When the late Howard M. Jenkins was a youth of eighteen he asked the advice of John F. Watson, the annalist, on compiling a history of the state of Pennsylvania. Although this correspondence took place before the Civil War, it was not until 1903 that the three-volume edition of Pennsylvania Colonial and Federal was produced under the editorship of Mr. Jenkins. In the meantime, he had written many historical sketches and articles, among them The Family of William Penn, the standard work on the subject. His Narrative and Critical History of Philadelphia: 1681–1895 (volume I of the Memorial History of the City of Philadelphia, edited by John R. Young) had been published in 1895.

Watson's reply to Mr. Jenkins, dated Germantown, September 18, 1860, has recently come into the possession of The Historical Society and is reproduced below. Full of human interest, it also throws into sharp relief the work, tribulations, and rewards of an early local historian.

Germantown

Charles F. Jenkins

Dear Sir,

I duly rec'd your letter asking my opinion and advice, on your executing a new History of our State. I am not the best judge of what is required, and of what may be done, to meet the Public wants. I do not profess to be a thorough historian myself. What the Public should know, is very different from what they will read & pay for. Doct' Mumford in Camden, thought to make something better for the State history of New Jersey: but it fell a disregarded thing. If you should choose to write of our State history, con amore, you might succeed to please yourself, & to leave something which should surpass your predecessors; something which ought to magnify your name & perpetuate your memory; but I feel persuaded, that it
would not realise any adequate profit, for the time & labour employed. Romances & fictions, have the rule of men's minds! If you would take my own experience for anything: Then learn that my Annals of Phildª, could not even find one bookseller in Phildª to undertake its publication. I had to set up a press in Germtª to perform it. I had also to procure a printer to perform for my money, the publication, of my Annals of New York; and when I was lately in N York, to get out a new & enlarged edª no bookseller there, would buy me out on any terms! My Son, who is a merchª there, takes it now to himself, & placing the books in the hands of the book trade at 25% Comª, for what they may sell. There was not one, who seemed to know what Annals of Olden time, could mean.

If these facts, can offer you any sedative you are welcome to this frank expose. It is not in my heart to give you any encouragement. What I did, was as grateful homage to God, to mark the way of his Providence to my Country; and to show to present & future generations, "the Rock from which we were hewn." I care not for rem-compense. I have but little; but "sufficient praise, for any private man."

Yrs very respectfy

John F Watson

This is written in my 82d yr of age, & without glasses.

My health is excellent. I am as Caleb.