of them.

ROBERT TAYLOR advised the public on March 15, 1786, that he was fitting up "the Bleachfield in Lower Merion township, ten miles from Philadelphia, laid out and lately possessed by Daniel Bunce, where he intends carrying on the bleaching and printing business on the same principles they are conducted in Britain." According to his notice he was the most advanced of all our early calico and linen printers. His readers were told that "Pattern books will be lodged in different places for the convenience of the public." This indeed was an innovation.

How his methods aided business we know not, but in 1795 his Executor advertised the estate and asked for the return of "implements in care of his friends . . . or any other property of his to the Executor."

OAKFORD & LA COLLAY. Like Robert Taylor, this firm chose the country for their business and advertised June 27, 1797, from Darby that they carried on "the calico printing in its various branches, having a variety of new patterns, both for calico and shawls."

DAVY, ROBERTS & CO. At the close of the eighteenth century the English textile artisans were emigrating to this country rather rapidly. Germantown seemed to attract them and we find many small mills were started in that vicinity; such as knitting, spinning and weaving mills. So there is no surprise to find this firm advertising in 1798 in various journals "Calicoes printed at Germantown equal to any London work."

And as the Philadelphia Shipping Merchants were attempting to establish a market for our goods in exchange for cargoes to be imported, Messrs. Davy, Roberts & Co. included in their notice "Calicoes printed at Germantown and completely finished by skilfull workmen with punctuality and expedition at the lowest prices, to patterns suitable for the West Indies, or this country."

In the Philadelphia Directory of 1798 William Davy and Josiah Roberts & Co. are listed as *Merchants* at 59 South Water Street. It is possible they did not operate a printing plant, and sold for someone else.

When one considers the multiplicity of the various branches of cotton and woolen manufactories needed for this country, is there any wonder, with the foregoing record of but one branch of the textile industry, that Philadelphia has become the greatest textile producing section of the United States? And as the nineteenth century opened, one can well imagine the gaily printed cotton gowns of the ladies of the day—as they walked forth on High Street, also the attractive hangings and brilliant coloured "Bed furniture" in the shape of these old linens and calicoes and chintzes which collectors of today are anxious to secure and preserve.