A Russian magazine in 1814 published an article, which stated that "there was no city in the entire world, where the internal and the external cleanliness of houses and streets was carried to the same high degree of perfection," as in the city of Philadelphia in the United States of America. The article went on to comment that this well-scrubbed appearance "entirely offset the lack of harmony in the style of Philadelphia's architecture, this being particularly true on Saturday afternoons, when not only windows, the outside walls of houses and the porches, but the very sidewalks were washed with soapsuds."

Pavel Petrovich Svin'in, a young Russian diplomat, was the author of the article, "A Glance at the Republic of the United American Provinces," which offered this enthusiastic endorsement of Philadelphia's efforts with swab and mop. Svin'in had resided

* Several months after the completion of this study, I became aware of Miss Margaret Jefery's article on P. P. Svin'in, "As a Russian Saw Us in 1812," Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin (November, 1942), 134-140. The paragraphs on Svin'in's art are particularly interesting, and the six reproductions of Svin'in's water colors add to the value of Miss Jeffery's work.

1 Syn Otechestva (St. Petersburg, 1814), Part XVIII, No. XLVIII, 86.
2 "Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinennykh Amerikanskikh oblastei," Syn Otechestva (1814), Parts XVII and XVIII, Nos. XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII, 253-270, 13-16, 41-58, 81-97, respectively.
from 1811 to 1813 in the city he so admiringly described, in the capacity of the secretary of the Russian Consul General, and was thus speaking from firsthand knowledge.  

His approach to the American scene was different from that of a number of the better known nineteenth-century observers, not only in his admiration for many aspects of the American way of life, but also in his ability to discern in the traits of the young nation the promise of her future greatness.

Svin'in came to America reasonably well equipped for his self-imposed role of an interpreter of the American culture to his compatriots. His better than average education, his previous experience in the diplomatic service, and particularly his well-trained eye of an artist, skilled not only with pen but with pencil and brush as well, were valuable assets in this task. Svin'in's ability as a painter was greater than his talent as a writer, and some of his water colors of Philadelphia scenes are more distinguished than his book and his articles on the United States. Nevertheless, the impact of his writings on America on the minds of the educated Russians should not be underestimated.

At the time that Svin'in's works were published, there were very few Russians possessed of the same extended acquaintance with the life and mores of the United States as he was. Despite his pronounced Anglophilism, Svin'in did not let his love for Great Britain affect his judgment of what he saw in America, albeit during a part of the period of his residence in Philadelphia, Russia was allied to England, while America was fighting the thalassic empire. Among the more advanced Russian thinkers and writers of Svin'in's time there was a certain anti-American bias, resulting in part from their abhorrence of the American slavery system, which they criticized as a part of their own struggle for the liberation of the serfs in Russia. Svin'in's commentary on conditions in the United States helped to strengthen the current of public opinion in Russia favorable to America.

3 In the article in the Russkii biograficheskii slovar', edited by Polovtsev, Vol. 18, 218–221, it is stated that Svin'in was “attached to our diplomatic mission in the United States of America.” The more accurate note of V. I. Saitov in Ostafevskii Arkhiv kniazei Viazemskikh (St. Petersburg, 1899), I, 509, mentions that Svin'in lived in Philadelphia in 1811–1813 in the capacity of the secretary of the Russian Consul General.

4 See, for example, D. Blagoi, “Vydayuetsiia russkii revoliutsioner i pisatel (k 200-letiu so dnia rozhdeniia A. N. Radistcheva),” Bolshevik, No. 14 (1949), 35, 36.
Born on June 19, 1788, Pavel Petrovich Svin'in was the son of Petr Sergeevich Svin'in (1734-1813), a lieutenant-general in the army and later a senator. His family traced its line to Gregory Svin'in, who supposedly immigrated from Lithuania in the fifteenth century, and became a Russian landowner in 1434. Paul (Pavel) Svin'in belonged to the branch of the family which was inscribed in the Sixth Part of the Russian Genealogical Book of Nobility, both at Moscow and Kostroma. Svin'in’s social position was somewhat akin to that of members of the English “county” families. His was a “service” family, sending forth its sons to carve careers for themselves in the army, the navy, and the civil services. Despite their ancient lineage, their inscription in the Sixth Part of the Book of Nobility (which part was the Golden Book of the untitled Russian nobles), and a measure of success achieved in the service of the empire, the Svin'in were not among the prominent noble families of Russia. The well-known book by Count A. A. Bobrinskii on the nobles of Russia does not list any of the Svin'in, nor does P. N. Petrov’s history of these families.

Young Paul Svin'in was educated at an excellent school, the Moscow Boarding School for the Nobles, one of the cluster of educational institutions which grew up around Moscow University and which was maintained by the government to prepare young men for entering the University. Known as “Pansion” for short, it was guided by one of the ablest and most original Russian educators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Professor A. A. Prokopenovich-Antonskii.

The Pansion’s curriculum was of an encyclopedic character; it tried to cover too much ground. This was partly the consequence of

5 Saitov, I, 508; the article on Svin’in in the Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’, published by F. A. Brockhaus and I. A. Efron (St. Petersburg, 1899-1904), XXIX, 151, 152. On the other hand, the Russkii biograficheskii slovar’, Vol. 18, 218, contains the statement that P. P. Svin’in was born in 1787.
6 Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’, XXIX, 152. Certain genealogists have confused P. P. Svin’in with another member of his family, whose initials were identical.
7 Count A. A. Bobrinskii, Dvoriankie rody, vnesennye v obshchii herbovnik Vserossiiskoi Imperii (St. Petersburg, 1890); P. N. Petrov, Istoriia rodov russkago dvorianstva (St. Petersburg, 1886). These books were kindly examined on my behalf by A. S. Poloushkin, Esq., of New York, who advised me of the negative results of his study in his letter of Dec. 28, 1949.
8 Russkii biograficheskii slovar’, Vol. 18, 218; N. V. Sushkov, Moskovskii universitetskii blagorodnyi pansion . . . (Moscow, 1858), 3, 6, 20.
the dual role of the school, which was supposed not only to serve as a prep school for Moscow University, but also to train civil servants to man the chanceries of the empire.\textsuperscript{9} Mathematics, modern languages, literature and law formed the core of the curriculum. It also included geography, history, and the natural sciences. The arts, too, had their place: music, drawing, painting. Ancient languages were optional, while theology, ethics, and logic were obligatory. Rudiments of military science and even military drill were imparted to the pupils of the Pansion.\textsuperscript{10} Obviously, such an all-embracing program of studies implied a somewhat superficial attention to the several subjects involved. This was mitigated by the then unusual practice of the school, which permitted its students to develop interests in one or more subjects along the lines of their inclinations and talents. As a result, some concentrated on mathematics, others on law or literature.\textsuperscript{11} Contrary to the mores of the eighteenth-century Russian schools, there were no corporal punishments whatsoever, and very few students were ever expelled from the Pansion.

The author of a historical sketch of the school, N. V. Sushkov, wrote: “It would be right to call the Pansion a literary and particularly dramatic school.” This conclusion he drew from the fact that the Pansion’s alumni included such important literary people as the poet V. Zhukovsky, the playwright A. Griboedov, and the great M. Lermontov,\textsuperscript{12} as well as a number of lesser writers in verse and prose.\textsuperscript{13} The literary talents of the students found their outlet in a number of periodicals published by the school, such as the \textit{Utrenniaia Zaria} (\textit{The Morning Dawn}). There was a literary society, to which the ablest students were admitted, and a school stage for students’ theatricals.\textsuperscript{14}

Paul Svin’in contributed to \textit{The Morning Dawn} verses, fables, and a prose translation from the French of an essay on the death of Socrates.\textsuperscript{15} He did very well at school, and his name was engraved in the Golden Tablet of the graduates of the Pansion among its fore-

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{Ibid.}, 3, 41, 43.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Ibid.}, 43.
\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Ibid.}, 44.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, 36, 45. Lermontov did not graduate, but continued his education elsewhere.
\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, 7, 8, 34.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, 36.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Russkii biograficheskii slovar’}, Vol. 18, 218; \textit{Syn Otechestva}, IX, Part IV (1839), 78.
most scholars. In the biographical remarks on the Pansion's alumni in N. V. Sushkov's volume, Paul Svin'in is referred to but briefly: "A writer and the founder of the magazine Otechestvennyia Zapiski [The Fatherland's Records]."

Upon graduating from the Pansion, Svin'in did not enter the civil service immediately, nor did he continue his studies at the Moscow University. He went instead to St. Petersburg and attended there classes of the Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts, where he studied painting.

Dr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky, the erudite author of the excellent essay on P. P. Svin'in in the volume of reproductions of the latter's water colors of American life and landscape, came to the conclusion that it was impossible to establish definitely who were the art teachers Svin'in studied under at the Academy. This is true, insofar as the evidence available in America is concerned. Nevertheless, the records of the Academy of the Fine Arts and other data in reference books justify a tentative view that the former Director of the Academy, Ivan A. Akimov, an excellent art teacher especially interested in painting on historical themes, and Professor Gregory I. Ugriumov, who had done good work in the same field, had influenced Svin'in while he studied at the Academy.

Of course, these suggestions are merely conjectures, based on the study of fragmentary information. There is, moreover, a specific

16 List of alumni who received gold medals and certificates of excellence. Sushkov, Supplement XIV.

17 Russkii biograficheskii slovar', Vol. 18, 218; Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 78.

18 Dr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky's essay is an excellent piece of historical research and analysis. The few corrections offered in this article are not intended to imply that this writer does not give their due to the fine scholarship and penetrating acumen of its author. His essay will remain the principal study of P. P. Svin'in in the English language until the appearance of a monograph based upon documents unavailable at present to western scholars.


20 Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', I (1890), 283; P. N. Petrov, Sbornik materialov dlia istorii Imperatorskoi St.-Peterburgskoi Akademii Khudozhestva za sto let eia sustchestovaniia (St. Petersburg, 1864), Part I, 420.

21 Entsiklopedicheskii slovar', XXXIV (1902), 569; Petrov, Sbornik materialov, Part I, 420.

22 Upon examining S. N. Kondakov, Iubileinyi spravochnik Imperatorskoi Akademii Khudozhestva, 1764-1914, and I. I. Becker, et al., Akademiia Khudozhestv (Gosizdat, 1940), Dr. Felia Holtzman independently reached the conclusion that I. A. Akimov and G. I. Ugriumov were the teachers of historical painting at the Academy during the period when Svin'in was studying there. See Dr. Holtzman's letter to the writer of Feb. 9, 1950.
difficulty in the path of anyone attempting to trace influences in Svin'in’s art. His style was variable to a degree. It would take a very perspicacious art expert to establish by the evidence of style alone that, for example, the figure of the Don Cossack, used to illustrate some of Svin’in’s writings, and the Philadelphia street scenes were the work of the same artist, or that some of the third-rate landscapes in his book on Russia were produced by the same hand which painted the water color of the Upper Hudson with a steamer in the foreground.  

At the age of eighteen, the budding painter entered the civil service and was duly enrolled at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His first assignment was most unusual for one lacking any diplomatic experience. He was attached to the staff of the Vice-Admiral D. N. Seniavin, who commanded the Russian naval and land forces in the Mediterranean, with Corfu in the Ionian Islands as his headquarters.

Svin'in's connection with the Academy was not broken off completely by his departure from St. Petersburg, but more will be said on this later.

The young official left Russia from the Kronstadt roadstead in the Gulf of Finland on August 29, 1806, in the 74-gun Silnyi, in which Commodore I. A. Ignat'ev flew his broad pennant. The squadron under this officer's command was dispatched to the Mediterranean to reinforce D. N. Seniavin's fleet. It consisted of five ships of the line, one frigate, and two sloops of war.

The volumes of his Memoirs of the Fleet reflect the impression made on the romantic young man by his voyage to the Mediterranean. It broadened his horizon by bringing him into touch with the Latin, Southern Slav, and Greek, as well as the Turkish, cultures. It was his fortune to become acquainted with a number of representative personalities of different nationalities, including the brilliant and personable Sir Sidney Smith, Bonaparte's victor at Acre and a great seaman. Some of his Russian colleagues, including Seniavin himself,

23 The Philadelphia scenes this writer has in mind are reproduced in Yarmolinsky's volume under Numbers 15 and 17; the steamboat is under Number 7.

24 Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 78; Russkii biograficheskii slovar', Vol. 18, 218. In the slovar' it is erroneously stated that Svin'in made his voyage to the Mediterranean in the Rafail.

25 Pavel Svin'in, Vospominaniiia na flote (St. Petersburg, 1818), Part I, 1-14.
were among the most cultured and talented Russian officers of their time. Association with such men as Rear-Admiral Alexis S. Greigh and Commodore I. A. Ignat’ev left on him a lasting mark.\(^{26}\)

During the blockade of the Dardanelles by Seniavin’s fleet, Svin’in met a Philadelphian, a certain Mr. Hopkins, whose friendship and hospitality he enjoyed four years later when he was appointed to a consular post in America.\(^{27}\)

His admiration for all things English was aglow when he stepped ashore at Portsmouth, where Ignat’ev’s squadron called on its way to Corfu. This feeling found its reflection in the lines of the *Memoirs of the Fleet*: “And so I trod today the soil of the land I wanted to see ever since my childhood, which I loved to imagine perfect, accustomed as I was to give the name of ‘English’ to all that was beautiful in my fatherland”; and “there were no women in the world more lovely than the English, . . . in one word they are divine, incomparable.”\(^{28}\)

There is little information available as to Svin’in’s knowledge of the English language and literature at the time. At the Pansion two of the eight assistant housemasters were English-speaking and were supposed to practice colloquial English with the students during their tour of duty. English language and literature were also taught as a part of the regular curriculum. Among the publications of the Pansion intended for the use of the students, there were an English chrestomathy and a booklet, *The Young Englishman*, containing a number of English maxims and adages.\(^{29}\)

According to his *Memoirs of the Fleet*, the young attaché was able to converse freely with British naval officers when visiting their ships.\(^{30}\) It was also known that he was an ardent admirer of Shakespeare, as well as of Fielding, whom he called “my beloved author.”\(^{31}\) Upon Seniavin’s fleet’s arrival at Lisbon in 1807, Svin’in made a pilgrimage to the English cemetery where Fielding was buried.

One of the most interesting episodes of Svin’in’s life was his horse-

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\(^{26}\) On Sidney Smith, see *ibid.*, Part II, 23–26.

\(^{27}\) On Mr. Hopkins, see *ibid.*, Part II, 212.

\(^{28}\) On England, see *ibid.*, Part I, 61, 62, 78.

\(^{29}\) Sushkov, 41, 43; Supplements, 47, 58.

\(^{30}\) Svin’in, *Vospominaniia na flote*, Part II, 23–26, 195.

\(^{31}\) Pavel Svin’in, *Ezhednevnyia zapiski v Londone* (St. Petersburg, 1817), 152, 153; *Vospominaniia na flote*, Part II, 372.
back ride from Madrid to France on his way to St. Petersburg. Upon leaving the Mediterranean after the Tilsit peace treaty was ratified, Seniavin’s main forces entered the Tagus and were blockaded there by a British squadron, for war had been declared between the two former Allies—a situation somewhat like that which confronted the French navy after the collapse of French military resistance in 1940. As the sea route was closed, the young diplomat was sent with dispatches to Russia overland. Svin’in’s pages on the perilous journey from Madrid are among the earliest Russian romantic writings on Spain and perhaps are the best he has written. In a way, he was a forerunner of the numerous Russian travelers, writers, and composers who fell in love with the Iberian land and its people and who became carriers of Spain’s cultural influence in Russia.

This journey ended Svin’in’s connection with the navy. His services were recognized by the conferment of the coveted cross of St. Vladimir 4th class, a high distinction for so young a civil servant. His Memoirs of the Fleet contributed to the creation of the cult of D. N. Seniavin as a national hero of Russia and is among the few original sources in this admiral’s campaigns against the French and the Turks.

Upon his return to the Russian capital, Svin’in resumed his connection with the Academy of the Fine Arts, at the same time performing chores at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he was assigned to the dull position of translator. On September 7, 1811, he submitted to the Council of the Academy a canvas depicting an episode of Field Marshal Suvorov’s Italian campaign in 1799, asking to be admitted to membership in the Academy on the strength of the merits of his work. The Council acted favorably and included this painting among those submitted for the final review by the general assembly of the Academy. On September 13, the public meeting of the Academy decided by a majority of votes that the young translator’s work deserved recognition, and duly elected him to membership in the Academy, thus officially recognizing Svin’in

33 Ibid., Part III, 21–39. On Spain’s cultural influences on Russia, see the interesting volume by Ludmilla Buketoff Turkevich, Cervantes in Russia (Princeton, 1950).
34 Svin’in, Vospominaniia na flote, Part III, 52.
35 On the controversy between Svin’in and the naval memoirist, V. B. Bronevskoi (1784–1835), on plagiarism allegedly committed by Svin’in, see Saitov, I, 554 (footnote to page 170).
36 Petrov, Sbornik materialov, Part I, 551.
A RUSSIAN SKETCHES PHILADELPHIA

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as a competent painter. A few days after his election, Svin'in sailed from Kronstadt to America, where he was given the post of secretary of the Russian Consul General at Philadelphia.

The diplomatic relations between Russia and the United States had been established only a few years before Svin'in's departure. Emperor Alexander I in June, 1808, had appointed Andrei Iakovlevich Dashkov Consul General at Philadelphia, conferring upon him at the same time the dignity of "chargé d'affaires near the Congress of the United States." Dashkov arrived in the United States in June, 1809. In May, 1809, Count Pahlen was made the Russian Minister to the United States, while in June of the same year the United States Senate finally confirmed the nomination of John Quincy Adams as American Minister to Russia. Because of Pahlen's subsequent appointment to Brazil, Dashkov was accredited in November, 1811, as his successor. Svin'in, therefore, was among the first Russian foreign service officers to reside in America. And as Dashkov lived in Philadelphia, that city became the center of Russian diplomatic activity during the period of Svin'in's sojourn in America.

One gathers from Svin'in's writings that he traveled a great deal while in America and became acquainted not only with New England and the states of New York and Pennsylvania, but with Virginia as well. This suggests the view that his actual duties were broader than those usually connected with the position of a secretary of a consulate. Inasmuch as he made a detailed study of American industry, commerce, and agriculture, one may conclude that he acted as a sort of commercial secretary of the Russian mission. The twenty months spent by the young Russian official in Philadelphia were

37 Ibid., Part I, 562, 563.
38 Pavel Svin'in, Opyt zhivopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike (St. Petersburg, 1815), 206, 207. Svin'in sailed about Sept. 17, 1811.
39 See Note 3 above.
40 John C. Hildt, Early Diplomatic Negotiations of the United States with Russia [Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, Series XXIV, Nos. 5-6] (Baltimore, 1906), 38, 42.
42 Ibid., 38; Yarmolinsky, 5.
43 Pavel Svin'in, "Opyt zhivopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike, Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinnenykh Amerikanskikh oblastei," in Syn Otechestva (1814), Parts XVII and XVIII; also Yarmolinsky, 5.
among the happiest of his life. The epigraph of his book on America was borrowed from the *Elegy* by Andrei Turgenev: "And in the very sorrows, the remembrances of past blissful days may console us."45

While Svin’in was in America, two important events occurred. On June 18, 1812, war was declared between the United States and Great Britain, and on June 24 of the same year Napoleon invaded Russia.

The Russian government, engaged in a mortal struggle with the great conqueror, was deeply concerned by the outbreak of hostilities between its British ally and America. Emperor Alexander I attempted to bring the Anglo-American war to an end by an offer of mediation, which was accepted by the United States, but rejected by Great Britain.46

The close connection between the struggle of Russia with France and the American war with England was understood by some of the thoughtful men in the United States.47 The opponents of war with England saw a welcome chance to bring it to an end through Emperor Alexander I’s mediation. There developed a considerable interest in his personality, while the outcome of the great campaign in the plains of Russia was closely followed.48

But even before the outbreak of hostilities, the Philadelphia *Port Folio* published in March, 1812, a portrait of the Russian ruler, designed by Svin’in and engraved by the well-known David Edwin.49 The leading article in the same issue of the *Port Folio* said that the portrait was “recognized as a striking resemblance of the illustrious original,” and that the magazine was “indebted to the politeness of an officer, the first exercise of whose distinguished talents, as an artist, since his residence among us, is the patriotic attempt to diffuse the fame of his sovereign.”50

45 Svin’in, *Opyt zhivopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike*, title page.
49 Yarmolinsky, 5, 6.
50 Ibid., 6.
This was not the only contribution made by Svin'in to the Port Folio. The April issue of the magazine published a frontispiece by him, depicting "A Cossack of the Don in his Military Dress." The same number included also an article on the Cossacks of the Don, in which, *inter alia*, the author drew a comparison between certain traits of the Cossacks and those of the American Indians. The information offered in this article was not distinguished by accuracy, but then, at the time, the knowledge of Cossack history was still very imperfect.51

These ventures into American journalism were followed by a volume of Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg, published by Thomas Dobson of Philadelphia in 1813. The book was illustrated by nine colored engravings from drawings by Svin'in. It was poorly organized; items on Cossacks and Circassians were intermingled with those on St. Petersburg and Moscow.52 In this volume Svin'in was, possibly, the first to assert that "no two countries bear a more striking resemblance than Russia and the United States," a theme so successfully developed by Roger Dow in his "Prostor" in 1941.53 The book was republished in London in 1814 and again in 1843 under the title, Sketches of Russia.54

In his preface, the author criticized the "accounts of the majority of travellers," who, in his view, had helped to create an entirely false idea of Russia.55 He drew a parallel between these accounts of Russia and the travelers' unfavorable reports on the United States.56

51 Ibid.
52 Paul Svenin, Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg Ornamented With Coloured Drawings Taken From Nature (Philadelphia, 1813). Svin'in is described on the title page as "Knight of the Russian Imperial Order of St. Vladimir, Academician and Member of the Academy of Fine Arts, New York." As to the latter membership, see Yarmolinsky, 7.
54 Yarmolinsky, 6.
55 Svenin, Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg, 2. At that particular time, Russian officials in America were particularly exercised over the well-known work of Dr. Edward Daniel Clarke, Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa. On this, see Alexis Eustaphievie, Strictures on "The Correspondence Respecting Russia," attached to Reflections on the War of 1812 . . ., by Col. P. A. Tchuykevitch (Boston, 1813), 68. On what Eustaphievie's *bête noire*, Robert Walsh, Jr., had to say later on the Edinburgh Review's attacks on the United States, see his An Appeal from the Judgments of Great Britain Respecting the United States of America (Philadelphia, 1819), Part I, vi, 1.
56 Svenin, Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg, 1.
It may be possible that this criticism had some connection with what the young diplomat heard at the Tuesday Club, that lively forerunner of the Franklin Inn Club of Philadelphia, unless he met elsewhere Robert Walsh, the much traveled young literatus from Baltimore, who began to publish in 1811 the American Review of History and Politics.\(^{57}\) Walsh considered himself an authority on Russia and, as he had never visited it, based his views on reports of travelers and other books on the empire of the tsars.\(^{58}\)

One of the points Svin'in was trying to make in his book was concerned with the lofty character of Russian, particularly Moscow, hospitality. "It only suffices to be a stranger, to insure a good and cordial reception. He is sure not to be looked upon as troublesome, nor does sordid interest mix with that liberal disposition, which induces men to regard each other as brethren, and to treat each other as friends. . . . hospitality is not there looked upon as alms: it is an exchange of attention and gratitude."\(^{59}\)

The author stressed the religious tolerance in Russia, pointing out that on the main thoroughfare of St. Petersburg there were situated churches and temples of twelve different religious denominations, including a Jewish synagogue and a Moslem mosque. "Some travelers call this street by the name of Tolerance Street," he wrote.\(^{60}\)

His vivacious, if not always accurate, description of the new and ancient capitals and of the picturesque populations of the outskirts of the empire was marred by an attempt to defend the indefensible: Russian serfdom. Svin'in naïvely suggested that the fact that there was no Russian emigration to America, should be interpreted as a proof that the Russian serf peasants were better off than the tillers of land of Central and Western Europe.\(^{61}\)

Svin'in's was not the only book published in America by a Russian at that time. The Russian consul at Boston, Alexis Eustaphievich


\(^{58}\) *Correspondence Respecting Russia Between Robert Goodloe Harper, Esq., and Robert Walsh, Jun.,* unnumbered page (advertisement of the Editor).


\(^{60}\) *Ibid.*, 2, 44.

(Evstafev) published in May, 1812, a volume on *The Resources of Russia*, with a chapter on Cossacks. In 1813 there appeared a third book by a Russian, P. A. Tchuykevitch, *Reflections on the War of 1812*, which was translated into English by the same A. Evstafev, who added to it his own essay, *Strictures on “The Correspondence Respecting Russia,”* which was a bitter attack on Robert Walsh’s views, expressed in the latter’s letters to Robert Goodloe Harper, the prominent Baltimore lawyer and the future United States Senator from Maryland. These letters commented on Mr. Harper’s speech at a public banquet, held on June 5, 1813, at Georgetown, D. C., to commemorate the Russian victories over Napoleon, and were inimical to the Muscovite Empire.

Svin’in’s life in America came to an abrupt end because of his appointment to accompany to Europe the famous French general, Jean Victor Moreau, then living at Morrisville, Pennsylvania, whom Emperor Alexander I had invited to enter the Russian service. He sailed from New York in the *Hannibal* on June 21, 1813, for Göteborg.

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Col. P. A. Tchuykevitch, *Reflections on the War of 1812* with Tables Shewing the Numerical Force of the Enemy, when he Entered Russia, and the Losses he Sustained in the Subsequent Battles and Actions from the Commencement of the Campaign to the 1st of January, 1813. Founded upon Official Documents. Printed and Published in St. Petersburg and Translated from the Russian by Mr. Eustaphieve with *Strictures on “The Correspondence Respecting Russia”* (Boston, 1813).

Also there appeared in Robert Walsh’s *The American Review of History and Politics and General Repository of Literature and State Papers* (January, 1812), 74-120, a review article of E. D. Clarke’s work, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa*, Part I, by “A Russian.” Evstafev mentions this article in his *Strictures*, attached to Tchuykevitch’s *Reflections on the War of 1812*, stating that it was written “by a Russian gentleman.” One may conclude from his remarks that this article was not written by him. The introductory editorial remarks to the review article explain that it was originally written in French and then translated into English. Some parts of these remarks seem to provide grounds for assuming that Svin’in was not the author of the article.

63 For example: “There is no government or people, on record, whose history is more atrocious, in almost every stage.” *Correspondence Respecting Russia Between Robert Goodloe Harper, Esq., and Robert Walsh, Jun.*

64 Svin’in, *Opyt zhivotpisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike*, 124-129.
in Sweden. Moreau's death from wounds received in the battle of Dresden (August 26–27, 1813) terminated Svin’in’s mission. Then followed a trip to England in the spring of 1814 to deliver to Moreau’s widow Emperor Alexander’s condolences and to apprise her of the large pension and grant bestowed upon her by the tsar. 

Even before Svin’in’s return to Russia from England, there appeared in 1814 in the St. Petersburg magazine Syn Otechestva (Son of the Fatherland) a series of his articles on the United States. These articles were followed in 1815 by a volume entitled Opyt zhivopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike (An Essay of a Picturesque Voyage in North America), with six illustrations from the author’s drawings. As the contents of the articles and those of a number of chapters of the book either duplicate or supplement each other, they will be discussed together to avoid repetition.

From the viewpoint of organization of material, this book was no improvement over that on Russia published by Svin’in in Philadelphia. The seven chapters of it were really separate papers. Chapters I and II were abbreviations of the articles in the Syn Otechestva, while Chapter IV was a pamphlet on Moreau, published in 1813 and 1814 in French and English. The second chapter dealt with religious denominations in the United States, while the last

66 Ibid., 128, 129.
67 Russkii biograficheskii slovar', Vol. 18, 218; Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 79.
68 "Nabliudeniia Russkago v Amerike i Opisanie Stimbota (parovogo sudna)," Syn Otechestva, Part XVI, Nos. XXXVI, XXXVII, 135–144, 175–182; "Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinennykh Amerikanskikh oblastei," Syn Otechestva, Parts XVII and XVIII, Nos. XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII, 253–270, 3–16, 41–58, 81–97. Dr. Yarmolsky has stated in a footnote to page 11 of his book: "This work is mistakenly listed as a separate book in the article on Svinin in 'Russki biograficheski slovar' ('Russian Biographical Dictionary'). St. Petersburg, 1904." However, N. A. Polevoi, the editor of the Syn Otechestva, wrote in his obituary of Svin’in in Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 79, that "Aside from the articles in the magazines of that time, P. P. Svin’in published in fragments his foreign notes [Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinennykh Amerikanskikh oblastei, 1814 . . . .]."
69 Opyt zhivopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike Paula Svin’a (Printed by F. Drechsler, 1815, 219 pp. 16°). In 1818 there appeared a second edition of this work (see Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 79).
three were given respectively to a description of Niagara Falls, of the sports of the American Indians, and of the fishing off the Banks of Newfoundland. In his essay on Svin’in, Dr. Yarmolinsky has subjected the chapter on the American Indians to a well-informed and penetrating analysis to which this writer has nothing to add. Those on Niagara Falls and the fishing off the Banks of Newfoundland fall outside the scope of this study.  

Svin’in began his book by pointing out that the American federal state and its rapid advancement was a unique phenomenon, “without precedent in the annals of history,” and that the same was true of the spirit of its government, its laws and politics, even of the family life and mores of its population, into the making of which went “all peoples of the world.”

This staunch Anglophile strongly disapproved of the British policy which led to the separation of the American colonies from their motherland. He called the British government’s conduct senseless, and expressed the thought that the British Cabinet was guided by envy for the successes of the American colonists. In his opinion only this “unjust and senseless” policy had forced Americans to take up arms in the defense of their liberties. Svin’in had the highest praise for George Washington and called him “a man endowed with all talents and high virtues.” The Federal Constitution inspired his encomium: “It proved . . . that it was composed and written by men of vast knowledge and great virtues.” The American Revolution was unlike any other one in history. The Russian diplomat thought that Americans were entitled to enjoy the privileges of “true freedom and happiness, which were the true foundation of the spirit of their government, which surpasses . . . in this respect all ancient and modern republics.” American laws were designed for a people “good and wise, capable of holding oneself within the limitations of human and social rights.” As a result of George Washington’s guidance, the progress of this country was so rapid that one could think it was “a dream rather than reality.”

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70 Yarmolinsky, 23-32.
71 Opis zhivotnogo puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike Pavla Svin’ina, 1, 2.
72 Ibid., 7, 8.
73 Ibid., 9, 10.
Svin’in lived in America during the acute phase of political strife between the Federalists and the Democrats. He believed that this political struggle had weakened the young republic. In his view, party animosities were envenomed by the intrigues of Spanish and British agents, “who used all the means of the most cunning politics to feed this spirit of discord among Americans.” His sympathies were with the Federalists, whom he called “men of good sense, who see all the senselessness and injustice of their government, which, because of personal hatred for England declared war upon her.” The author thought that the prolonged war between America and Great Britain was likely to abate party feelings and to bring a greater harmony into political life. Then, he wrote, “we shall see all the might” of the adolescent nation.

In discussing the three main ethnic groups forming the population of the United States, the author wrote that the Indians were doomed to extinction through the ravages of smallpox and alcoholism. For the Negroes he hoped for a better future and anticipated their early liberation, pointing out that slavery had already been abolished in six states.

Svin’in was very much impressed by the rapid progress of the white part of the American population. He was convinced that its amazing advancement was favored not only by its wealth, but also by its code of morals. Americans were much more vivacious and incomparably more friendly and hospitable than the British. He could not bring himself, however, to approve the acquisitiveness of the men of the New World. In his opinion, the “passion” for trade dominated all classes of society and brought in its train greed for money. Svin’in even wrote: “Money is the god of Americans.” At the same time, he was impressed by the fact that there was very little crime in the United States and ascribed this not only to the great natural wealth of the land, but also to the strong religious feeling of its citizens.

75 Opyt zhivopisnago putestviiia po Severnoi Amerike Pavla Svin’ina, 37, 38; “Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinennykh Amerikanskikh oblastei,” Syn Otechestva, Part XVIII, No. XLVII (1814), 51.
76 Ibid., 53; Opyt zhivopisnago putestviiia po Severnoi Amerike Pavla Svin’ina, 20, 21.
77 Ibid., 19, 20.
78 Ibid., 23.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 23, 24.
The Russian official had a very high opinion of the valor of Americans and of their aptness for military service. Under good discipline, the American troops would be far ahead of most European armies, he thought.81 The author’s admiration for the seafaring qualities of Americans was even greater. He wrote that Americans were further advanced in the mastery of the nautical arts than any other nation. The superiority of the naval personnel was founded on the fact that it was the cream of some 200,000 “brave and skillful” merchant marine seamen.82 The long wars which followed the French Revolution had provided a powerful stimulus to the development of the American merchant marine. This, combined with the “enterprising spirit of Americans” in commercial ventures and the better construction of their ships, had “given . . . into their hands the trade of the entire world.” In the author’s opinion, the future of the United States seaborne commerce depended upon the outcome of war, but he looked hopefully to a rapid growth of American-Russian commerce, expecting to find in the United States a ready market not only for such articles as iron, canvas, leather, hemp, linen, etc., but also for shoes, boots, hats, and even mirrors.83

The prodigious development of American industry was given impetus by the embargo and the war with Britain. The shortage of labor encouraged the application of all kinds of machinery in manufacturing processes and led to their mechanization.84 Svin’in visited wire and nail factories in New England and watched a worker producing two hundred nails per minute. Apparently, he had no qualms as to the influence of the machine on the fate of humankind. The advantages were obvious to him. But it was the then new steamboat which captured his imagination to the extent of prompting him to wish to abandon his diplomatic career and to take up the development of steam navigation in Russia.85 Through his friendship with a “skilled mechanic Mr. S. . . .,” he was able to study drawings and models of steamboats, and wrote a comprehensive report on them to St. Petersburg. He suggested that the government undertake the

81 Ibid., 24, 25.
82 Ibid., 25, 26.
83 Ibid., 27, 29.
84 Ibid., 32.
85 Ibid., 84-87; “Vzgliad na respubliku Soedinennykh Amerikanskih oblastei,” Syn Otechestva, Part XVIII, No. XLVII (1814), 41-43; Yarmolinsky, 7-11.
construction of steamships and that he be given either the supervision of the construction of the first Russian steamship or be permitted to undertake its building at his own cost, should the government be disinclined to finance it. He had to abandon these plans, as the American Minister at St. Petersburg had already secured a fifteen-year privilege for Robert Fulton. The latter failed to take advantage of this opportunity and the first steamship in Russia was built by a Scotsman resident at St. Petersburg, Charles Baird, whose ship made its maiden round-trip voyage to Kronstadt and back to St. Petersburg on November 15, 1815. The well-known Russian journalist, Thaddeus Bulgarin, wrote in his memoirs that Svin'in had brought with him the drawings and a sketch of a steamship built by Mr. Brown of New York, and asserted that Svin'in had suggested to Baird to undertake the building of his steamer.

The noncommercial aspects of American life also attracted Svin'in's attention. He was amazed by the readiness of wealthy Americans to turn their riches to the development of their country. There was no land in the entire world where the government itself did so little in this respect. Roads, canals, bridges—all were built by private entrepreneurs, who readily combined into companies to pool their capital.

Another aspect of private initiative was singled out by him for particular praise: the generosity of rich Americans in establishing hospitals, old people’s homes, orphans’ asylums and other philanthropic institutions. He considered the existence of these even in small towns and villages as a proof of the presence of “a felicitous government, of human kindness, as a national trait, combined with a happy life” of the people. He went on to say that it was impossible to find even a single beggar in America.

Svin’in thought well of the American penal system, obviously basing his views on what he had observed at Philadelphia. American
prisons were more like workshops than jails. “Humanity does not suffer in them. It is punished, not by degradation, but by deprivation of freedom, this supreme good.”

The author highly esteemed American educational and cultural institutions. The fact that children of all classes of people went to the same schools tended to imbue them with a common viewpoint, “to think and to see things in the same light.” This he considered important. Well-stocked public libraries were numerous and that of Philadelphia possessed as many as 100,000 volumes. Harvard and Yale he called universities. Princeton and Pennsylvania he placed in a lower rank—that of academies. He spoke with respect of the American Philosophical Society, which “was known the world over for the learned publications of its works,” for the zeal of its collaborators, and also because its founder was the famous Benjamin Franklin.

Svin’in’s discussion of religion in America is incomplete. He gave attention only to religious denominations either little or entirely unknown in Russia and, excepting the Society of Friends, treated them from the angle of the unusual and picturesque in their ritual. He stressed the spirit of religious tolerance in America and considered it “the principal cause of the rapid growth of the population and of the well-being of this land.” While he had attended services of the Negro Methodist church in Philadelphia, was present at a revivalist meeting near Germantown, and observed baptism by immersion in the Delaware, it was the Society of Friends which called forth his particular admiration.

Friends helped each other “with the greatest readiness,” so that poverty was unknown among them. They were prominent in all forms of philanthropic work and took an active interest in prison reform and the improvement of hospitals, etc. He praised them for practical human kindness, saying that when persons were hurt in street accidents, he had observed many times a Quaker to be the first to offer help, to tear his handkerchief to bind the wounds of the

90 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 33.
92 Ibid., 35.
94 Opyt zhivotopisnago puteshestviia po Severnoi Amerike Pavla Svin’ina, 45, 46.
95 Ibid., 47-57, 75-79.
sufferers. "Beyond doubt, Quakers are the most peaceloving and honest men." 96

In 1829, Svin’in published in the magazine Otechestvennyaia Zapiski, which he edited, a further article on America. It dealt with the fine arts in the United States. Dr. Yarmolinsky pointed out in his essay, that this article has importance as a contemporary record, there being only a few dealing with this theme. 97 Svin’in predicted a bright future for American painting and the graphic arts, but had a low opinion of the state of sculpture and of architecture, although he expressed his admiration for American bridge builders. Several pages of that article were given to the description of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and of that of New York. 98 This article deserves to be translated and published, for Svin’in, a painter himself, was fairly well qualified to write his survey of the state of the fine arts in America. 99

In 1820, Svin’in published an article on the commercial relations between the United States and Russia. As Dr. Yarmolinsky has said, it is an expanded version of a part of the first chapter of his book on America, with statistics brought up to 1817. 100

Svin’in’s writings on America contain inaccuracies, unacknowledged borrowings from other authors, and one or two deliberate misrepresentations of facts. 101 Nevertheless, in their general content, they reflect correctly the contemporary American scene. Svin’in’s analysis of what he observed and read often penetrated below the surface to the very roots of the American way of life. Small wonder, then, that his book on the United States was translated into German and Dutch. He did better than many a foreign observer of his day, and what he wrote was free of an anti-American bias. 102

Sailing for Europe from New York in 1813, Svin’in took with him

96 Ibid., 63, 64, 72.
98 Ibid., 42.
99 Ibid., 33.
101 Ibid., 26, 30, 41.
102 Paul Svinin, Malerische Reise durch Nordamerika, translated from the Russian (Riga, 1816); Paul Svinin, Tafereelen uit eene Reis naar Noord-Amerika, translated from the Russian following the High German translation (Haarlem, 1818). See Yarmolinsky, 18.
not only the drafts of his articles, but also a large portfolio of water colors of American life and landscape. These water colors are now in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The late R. T. H. Halsey, who purchased them in 1925, wrote an excellent appreciation of their merits. At least a few of them, such as the "Worldly Folk" scene and that of the "Night Life in Philadelphia," deserve to be better known.  

Continuing in government service until 1824, Svin'in began to publish in 1818 the periodical *Otechestvennyia Zapiski* at St. Petersburg. During the first two years, the magazine was filled with his own writings, but from 1820 on it included contributions by some of the prominent Russian writers of the day. It concerned itself entirely with Russian themes.

A noticeable change came about in Svin'in's views after his return from his travels. His patriotism, previously broad enough to contain a strain of cosmopolitanism, assumed a narrower, nationalistic aspect, partly under the influence of moods generated in Russia by the outcome of her wars with Napoleonic France, partly as a rebound from his uncritical admiration of all things foreign, combined with a nostalgia for his native land which he acquired during his long years of absence from Russia. The *Otechestvennyia Zapiski* mirrored this change in its exclusive interest in Russia's past, the mores of its populations, and the ethnography of her numerous nationalities. Nevertheless, his sojourn in America continued to influence him not only in sustaining his admiration for the United States, but also in his passion for new inventions and Russian inventors, whose work he was the first among Russian journalists to bring systematically before the Russian reading public.

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103 This writer is indebted for the information on the present location of Svin'in's water colors to Mr. R. Norris Williams, 2d. For R. T. H. Halsey's opinion, see Yarmolinsky, xiii—xviii.

104 *Kartiny Rossii i Byt raznoplemennykh eia narodov iz Puteshestvii P. P. Svin'ina* (St. Petersburg, 1839), Part I; the publisher's Foreword, ii; the author's Foreword, xii, xiii; "Ob'avlenie o prodolzhenii izdaniia Otechestvennykh Zapisok na sleduiustchii 1822 god," *Otechestvennyia Zapiski*, No. 17 (1821), 395-397.

105 *Otechestvennyia Zapiski* (1818), i—iv; ibid., 223, 224; *Syn Otechestva*, IX, Part IV (1839), 79; *Russkii biographicheskii slovar*, Vol. 18, 218.

106 The program of the *Otechestvennyia Zapiski* included the reports on Russian inventions. See, for example, No. 17 (1821), 397. In 1818, in an article on the Tula Arms Works (page 119), Svin'in spoke about foreigners trying to appropriate to themselves the glory belonging by right to Russian inventors. In this respect, he must be regarded as a precursor of the current Soviet efforts to lay claim to Russian priority in a number of important inventions. In Svin'in's time, such efforts were not viewed with favor by the westernized part of Russian society.
In 1830, because of lack of means, Svin’in was forced to abandon the publication of his magazine and retired to his lands in the province of Kostroma. There he continued to write, contributing numerous articles to different Russian periodicals, as well as publishing two historical novels of doubtful merit. His most important work of that period was a book, new in type in Russia, an ethnographical description of the country, illustrated by his own drawings, some of which had the same high quality as his water colors on American themes. A life of Peter the Great which he began remained unfinished. In 1838 Svin’in returned to St. Petersburg and renewed the publication of the Otechestvennyia Zapiski, without assuming, however, the post of its editor.

During his busy years of journalism, Svin’in did not abandon his interest in the arts. In 1827 he was proposed and duly elected to the dignity of the Associate at Large of the Academy of the Fine Arts. He also became a member of the Russian Academy (Rossiiskaia Akademiiia) and of several important learned and literary societies. He died on April 21, 1839, at St. Petersburg.

This versatile and warm-hearted man was entirely forgotten in Russia. His fine water colors and excellent drawings were overlooked by the historians of the fine arts in Russia. Of his writings only the memoirs of the Seniavin campaign in the Mediterranean are still being read by naval historians and the more intellectual Russian naval officers.

Dr. Avrahm Yarmolinsky made a valiant effort to rescue his art and writings from obscurity and to make him known to the American public. Unfortunately, even those keenly interested in Philadelphia’s history are often unaware of Svin’in and his work. This talented man, who loved our city so well, is worthy of a better fate.

Philadelphia

D. Fedotoff White

107 Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 79, 80; Saitov, I, 510.
108 Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 80; Russkii biograficheskii slovar’, Vol. 18, 218–221.
109 Ibid.
110 P. N. Petrov, ed., Sbornik materialov dlia istorii Imperatorskoi S. Peterburgskoi Akademii Khudozhestva za sto let eia sustchestvoamija (St. Petersburg, 1865), Part II, 220.
111 Ibid., 213.
112 Syn Otechestva, IX, Part IV (1839), 80. Dr. A. Yarmolinsky, on page 44 of his volume, stated that Svin’in was a member of the Russian Academy of Science. This is not so. The two academies became united only in 1841, i.e., after Svin’in’s death. Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’, I, 265.
"Worldly Folk" Questioning Chimney Sweeps before Christ Church
Members of the City Troop and Other Philadelphia Soldiery
Probably an Exhibition of Indian Tribal Ceremonies at the Olympic Theater, August 9, 1812
A Philadelphia Anabaptist Immersion during a Storm
Negro Methodists Holding a Meeting in a Philadelphia Alley
A Winter Scene in Philadelphia with the Bank of the United States in the Background
Negroes in front of the Bank of Pennsylvania
Night Life in Philadelphia—An Oyster Barrow in front of the Chestnut Street Theater