NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Letter of John Laurens, November, 1777

Several months ago, the Society purchased from the Estate of John C. Gribbel, late president of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, a letter written by John Laurens to his father describing the attack against the forts on the Delaware. I take pleasure in presenting this letter, with a few notes on the writer and on the events of the campaign, to the readers of the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography.

On September 26, 1777, General Clinton’s victorious army marched into Philadelphia with very little opposition. Washington had lost the Battles of Brandywine and Germantown, and was about to encamp at Whitemarsh before moving into Valley Forge for the winter. The municipal government had moved to Lancaster, but Colonel William Bradford, who had been left in charge of Philadelphia, had done his best to salvage what supplies and ammunition he could. Both Washington and Bradford had begged Thomas Mifflin to defend the city, but that fair-weather patriot was not well and refused the command. At this juncture, only the forts on the Delaware disputed British control of Philadelphia. 

The situation was something like this: Fort Mifflin on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware was fairly well protected. On Fort (Mud) Island, it lay seven miles down the river just below the place where the Schuylkill empties into the Delaware. Facing Fort Island were Carpenter’s and Province Islands, to the south lay Hog Island, directly opposite on the Jersey shore was Fort Mercer at Red Bank. Four miles further down the river, on the Jersey side, was Billingsport. All three forts were under the command of General Varnum of Rhode Island whose headquarters was at Woodbury, two miles east of Red Bank.

1 Jared Sparks, The Writings of Washington, V. 371.
2 This naval campaign, with the exception of the defence of Fort Mercer, has been very much neglected by historians. The only adequate account I know is in John William Wallace’s Colonel William Bradford, the Patriot Printer of 1776, a book difficult to procure and one which should be reprinted.
A chain from Fort Mifflin.

A "boom" between piers, tried but abandoned.

Chain between piers, opposite to Fort Mifflin.

Chevaux de frise, opposite to and below Fort Mifflin.
When the attack was launched, Fort Mifflin, as Laurens' letter shows, held out against heavy odds as long as possible. Fort Mercer, a much stronger work, also resisted valiantly. Billingsport, which had been a continual bone of contention between the Pennsylvania authorities and Congress, had to be evacuated almost at once. Neither Washington nor Bradford had approved the erection of elaborate fortifications at that place, believing that Billingsport could not be held and that it might easily be used against the Congressional fleet if taken by the enemy. Congress chose to disregard this advice, but events proved the soundness of Washington's views and the fort had to be evacuated immediately when, early in the campaign, Clinton sent two thousand men against it.

In addition to the forts defending the river, the Pennsylvania Naval Board had placed numerous chevaux de frise opposite Fort Mifflin and Billingsport, and fixed a large boom entirely across the Delaware. Unfortunately, none of these protective devices was successful, since the British seem to have found out where they were placed and quickly destroyed them. Certain evidence indicates that Robert Whyte, who helped build the chevaux de frise, reported their location to the British. At any rate, after the fall of Fort Mifflin Whyte went to England and never returned to the United States.

In the end, therefore, the patriots had to depend on their small fleet of war galleys under the command of Commodore John Hazelwood to protect the Delaware. At the lower end of the river, they

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8 In his biography of Bradford, Wallace remarked: "Probably even at this early date, had begun that cabal called 'Conway's,' in which Mifflin, Lee, Gates, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Mr. Lovell, and others were shortly afterwards so active, and which being of the opinion that Washington was a blunderer and Gates 'A GENERAL,' sought to supersede the then commander-in-chief, and to put a man whom they thought very able in his place." I have quoted from this in full because Dr. Knollenberg, in Washington and the Revolution, has attempted to prove that the Conway cabal did not exist. This is contrary to the views expressed by Conway's contemporaries. I have in my library two holograph letters from George Lux to General Greene; one of them written April 28, 1778 reports: "I learned that General M. has publicly declared . . . so that is a plain sign that the Junto has given up all ideas of supplanting our general." There is, moreover, Dr. Rush's famous letter to Patrick Henry: "We find the Northern Army has shown us what Americans are capable of doing with A GENERAL at their head. The spirit of the Southern army is in no way inferior to the spirit of the Northern. A Gates, a Lee, or a Conway would in a few weeks render them an irresistible body of men." Dr. Knollenberg admits that this letter is damaging to his theory, and I do not think the material he offers to support his views is conclusive.

4 Note the plates on the opposite page.
were fairly successful, sinking the Augusta and the Merlin, two of Lord Howe’s ships, and giving the Roebuck a severe pounding. Above Philadelphia, Hazelwood was not so fortunate, and by October the English had access to the upper Delaware.

A detailed treatment of this campaign is found in Wallace’s book on Colonel William Bradford. One of the best contemporary accounts of the affair may be found in the diary kept by seventeen-year-old John Morton. A short article written for the City History Society of Philadelphia by C. Henry Kain appeared in 1910. The English point of view is noted briefly in the Journal of Capt. John Montresor, Chief Engineer of the British Army.

John Laurens, the author of the letter printed below, has always been a great favorite of mine. Serving through many of the important engagements of the Revolution, part of the time as aide-de-camp on Washington’s staff, Laurens was more than once called upon by Washington to solve a problem requiring tactful and courageous handling. It seems a tragedy that a man whom Hayne called the “Bayard of the South” and whom David Duncan Wallace described as “one of the most noble, talented and . . . promising characters called into prominence by the American Revolution” should have been killed when the war was practically over. Laurens fell in 1782 in a skirmish with a British force coming from Charleston to search for rice along the Combahee River.

Philadelphia

FREDERIC R. KIRKLAND

John Laurens to Henry Laurens, President of Congress, Yorke 15th November. At break of day the Enemy’s Batteries began a heavy Cannonade upon Fort Mifflin, and their Fleet set Sail to come up the River with the Tide. One of their Ships, an old East Indian cut down for a floating battery, and arriv’d with eighteen 24 pdrs, and two Sloops, advanced between Hog Island and the northern point of Tinicum, at the distance of about one thousand yards from our grand Battery. Six other Vessels and a Galley carrying a

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6 The Augusta was probably set on fire by a hot shot from Fort Mifflin, but previously she had been bombarded heavily by the continental squadron.


+Collections of The New York Historical Society (1881).
36 pdr. approached the Chevaux de frise about six hundred yards from the Fort— the Garrison saluted them with Red hot bullets. At 8 O'Clock the Fire of the Six Vessels and Galley commenced, and was seconded by that of the Land-batteries. A quarter of an hour after the two Sloops with 8 Pieces 32 & 24 pdr.s brought their guns to bear on the right of the battery, and after many successive broad-sides, laid the parapet in ruins, and dismounted one of the two pieces which were on that side, there being only two Embrasures on the right, from whence the fire of the Sloops was return'd.

The Musquetry of the Tops drove the Cannoniers from the Platform, and the Land batteries making a cross-fire with that of the Vessels render'd the right of the Battery untenable. Major Fleury who commanded a number of men appointed to answer the Fire of the Enemys Tops, and Cap't Lee of the Artillery remain'd in this dangerous part of the battery 'till all their men were either kill'd or wounded, and the Cannon batter'd to pieces. Cap't Dickinson commanded two Pieces on the left of the Battery, & Lieuten't. —— in the Center.

Major Thayer the Commandant was every where— Major Talbot, [Silas Talbot of R. I.], commanded a Reserve in the interior work—a kind of last Retreat thrown up in form of a cross to enable the Garrison to dispute the ground inch by inch in case of Storm.

At 11 OClock Ammunition began to fail, and Major Thayer order'd the blue Flag to be hoisted as a Signal of Distress to the Commodore— Major Fleury and some Volunteers ran to the Magazine and after searching, found one Cartridge for a 32 pounder, and several eighteen pounder Cartridges— the Fire was renewed.

In conformity to Maj'r Thayers order, they had begun to lower the Fort Flag in order to hoist the Signal, but Cap't Lee [probably James Lee (Pa.) of 2nd Continental artillery] and Maj'r Fleury ran to hinder it, entreating the Commandant rather to send off some

*The Somerset, Captain Ourry, of 500 men, 64 guns
The Isis, Captain Cornwallis, of 350 " 50 "
The Roebuck, Captain Hammond, of 280 " 44 "
The Pearl, Captain John Linzee, of 220 " 32 "
The Liverpool, Captain Bellew, frigate 28 "
The Cornwallis, galley, Lieut. Johnston, with a 32-pounder 1 "
The Vigilant, armed ship, Captain Henry, 150 " 16 "
The Fury, Lieutenant Botham, armed hulk, 150 " 3 "
of the boats from the wharf than to make a Signal which would discover to the Enemy the Weakness of the Garrison. The Commandant approved of what they said, and order'd the Flag to be hoisted again. The Enemy had for a moment slacken'd their Fire imagining no doubt that the Garrison was preparing to surrender—but our Cannon undeceived them.

At one O'Clock, the Ammunition of the Fort was exhausted, only two Cannon remained fit for use, the rest were dismounted or broke to pieces, the Parapet was destroyed; one of the Sloops which had moved towards the middle of the Fort had demolished the Bank, and was knocking down the Palisades—a Body of Troops appear'd on the opposite Shore ready to embark, and our Garrison was small. The Commandant call'd a Council at 2 O'Clock, the Result of which was—that the Garrison must either have Ammunition and a Reinforcement or Boats.

The Enemy's Fire raged, ours languished.

The Block houses flew about in splinters—a piece of Timber detached from one of them knock'd down a Lieutenant and Major Fleury—the former was kill'd by the blow and the latter lay senseless. Major Talbot who ran to their assistance was wounded in the Leg and Arm with two Grapeshot. Night came on and transport-boats arriving instead of a Reinforcement, the Garrison evacuated their post and embarked at half after eleven, at the very moment when the Sound of Oars announced the approach of Troops to storm our level'd Palisades.

This account of our brave Garrison's last days Defence, is the most circumstantial I have been able to collect, and may be depended upon coming from the authority of Major Fleury Engine'r of the Fort.

On the 18th we received Intelligence from different officers commanding Outposts, that a Detachment of British Troops amounting to 2000; some allledged 5000, but the former is the most probabler had cross'd the Schuylkil march'd down to Chester and were there embarking Horses, Artillery &c the circumstance of this party's being attended by a number of women and Children induced some persons of little Reflection to believe that the Enemy were preparing to quit Philadelphia—but as persons of more judgement ex-
pected, these Troops under the command of L. d Cornwallis cross'd the Delaware landed at Billingsport, were joined by the Reinforcement whatever it be from N. York and meditated an attack on Fort Mercer, their Aparatus of Artillery disclaimed any intention of storming that post as they march'd with twelve Cannon and several Howitzes. Gen'. Varnum was warned by express from Head Quarters of the Enemys Designs— Huntingtons Brigade was detached on the 19th and Greens Division on the 20th to cooperate with the Force under Gen'. Varnum in preventing the Enemys laying Seige to the Fort— and advice was sent to Gen'. Varnum of these Corps being detached. 21st— This Morning Letters from him and Gen'. Greene inform us that Fort Mercer was evacuated on the evening of the 20th the Garrison and flying Camp had moved to Mount Holly. The Fort was certainly untenable against formal Siege without a superior Force in the Field, to oblige to raise it. The Galleys pass'd Philadelphia and have retreated up the River— a Brig & two Sloops likewise pass'd— the large Vessels why, I can't conceive, were burnt. 9 The Enemys Force in Jersey are part at Billingsport, part at Fort Mercer, and part at Manto Creek— Gen'. Varnum seems to think that an engagement with them is desireable— he says they were delayed at Bilingsport by a rumour prevailing which intimated that the greatest part of the Continental Army was in Jersey and they waited for farther Reinforcement, before the [sic] took their present Positions. This afternoon a party of the Enemy sallied from their Lines skirmished with one of our advanced Parties which was not in force, and in their return burnt Mr. Dickinsons house, Mr. Mifflin's and several others with valuable furniture in them. As soon as intelligence of it was received at Head Quarters, six Companies were order'd to march and chastise the Incendiaries but they had retired before our Party arrived— they gave out that German Town would be burnt to morrow— and tho it is not usual in war to proclaim ones real intentions, we shall be as much on our guard as if we were sure that they will attempt to realize their

9 There was nothing else for the Americans to do except burn the ships, or else have them fall into the hands of the enemy! Hazelwood and Robinson had waited ten days for sufficient wind to sail by Philadelphia, but it did not come. The small galleys were able to sneak away in the night without being discovered although the British held both sides of the Delaware.
Menaces. If all our men were as well cloathed and accoutred as one of the New England Regiments that arrived in camp two days ago, we could even with the scanty reinforcement that we have received from the Northward, make a glorious Conclusion of the Campaign and perhaps of the War— the Regiment that I allude to is uniformly and handsomely cloathed armed and accoutred, has a Grenadier and Light Infantry Company— both Officers and Men make as good an appearance and are as well under arms as any Troops I ever saw. I have been informed by a foreigner [probably du Plessis] of Character who said he had seen the Invoices of Military Stores ship’d from France for America, that Cloathing including every minute article of dress, even Garters shoe-buckles & Stock buckles for thirty thousand men, Arms and a proportionate number of Tents arrived in the Amphitrite and another Vessel— and that these necessary Supplies intended for the use of the Continental Army, must have been monopolized by one of the N. England States in which they were received— if this be the case, such a remarkable attempt to engross the advantages of the confederacy demands a Congressional Inquiry— if the Frenchman from whom I had this anecdote was mistaken, and the Stores alluded to were imported on the account of the particular State which received them; that Branch of the Confederacy is dangerously politic.

Novem: 24th. Humphries Philadelphia Paper of the 19th cites some English Intelligence— the most remarkable paragraph is that the suffrages of the Privy Council upon the Subject of War with France, were Six for and Six against, the King gave the casting Vote against it— I am desired to mention to you that the Letters for Delaware State, come out of their way at least forty miles when sent to head quarters— I have received yours of the 17th and am much obliged to you for the Orthography of Galley— as it was a word that had not frequently occur’d in the course of my former reading and writing— I was tempted to give up my own spelling, and follow that which I observed adopted by our Officers— I am furnished with every important anecdote relative to the Forts on Delaware and will send you the whole history of the Siege or such parts as you may be desirous of seeing together with a Sketch of the Posts and the adjacent Islands &ca— I am exceedingly anxious to see you my Dear Father but can’t determine myself to ask leave of absence at this
moment— whether near you or at a distance I am ever Your affectionate

John Laurens

As the Public Dispatches are not ready and [I ha]ve obtained possession for a few moments of [a] Philadelphia Paper— I will copy as much as time and paper will permit.

The Three Friends, Cook laden with Rice and Indigo bound from C. Town S Carolina, to Bilboa, brought into this port.
The Clarke from So Carolina to Nantz, taken by a Letter of Marque— Carried into Falmouth.

Divisions of the Cabinet for War against
Ld G. Germain North
Ld Suffolk Mansfield
Ld Barrington Weymouth
Ld Gower Nugent
Mr Wedderburne Rigby Messrs Jenkinson Ellis

against it
The King

[The] two Ribbands vacant by the Death of Sr Charles Montague [a]nd Ld Inchiquin— it is said are designed for Governor Pownall and General Tryon.

August 16th. Yesterday 500 Recruits arrived in Town from different parts of the Country— march’d from Plymouth to embark and join their Regiments in America. A Letter from Paris has the following Paragraph “The Pallas Frigate is sailed from Brest for Philadelphia, commanded by Monsieur de Duviel, who has a Proclamation from the French King— which is to be published in America, requiring all French Officers in the Service of the Congress, on pain of death immediately to return to France.

August 23. By a Letter from Paris dated August 7 we are assured that the King has order’d a Placart to be published at Brest, Rochelle, Nantz &ca commanding on pain of Death all the Subjects of France in the Service of Congress, or any foreign State to return to their native Country— this we are assured is occasion’d by the spirited Remonstrances of Ld Stormont [the British Ambassador at Paris].
Augt. 30th. A Treaty is said to be concluded with Russia for taking 36000 Russians into pay, and with the King of Prussia but the contents are not known— it is not for a body of his Troops— but 12000 more Hessians, Wirtembergers, Palatines, and Mecklenbergers are agreed for— 24 New Regiments are to be raised in England and Ireland— of 500 men each— so that the Army in America next Campaign will not be short of 80,000 men.

Philadelphia. On Friday Even last, the Vigilant came over the Bar into the Channel— and began a heavy Cannonade on Fort Mifflin, at the same time that a Ship or two of War attacked it in front and continued an incessant fire during the whole day, battering it on every quarter. The crisis approaching to attack it by Storm the Rebels sufficiently panick struck by the operations of the day and dreading an event which however they had seemingly fully expected and prepared for— setting fire to their barracks and leaving what Cannon, Stores Cattle &ca they had— abandoned it with the greatest precipitation and fright a Party of British Troops immediately took possession of it— and found it batter’d and torn in every part. The Loss on the side of the Royal Army is a Midshipman kill’d and three or four privates wounded— The Rebels loss must have been very great, as every part of the Fort was marked with the most terrible Carnage.

II

A Washington Affair of Honor, 1779

An amusing and provocative cache of letters was just acquired by The Historical Society. Three generations had kept the carefully folded, ribbon-tied family papers of Robert Hare and Peggy Willing sacred, then a descendant unaware of their significant contents allowed a whole trunkful of documents to become partly water-soaked and forgotten in the attic of a Germantown mansion. Only by accident—the curiosity of a contractor who was making repairs—were they rescued.
Five of these letters relate to the contretemps arising out of the rivalry of Deborah Olney and Kate Greene for the favors of General George Washington. A dinner party at the winter headquarters of Colonel Clement Biddle, Deputy-Quartermaster General under General Greene, was the scene of the skirmish. The highest ranking officers and their wives attended; and all was very gay. Colonel Biddle’s immediate superior, General Greene and his flirtatious bride; a relative of General Greene and his right-hand man in the business of providing for the hungry army, George Olney, and his wife, a young Providence matron, were among the company that night. Over a year later, Mrs. Olney heard malicious whispers concerning her conduct at the party, and accused Kate Greene, her erstwhile friend, of circulating what she mildly termed a “very extraordinary story.” Evidently, Mrs. Olney’s supposedly scandalous behavior was occasioning a good deal of tea-table talk among the ladies of Boston, Wethersfield, Providence, Morristown and Philadelphia, and it was rumored that she had offended Washington and displayed a singular lack of breeding by telling the General: “If you do not let go my hand, Sir, I will tear out your eyes and the hair from your head.” Both Mr. and Mrs. Olney denied the report, and Washington gallantly lent his support to that unhappy lady’s version of the affair.

The whole matter is fully aired in the letters printed below, and historians may now decide whether the subject brought to light by the discovery of the Hare-Willing papers was a “tempest in a teapot,” or in reality an affair of honor between two belles of the Revolutionary era. Ruth, daughter of Deborah Olney one of the rival actresses in the story unfolded, sealed these letters and frankly inscribed the outside wrapper with the admonition: “Let them not to be exposed to anybody, unless some misstatements should hereafter appear in some gossiping memoirs of the time.” But the dead hand must not be permitted to direct the actions of living institutions, so for the benefit of historians, and in the interest of a fuller knowledge of the men and women of the Revolution, these letters relating to a scandal that was the subject of much excited discussion many years ago are presented here.

New York City

Marian Sadtler Hornor
George Olney to Tench Tilghman
Providence, March 11, 1781

Dear Sir:

My not seeing you after the Ball at Newport obliges me to take this method of requesting a favour of you, which I flatter myself your good-nature will induce you to comply with, and which I shall ever most gratefully acknowledge as an obligation. It is to ask His Excellency, and acquaint me with his answer, whether at Col. Bidwell's Quarters in Morris Town, or elsewhere, "Mrs. Olney, in a violent rage, told him, if he did not let go her hand, she would tear out his eyes, or the hair from his head; and that tho' he was a General, he was but a Man"; or whether she ever said a word to him that border'd upon disrespect. You will doubtless be surpris'd at this extraordinary request, unless you have heard that such a report has been industriously spread thro' the Country by some ill-natur'd, malicious person, which has greatly injured Mrs. Olney's reputation; but as I know it to be absolutely false, I cannot but hope you will kindly grant me a ready compliance, to enable me to justify her by producing an indubitable written proof of its untruth.

With great esteem, I am Sir,
Your Most Ob'. Hum'. Serv'.
Geo. Olney

P. S. If this should not reach you before you set out for Head Quarters, I shall send it after you; and beg you will write me by the first private or public conveyance, directing for me at Providence.

Tench Tilghman to George Olney
Providence, March 14, 1781

Dear Sir:

I received your favor of the 11th while at Newport. I am sorry to find that Mrs. Olney should have experienced a moments pain from the circulation of a story, which, if rightly represented, would have shewn, that instead of an affront being given or taken at the time alluded to, the highest good humour and gaiety prevailed. For the information of those who may think you would give a partial account of the matter, and for the confusion of those who have propagated so malevolent a report, I will, upon honor, briefly relate the circumstances, which I am authorised to do by his Excellency to whom I have shewn your letter.
The Winter before the last, when the Army was cantonned near Morristown, a large Company, of which the General and Mrs. Washington—General and Mrs. Greene—Mr. and Mrs. Olney were part, dined with Col. and Mrs. Biddle. Some little time after the Ladies had retired from Table, Mr. Olney followed them into the next room. It was proposed that a party should be sent to demand him, and if the Ladies refused to give him up, that he should be brought by force. This party His Excellency offered to head. They proceeded with great formality to the adjoining room and sent in a summons, which the Ladies refused—such a scuffle then ensued as any good natured person must suppose. The Ladies, as they always ought to be, were victorious. But Mrs. Olney, in the course of the contest, made use of no expressions unbecoming a Lady of her good breeding, or such as were taken in the least amiss by the General.

If the foregoing, which I have dressed in the stile of jest (for the whole matter was a jest) will answer your purposes, it will afford the highest pleasure to

Dear Sir, your most obedient Servant.

Tench Tilghman A.D.C. to the Commander in Chief

Mrs. George Olney to Mrs. Nathanael Greene
Providence, March 17, 1781

Madam:

On a late visit to Boston several of my friends inform'd me of a very extraordinary story, current there, extremely prejudicial to my Character, which, upon tracing, I found to come originally from you; and since my return from thence I have been told of it by several in this Town, who not believing it, and fearing it might give me pain, omitted saying anything to me about it. As I find this is not the only story you have fabricated or misrepresented, by several, to injure my reputation, (for what cause I cannot conceive) it is necessary to inform you, that the one I mean, is your ungenerous and untrue account of the affair at Col. Biddles in Morristown, about which, at the time, you discovered so much unfriendly pains to circulate thro the Country when you came on from Camp last Spring. On General Greenes account I am extremly sorry, that
in my own justification, I am obliged to send copies of the inclos'd letters to Boston, Weathersfield, and the Jerseys, in order to convince those to whom you told it, with the most agravating circumstances, and those who may have heard it from others, that it is utterly false.

I have only further to add, that I am not ambitious of nor do I wish the acquaintance of any Person, however high their rank and station in Life may be, by painful experience, I have found can in one moment; with a seeming pleasure, smile in my face, and the next sacrifice my character.

I am the much injured

D. O.

Mrs. Nathanael Greene to Mrs. George Olney

Coventry, March 18, 1781

Dear Madam

It is with Great pain that I acknowledge the receipt of your letter which is as unbecoming as my temper was at Col. Biddies. I thought for some time the letter had been forged as I could have no idea of such a one from a lady of such good Breeding. Surely it is not the same Mrs. Olney that I used to know and love. I knew a lady of that name who posses'd Many vertues and but one fault—that fault I mention'd freely to her, and to one of her friends her vertues I have also spoak of with approving warmth. I take the liberty always to redress the foibles of my friends and they Generally do mine with the same freedom, however this is not the subject I intended writing on—I know not what has been told you of my fabracation or misrepresentation this I know that such an accusation is unworthy of you, and much beneath my notis—you say I have been spreading evil reports and (fals ones too) through the country about you had this been true, my time would have been ad-vantageously spent I must confess—this is quite a Compliment—besides what indusement, what motive could I have had to injure the reputation of a woman I sincerely loved. The affair at Col B—s I did tell to Mrs. Col Bowen of who I knew to be a friend of your I did not agravating one tittle of it and if you will divest your self of parciallity and reflect one moment, you cannot deny it if you do, I will not be so impolite as to charge you with telling falshoods but your memory must be very perfidious. As to telling it in Jersey or
Weathersfield to any person (who was not there) is false, nor is it probable that Mrs. Col Bowen (who you say did not believe it) would tell it to any person from Boston or elsewhere. It has been mention’d to me by persons, with circumstances that never escaped my lips and I have vindicated your character in that which you would not have done for me—what is my reward for doing by you as my friend—as to your tearing out the Genl’s Eyes I heard, nor said nothing off but you did say you would tear out his hear—and I can bring sworn evidence to the truth of it. It might have been jest, as Col Tilghman says, but I believe he is the only one that was there Who thought so—and indeed after Mr. Olneys letter to him positively denying it, he could say no less than he did—if it is false why did I shew so much unbecoming temper, or why did Genl Greene as a friend to you both, take you into a room talk to you very seriously upon it—and a number of other circumstances I could relate that perhaps would help your memory. It is very evident that Genl Greene did not think it a jest nor could I byas him for the first I saw of him after our return from Col B—s was shut up in the room with you however to further convins you that I never did misrepresent your conduct on the black side, I shall write for Evidence of it to persons that was there, I will not shew them to any body but you, for I wish you to get clear of it Even at my expence you are perfectly welcom to send Col Tilghmans letter where you pleas, he very justly says his letter is a jest I think it is. I can assure you that I never told it to any persons but at Col Bowens who did not know it as well as I, or rather who was at Col Biddles at the time and saw and heard for themselves—and I think persons who are too proud to hear of their foibles ought to be too proud to make them so public—you know I told you so at the time. Another thing I can assure you that I never told it with a design to injure you nor with the least illnature or malis, for I believe I have very little of either, in my composition.

Another thing I can tel you that tho I could see and laugh at your one foible there never was a more friendly heart towards you than mine is, what could induce me to profess a friendship to you that I did not feel—indeed my Dear Madam you know not the heart which you have pain’d exceedingly by those cruel accusations. I believe their is but few people in the world so bad as you have represented
me and could I have the least thought that the picture you have
drawn of me was a true one, or had the least likeness, I would put
an end to my existence. My soul is above every one of your charges
—and notwithstanding your abominable letter I feel a sincere
friendship for you, and if it was in my power to make you happy you
would have a very different opinion of me. I am very willing you
should know all I have ever said of you and I say again, and again,
that it is true, and that I will at any time say to your face without the
least anger, I have nothing to hope of or fear from you, so that my
friendship is disinterested. I went to Providence yesterday on pur-
pose to see you which you took pains to prevent. I will not follow
one of your examples (tho some of them are good) to tell you I
shall not be glad to see you for it will always be pleasure to me to see
you and should be very happy to see you here and think you might
have inquir’d of me what I did say of you before you wrote such
a letter you never will deny it to my face I am sure. I receiv’d a
letter from Miss Cornelia Lott not long since they ware all well ex-
cept Mrs. Livingston who has another fine Boy I know you will be
glad to hear from them—therefore I write this.

I am With every wish for your felicity, your sincere friend and
very Humble servant

C Greene

I understand that Mr. Olney has said something of me which I
am sure he would not have said if Genl Greene had been at home and
which I shall not mention to him untill I hear again from Provi-
dence

C Greene

Mrs. George Olney to Mrs. Nathanael Greene
Providence, March 28, 1781

Madam

As I had but little expectation of your answering my other Letter,
much less a wish of continuing a correspondence which necessity
obliged me to begin, I shall not be so particular in my reply as you
have been in yours, especially as it must be folly in me to pretend to
dispute with you when you have so solemnly sworn to the truth of
your story, in direct and positive contradiction to Col’. Tilghmans
letter, written by the authority of General Washington himself,
(who surely ought to know whether I affronted him or not) which however you may affect to call a \textit{jest}, has so much seriousness in its introduction, that I am perfectly willing to risk my reputation, respecting the affair at Col'. Biddles, upon that single evidence—in addition to which I must observe that his Excellency, on his late visit this way, noticed me more, and was more sociable with me than he ever was before; which has not the appearance of his being offended with me, as you said he was. I am loth to believe you wou'd wilfully swear to an untruth, and therefore I will charitably suppose your memory to be more "perfidious" than mine; but Notwithstanding you have made oath to what you have related, and seem to think I will not dare to deny it to your face, yet with a self approveing Conscience I most seriously & truly declare, not only to you, but to all the World if necessary, that I \textit{never} told General Washington "I wou'd tear out his hair"; an expression which wou'd indeed have been both \textit{unbecoming} and affrontive, nor did I ever say anything like it; and I am under no apprehension of your procuring any sworn evidences to the truth of such an improbable extraordinary story. I must further utterly deny that Gen. Greene took Mr. Olney and me into a room to talk with us about it, and I dare say he wou'd not thank you for reporting that he \textit{seriously} lectur'd Mr. Olney, for having resolution to withstand every unpolite and irrational attempt to sink him below the brute Creation by getting him drunk. That, in conversing upon the subject in the common room below, he very calmly, and with great moderation advised Mr. Olney to adopt a less positive and blunt way of refusing to drink, I do not hesitate to own; nor do I doubt the friendliness of his motives, tho' his sentiments were different from mine. With respect to "your having never related the affair to any persons in Weathersfield or the Jerseys, who did not see it themselves," I shall only say that Mr. Joe Webb assur'd a person, who told us of it at Boston, that you acquainted him with it; and that it has come by such authority, and in so direct a line from the jerseys, that I cannot doubt your having injur'd me in the relation there. Could I have had the least doubt of the truth of any of my charges, or that you did not propagate this, and several other misrepresented stories which have hurt my Character, be assur'd that my unwillingness to censure others, and our great esteem and Respect for General Greene wou'd have prevented my ever
writing you such an "abominable letter" as you call it; but I can never believe any one to be my friend who exposes my faults, however few they are, to any persons whatsoever; your conduct therefore, in this instance, is most unaccountable, and cannot possibly be reconciled to your professions of love and friendship—happy indeed shou’d I be had I no reason to doubt their sincerity. You suppose Mrs. Bowen (whose name by the by I never mentioned) acquainted me with the affair at Col° Biddles; but in justice to her, I think it Necessary to declare she did not; and that I have had it from several others in this Town.

As M’r. Olney has never said anything about you but what our own justification necessarily dictated, he bids me tell you, that he has not the least objection to your or General Greene’s knowing all he has said on this Disagreeable subject; but as you may have heard something he never did say he wishes to know what you have been told, and pawns his honor, if true, to own it.

As I love and esteem all M’r. Lotts Amiable family, I am happy to hear of their welfare; and for this information I return you my thanks.

If I had leisure, and cou’d hope it wou’d have any good effect, I cou’d relate several circumstances in which you have greatly wounded my reputation and feelings; but as I have something else to do, and you seem determined to deny every thing I say or prove against you, I shall only add that when the Day comes in which the secrets of all Hearts will be known, and the truth of every Circumstance in life discover’d you will then see you have done me injustice; and untill you acknowledge this I can never with sincerity subscribe myself,

your friend

D. Olney

N. B. No reply was ever written to this letter.
The Board of Editors is very glad to print for the American Historical Association the following statement of their position in the recent important controversy regarding the Rugg textbooks.

In view of the multiplying evidences of hostility toward certain history textbooks in the schools, it is appropriate that the Executive Committee of the American Historical Association should announce its considered views on a subject of such far-reaching importance. The American Historical Association consists of nearly thirty-five hundred teachers, investigators and writers of history in all parts of the country. Since its founding in 1884, it has striven ceaselessly to improve methods of research and instruction and to add to the people's knowledge of their past. Among its presidents have been two Presidents of the United States. Its membership embraces many veterans of the Spanish-American War and the First World War. In every section of the Union, members of the Association have attested their devotion to the commonweal, not only by conscientiously discharging their professional duties but also by participating in a wide variety of civic activities. It is not reasonable to suppose that men and women of this type would write and use textbooks calculated to undermine the loyalty of their students.

Genuine patriotism, no less than honesty and sound scholarship, requires that textbook authors and teachers should endeavor to present a truthful picture of the past. Those who oppose this view would seem to believe that the history of the United States contains things so disgraceful that it is unsafe for the young to hear of them. This we emphatically deny. If the men who built the nation had their share of human frailties, the story as a whole is one of continuing inspiration to the people of this and other lands.

To omit controversial questions from the historical account, as is sometimes urged, would be to garble and distort the record. The history of the American people has been hammered out on the anvil of experience. It is a story of achievement, often against heavy odds. Some of the most glorious passages have consisted in the struggle to overcome social and economic injustices. Failures as well as successes carry lessons of which posterity can ill afford to be ignorant. In discussing controversial issues the textbook writer has an obligation to give both sides. By so doing he not only upholds the ideal of presenting a truthful picture, but also of encouraging in young people that spirit of inquiry, open-mindedness and fair play which lies at the root of our democratic institutions.

History teaching must, of course, be graded according to the successive levels of instruction; but in this respect it does not differ from other studies, such as English and mathematics. The essential consideration in history teaching as in other courses is the degree of complexity of the subject matter. This
complexity should be adjusted to meet the capacities of young students by simplification, not by perversion.

Judgment as to the merits of a textbook is the function of those most competent to form a judgment: the teachers concerned and professional scholars. A reasoned appraisal requires an up-to-date knowledge of the subject, a judicial frame of mind, familiarity with school curricula, and practical experience in teaching students of the age for which the book is intended. This function can not safely be left to propagandist organizations, or to self-appointed groups of citizens who judge on partial evidence or are unsympathetic with the continuing and permanent rôle of education in a democracy. Such minority groups seek, by ballyhoo or blackmail, to substitute their own opinion for that of those best qualified to act in the public interest. Even though these critics cloak themselves in the mantle of "patriotism," they are guilty of practices which the totalitarian governments have carried to ruthless efficiency. Sheer dishonesty enters in when criticism is based upon phrases and sentences wrenched from their context. Such irresponsible efforts to control the school curriculum can in the end lead only to a ruinous deterioration of both textbooks and teaching and to producing young citizens with a warped knowledge of the experience of their forebears in dealing with problems often akin to those of the present.

To the Editor of the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography:

Those who in the love of history and biography spend leisure hours in the library of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania may be interested in current adventures of the Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Bar Associations in the realm of legal biography and in the task of making available records of the early courts of the province of Pennsylvania.

At the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Bar Association in June, 1940, there was created a Standing Committee on Legal Biography and History. The Committee consists of one member in each of the fifty-eight judicial districts of the State, with Paul H. Rhoads, of Harrisburg as secretary, and the undersigned as chairman. During the past year this Committee has been reasonably active in three projects.

It has sent out a biographical blank to every judge in Pennsylvania and to every member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association; and a large proportion of responses have been received, thereby building up firsthand authentic information about many of the judges and lawyers of today. Extra copies of the filled in and completed blanks were obtained at the same time and then sent to the various local bar associations. Accordingly the Philadelphia Bar Association now has such returns from about 600 of the judges and lawyers of Philadelphia, and these may be inspected on application at room 600 City Hall, Philadelphia. The original set, covering the entire State, is at the office of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, in the custody of its executive secretary, Mrs. Barbara Lutz, 302 Market Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
The second adventure involved the determination to assemble complete lists of those who have held judicial office in Pennsylvania, not only in the state and province, but in each county. The president judges of the various common pleas courts and the officials of the local bar associations have cooperated with care and promptness. These lists are still in the office of the chairman of this Committee.

Incident to the assembling of the foregoing information we occasionally have been receiving questions concerning "lost judges." The facilities of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania have enabled us to obtain and to transmit biographical sketches as requested. The first such inquiry related to Judge Barnes of 1800 of Williams College. We were able to find the date of his admission to the Philadelphia bar, the period when he served as register of wills and as judge of the old district court of Philadelphia. We have since learned that he attended the Litchfield Law School. In due time material may be assembled, by an old-time Philadelphia lawyer, for readers of the PENNSYLVANIA MAGAZINE, covering Pennsylvanians who attended this unusual institution of legal training.

The third adventure of the Committee has been the resurrection of the out-of-print record of the proceedings of the first and only separate court of equity in the history of this Colony and State. It is known as Governor Keith's Court of Chancery, established by his ordinance in 1720, and abolished as "unconstitutional" in 1836. The Pennsylvania Bar Association has recently decided to reprint this volume. The records have an historical rather than a practical interest. To forecast the desirable size of edition (at $1.00 each) the membership has been circularized and 427 copies have, up to the present time, been requested.1

In harmony with the increased interest of the Pennsylvania Bar Association, the Philadelphia Bar Association has authorized the distribution of similar biographical blanks to its members, particularly those whose duplicate records have not as yet been received through the office of the Pennsylvania Bar Association. The chairman of the Philadelphia Bar Association's Committee on Biography and History, is Meredith Hanna, 600 City Hall, and its vice-chairman is the undersigned.

ALBERT SMITH FAUGHT

1 Readers of the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, desiring a copy at the suggested price, are requested to write promptly a postcard or letter indicating their interest, to Albert Smith Faught, 2004 Finance Building, Philadelphia.