A Portuguese Naturalist in Philadelphia, 1799

In the last years of the eighteenth century a number of wise and active men helped govern Portugal. Following a tradition already established by the Marquis of Pombal, they tried with great sincerity and some success to increase the productivity of the kingdom at home and the empire beyond the seas. In particular, the ministers of state Martinho de Melo and Dom Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho sought to improve agriculture and local industries and to stimulate new ones in Portugal and Brazil. The colonial archives in Lisbon are full of their detailed instructions to governors, recommending the gathering of seeds and plants and the importation of birds and animals, which could be useful in Europe. There are also the reports of the governors, the invoices of sea captains, the statements of naturalists, all attesting to the enthusiasm and the industry of these ministers. During this period young men of scientific bent were frequently recruited for special missions to collect specimens of foreign products which were thought essential for the future prosperity of the nation.

1 Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, first Count of Oeiras and Marquis of Pombal (1699–1782), was the principal minister of King Joseph I during the greater part of his reign (1750–1777). He was the reformer of many aspects of Portuguese life and the rebuilder of Lisbon after the earthquake of 1755.

2 Martinho de Melo e Castro (1716–1795), an outstanding Portuguese diplomat of the eighteenth century, served as minister to Great Britain from 1754 to 1770. In 1763 he represented his country at peace negotiations in Paris. From 1770 until his death he occupied the posts of colonial and marine minister. For a discussion of his interest in natural specimens, see Robert C. Smith, “Some Views of Colonial Bahia,” Belas Artes (Lisbon, 2 série, No. 1, 1948), 31–47. For further references to these collections, see Robert C. Smith, “The Woodbeach at Recife,” The Americas, VI (1949), 215–233.

3 D. Rodrigo Domingos António de Sousa Coutinho, Count of Linhares (1755–1812), was a member of one of the greatest families of Portugal and godson of Pombal. He served as minister plenipotentiary to the court of Sardinia and in 1796 became a member of the cabinet of Portugal.

4 The outstanding figure in this group was Dr. Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira (1756–1825), the so-called Brazilian Humboldt, who was sent by Martinho de Melo e Castro to record the natives, flora, and fauna of the Amazon (1783–1793). See V. Corrêa Filho, Alexandre Rodrigues Ferreira; vida e obra do grande naturalista brasileiro (S. Paulo, 1939).
One of these young men was Hipólito José da Costa Pereira Furtado de Mendonça, who came to the United States in 1798 at the age of twenty-four. He was on his way to Mexico, where he was to investigate the cochineal industry and obtain, if possible, the means of launching it in Brazil. Himself an American by virtue of his birth in Uruguay, he was educated at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. During the 1790’s Costa became a protégé of D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, who chose him for the Mexican mission, sending him first to Philadelphia to seek a passport from the Spanish minister and to familiarize himself with the natural resources of what was then the capital of the United States.

After his return to Lisbon, which occurred sometime between the end of August, 1800, and the beginning of January, 1801, Costa was appointed literary director of the royal press. His work in this capacity soon took him to England, where he committed the indiscretion of representing the Portuguese Masons at meetings of their British colleagues. This was a grave offense to the clerical government of Portugal, and the penalty Costa paid was severe. Upon his return he was detained without trial for three years in the Lisbon prison of the Inquisition. Eventually, he escaped to Gibraltar. From there he made his way to London, where between 1808 and 1822 he published Correio Braziliense, a liberal monthly. One of the aims of this journal was to obtain the independence of Brazil. When this goal was achieved in 1822, though with scant aid from the London journal, Hipólito José da Costa became the British agent of the new South American nation. His triumph was short-lived, however, for he died on September 11, 1823, just past fifty years of age.

Among Costa’s numerous writings some of the records of his mission to America survive. An account of the agriculture of the southern states, which he visited en route to Mexico, has been published in Brazil. In addition, some twenty letters written in Philadelphia to his chief, Dom Rodrigo, and a diary kept during part of his

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5 He was the son of an officer of the Portuguese army temporarily on duty in that area.
residence in the United States are in the collection of the Biblioteca Pública of Évora and have been microfilmed for The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The diary begins with Costa’s departure from Lisbon on Tuesday, October 16, 1798, and describes the journey of almost two months aboard the snow William, commanded by Captain Quandrill, until his arrival at New Castle, Delaware, on December 11. For the next four months the diarist resided in Philadelphia, collecting botanical specimens and paying court to the Spanish minister, who was reluctant to grant him a passport to Mexico.

From Philadelphia the naturalist traveled by land and water through Trenton, Princeton, and New Brunswick to New York, where he arrived two days later. There he remained for two months, in what he described as an impoverished city, having great trouble with landlords, but seeing the sights in company with scientists and attending the commencement exercises at Columbia. At length he was driven away by the threat of yellow fever, and on June 30 set out to see the interior of New York State and something of Canada. No description of this part of the journey is included in the diary.

The late summer was spent in New England, where at Newport, Bristol, and Providence Costa found Portuguese who were beginning to come to the United States, attracted by high wages. Early in October he returned to Pennsylvania from Boston and stopped with friends in Germantown. The narrative ends on November 27, 1799, after visits to Lancaster, West Chester, and Marshallton, where the naturalist went to consult the Quaker botanist, Humphry Marshall, to whom he had first written in January, requesting seeds of American plants that might prosper in Portugal. Some of this correspondence is preserved at the Chester County Historical Society in West Chester and at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

In his published report to D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, Costa relates how subsequently he made his way to South Carolina. From there he sailed on an American ship to Mexico, where he quickly obtained the desired cochineal beetles. These he brought back with him to Philadelphia, where he suffered the great disappointment of

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8 The arrival of the William at the Port of Philadelphia, fifty-six days out from Lisbon and carrying a cargo of salt and wine, was duly reported by the newspapers. Gazette of the United States, Dec. 15, 1798; Aurora, Dec. 17, 1798.
seeing them die. His letters to Lisbon indicate that for a brief period in 1800 Costa acted as a diplomatic agent for Portugal during the absence of the consul from Philadelphia.

The excerpts from Hipólito José da Costa's diary, here published for the first time, concern his residence in Philadelphia in the winter of 1798-1799. Much of his time was spent in the company of foreign diplomats, through whom he met President Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State Pickering, and travelers who informed him about the flora and fauna he had come to study. He visited the local botanists John Bartram and William Hamilton. Hamilton, who respected his knowledge, invited him to return several times to his celebrated hothouses at The Woodlands. Costa also knew Charles Willson Peale, but his opinion of the latter's famous museum was not entirely favorable. As a citizen of an arch-Catholic country, where the Inquisition was firmly established, the Portuguese naturalist had his first contacts in Philadelphia with other forms of worship. These proved a source of continuous fascination, for he devoted pages of his diary to describing the services of Baptists, Jews, Methodists, Lutherans, and Dunkers.

Like Moreau de St. Méry, he was not impressed by Philadelphia's pretensions to elegance, but unlike the malicious French diarist from Haiti, he admired the quiet and order which he found in the markets, on the streets, at the law courts—in short, wherever large numbers of citizens gathered. "This peacefulness," he wrote, "is the general character of the nation." The women of Philadelphia failed to attract him, and this is not surprising in the light of the incredible statement he made that few of them kept their teeth beyond the age of eighteen. Those he saw in New York were awkward, though sometimes quite pretty. Only in Newport, he discovered, were real beauties to be found. Engrossed in his scientific interests and the investigation of churches, Costa had little to say about the appearance of Philadelphia and the architecture of the country in general. Nassau Hall at Princeton, for example, was dismissed as "a building of stone, not covered with plaster." But he did recognize the Gothic Revival characteristics of Trinity Church in New York and proclaimed the First

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9 Médéric-Louis-Elie Moreau de St. Méry (1750-1819) was a French refugee in the United States whose experiences are contained in Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey [1793-1798], translated and edited by Kenneth L. Roberts and Anna M. Roberts (New York, 1947).
Baptist Meeting in Providence the finest place of worship he saw in America. One of Costa’s most interesting comments, in anticipation of his future role as a journalist, was on the freedom of the press in America. He marveled at it and envied it, but found that in general it was abused.

The diary of Hipólito José da Costa, as presented in these excerpts, adds a pleasing side light to our knowledge of Philadelphia at the very close of the eighteenth century. It provides a day-to-day chronicle of the doings of a sensitive European in a new and to him sometimes quite fascinating American city. It is the only known record of the sojourn of a Portuguese in Philadelphia at the time and establishes a rare link between Pennsylvania and the great program of scientific study conducted in the late eighteenth century by the Portuguese government.¹⁰

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Excerpts from the Diary of Hipólito José da Costa

December 11, 1798 Sailing up the Delaware River we passed by Reedy Island, and between this and the land were anchored nearly 50 vessels waiting for a wind to rise. We reached New Castle, where we saw an American frigate and a war sloop about to depart. I went ashore with the Captain to get provisions. New Castle is the place where the first attempt was made to found Philadelphia, which lies 35 miles from here and this was 60 years ago.¹¹ The Captain’s mother recalled that after that the present site of Philadelphia was chosen because the port is better there. New Castle has 50 brick houses and numerous warehouses. Many ships come here for the provisions they need in the way of food and to get their drinking water from the Delaware. The first house I entered was an inn, very clean and well stocked. On the wooden frame above the door there was painted a

¹⁰ The Portuguese of Hipólito José da Costa, which is terse, nonliterary, full of abbreviations, and almost devoid of punctuation, has been translated as faithfully as possible, with an arbitrary division into sentences and with the addition of punctuation and the correct spelling of proper names. The translation was made by Professor Smith, who also contributed the footnotes on Portuguese personages and on some of the buildings of Philadelphia. The rest of the footnotes were compiled by James Biddle.

¹¹ Philadelphia was founded in 1682.
compass and a quadrant indicating that this was a house of Masons or for them. In a large room in this house I saw a long table and on it many cups and forks, and some people seated. . . . I left this place and went to the slaughter yard, where there was some cattle to be slaughtered. It looked very lean, although the meat, like that in Philadelphia, was very fat, and there the Captain bought his meat. We then went to an excellent bakery. The snow, which had fallen and covered the streets, was exactly like the sweet caramels sold in Lisbon, for it is soft when walked on and piles up in the street. The ice however is transparent like glass and so smooth that it is easy to slip on. I fell on a piece of it that covered the bricks of a little stair in front of one of the houses I passed. Here I saw for the first time Leads [sleds] or carriages without wheels running on the surface of the ice pulled by 2 or more horses. They are used in this weather because ordinary carriages are likely to fall over on the ice. This place is much frequented by passengers going from Philadelphia to Baltimore who come this far either by land in carriages called Land-stadges, paying 10 dollars from Philadelphia and making the journey in 12 hours, or by water in freight boats which are called boatstadges or Water-stadges and pay 1 dollar. These, being covered, offer much accommodation and they sell all sorts of liquor, bread and fruit aboard. I saw a man in the street ringing a bell with a paper in his hand as they do in Portugal for funerals and this man was advertising in this way the sale of a boat. The paper contained the price (17 pounds) and the place where it was kept. I also saw here the house where the mail is handled with its sign "Post-office" and on its walls many printed notices of slight significance, because here the press is free and they print everything for the sake of convenience.

December 12, 1798 We sailed last night at ten and cast anchor this morning at 7 about two miles above Chester. The water is flowing at such a rate down the river that the Captain fears it may cut the mooring. We had some difficulty with the snow and ice before sailing at midday and we anchored, or rather tied up, at a pier beside Fort Mifflin. This is a fortification on an island in the river 5 miles from the city. It consists of three batteries set on stone walls two

12 Fort Mifflin, originally known as Mud Fort, was named for Gen. Thomas Mifflin, who hurriedly completed its construction in 1777. Later that year it was destroyed by the British. Earl I. Brown, Important Data Pertaining to Historic Fort Mifflin (Philadelphia, 1932).
arms' lengths in height. One battery faces the river or channel through which the ships pass. Another dominates the shore, while the third looks down the river. Since the walls are only two arms' lengths high, the batteries fire almost at the water level. Inside there is a lookout which rises a little higher, where there is a big flagpole from which they signal to the city. Facing up the river there is an esplanade. The whole fort is surrounded by a moat, which however in this weather is useless since the ice provides so many bridges to invade it. This fort, from which the English in the last war did great damage by cutting off all communication with Philadelphia and the mouth of the river, is now of very little use. On the shore nearby there is a hospital with a doctor who inspects the health of those aboard the ships entering the port. Here we were obliged to spend the night, in the 1st place because the doctor never came and if a ship passes without his permission the Captain must pay a fine of 300 dollars; in the 2nd place because there was so much snow; in the third place because there was no wind.

**December 13, 1798** Today the doctor came aboard, but because of the snow we couldn't go up the river, so I went ashore with the Captain and after getting permission from the commandant of the fortress I went to Philadelphia. I made this trip, which is 5 miles, on foot because we could find neither horses nor a chaise and we crossed in a boat the River Schuylkill, which empties into the Delaware 2 miles below Philadelphia. I reached the city and went to an inn called “City-tavern,” which although it is the best in the town charges about the same prices as the others. My room and board will be 15 dollars a week and that is without counting the wine and all I drink which is entirely extra.

**December 14, 1798** Today, freed of the snow, the ship came up the river and the secretary of Her Majesty's Minister, as soon as he heard that a Portuguese had arrived, came to ask me to call on the

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13 The City Tavern on the west side of Second St. between Walnut and Chestnut was built by subscription in 1773. This public house probably entertained more famous Americans than any other eighteenth-century tavern. Robert Earle Graham, “The Taverns of Colonial Philadelphia,” in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, XLIII (1953), Pt. I, 322, hereafter referred to as *Historic Philadelphia.*

14 Maria I of Bragança, Queen of Portugal (1734-1816). The reign of Her Most Faithful Majesty, which began in 1777, was marked by a long reaction, filled with national disasters, against the liberal policies of her father, Joseph I, and his chief minister Pombal. The Queen
Minister,16 which I did, badly dressed as I was. I couldn’t give him the papers I had brought because they had been left aboard. He invited me to dine there, but this day I did not accept his invitation. At night I went aboard the ship, which was at the wharf, and brought my papers to the Minister. Then I talked with his wife.

December 15, 1798 Today I went to the Minister’s house and remained alone with him and his wife. I bought a round hat like those of Lisbon, which cost me $400 reis [eight reis were equal in value to one cent]. Since the ship is not through customs I can’t yet get my clothes.

December 16, 1798 Sunday. I went to the Minister’s house on the way to hear Mass, but I did not find him at home. He had already gone to the chapel,16 which I could not locate. So I waited until he and his wife came home. Afterward several visitors arrived, among them Mme. Liston, wife of the English Minister here,17 and our Minister introduced me to her; also General Pinckney, who was Minister to France, and who is now consulting with General Washington about a plan for war.18 The latter went yesterday to the Potomac, without my being able to see him.

December 18, 1798 Today I went to see the House of Representatives.19 A message arrived from the Senate and the porter an-

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15 A protégé of the Marquis of Pombal, Cipriano Ribeiro Freire (1749-1824) served as secretary of the Portuguese legation in London in 1774 and as chargé d’affaires there from 1788 to 1791. He was resident Minister of Portugal in the United States between 1796 and 1799, when he represented his country for a period of months as minister plenipotentiary before being transferred to Spain. Freire later occupied a number of important government posts in Lisbon. During his residence in Philadelphia he was elected to membership in the American Philosophical Society. José Maria da Costa e Sá, Elogio histórico de Cipriano Ribeiro Freire (Lisboa, 1842).

16 St. Joseph’s in Willing’s Alley between Third and Fourth sts. and St. Mary’s on Fourth St. above Spruce were the only Roman Catholic churches in the city.

17 Sir Robert Liston (1742-1836) served as British Minister to the United States from 1796 to 1802.

18 Gen. Charles C. Pinckney (1746-1825) succeeded Monroe as Minister to France in 1796. Following the revelation of the XYZ affair, Pinckney returned to the United States where plans of war against France were under consideration.

19 The House of Representatives occupied the first floor of Congress Hall at Sixth and Chestnut sts. The Senate chamber was on the second floor of this building.
nounced this to the Speaker. Then the messenger entered and stopped before the President but outside the rows of benches. The porter cried "A message from the Senate." The sergeant at arms took up a wand, which was resting on one of the benches, which had a silver surface and a golden eagle on top and is about 6 or 7 palms in length. This he kept in his hand while the messenger announced his business. Afterward he gave a paper to the sergeant at arms, who went and handed it to the Speaker and returned to put the wand back in its place. The Speaker then ordered the paper read by a clerk, one of two whom he had beside him. There is in this room a great chair for the Speaker and a place for two clerks beside him. In front and arranged in the form of a half-moon, are the seats of the representatives with small tables before them to write on and behind these seats is the place for the people who come to watch the proceedings. For these there are also two galleries. Only the members can enter the area of the seats and they can keep their hats on except when speaking. If, however, they are Quakers they never take their hats off. Everybody who is behind the seats of the representatives must be bareheaded, but those who occupy the galleries may wear their hats.

December 19, 1798 I went today to the Supreme Court, which is the principal tribunal of justice of the District of Philadelphia. There was a little raised place where were seated the four justices, wrapped up in great capes and with their hats on their heads because of the cold. There was a table in front of them on which they wrote. On the floor in front of this place there was a circle of seats around an oval table, and here were seated the lawyers. One arose to speak in a case concerning letters of exchange. The judges produced questions to which the attorney replied while the opposing lawyer made his solicitation. Everything was done with great moderation, the attorneys all bareheaded, but the spectators with their hats on.

December 23, 1798 Until today I could not continue my diary because I was so busy with letters for the Court. Today I went to

20 Jonathan Dayton (1760-1824), of New Jersey.
22 The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania met in the State House. It is possible that the diarist may be referring to the U. S. Supreme Court, which sat in the nearby building on the corner of Fifth and Chestnut sts.
mass at the Catholic chapel. Here there are seats for everyone and the church ornaments have the arms of the Jesuits. Decency and moderation reigned in everything I have seen here. The priest who said mass had no tonsure and the acolytes wore red cassocks.

*December 24, 1798* The horses that pull the sleds have harness that is so simple that I thought it worthy of note and this with the street carts and wagons I have sketched.

*December 25, 1798* Today there was a sermon in the Church of St. Mary of the Catholics. Also at night I went to a Methodist church where there was a man preaching in the pulpit dressed in an overcoat and with gloves called *meteens*. In all the churches there are seats fixed to the floor for all the families who pay so much per year for them. This rent together with the offerings which they take up at the meetings of all the sects maintain the churches and the ministers of all the religions, even the Catholic. The prostitutes in Philadelphia are so numerous that they flood the streets at night in such great numbers that many are never seen abroad with a man; however their houses are always free of dangers, which is the contrary of what prevails in most parts of Europe.

*December 26, 1798* Here there are two markets, one in Market Street and another in New-Market. They are not held in open squares but in sheds the length of the street and the streets where they are located are so wide that there is plenty of room between the sheds and the houses. All the buildings here, shops, offices, churches, and courtrooms, have stoves of iron attached to chimneys which carry the smoke outside, and the place to receive a visitor here is always beside the stove.

*December 27, 1798* Today I went to see John Bartram, who according to a newspaper had seeds to sell, but nowhere in Kingsessing could I find out about him. There is a battery there of 15 pieces of artillery, which seems to me as ridiculous as it is useless.
Also there are shipyards and the place is built up over 5 little islands. You cross from one to another on bridges, all of which are made of wood.

December 28, 1798 Today I saw the public library, founded by private subscription and promoted by Benjamin Franklin, whose bust is over the door. It consists of two rooms, without any decoration or painting beyond the bookshelves which are extraordinarily smooth and simple and all the books have wire screens in front of them. I also saw Peale's Museum, which is open to everyone who can pay 200 reis [twenty-five cents]. This consists of 3 small rooms and contains the portraits of all the men who took part in the American Revolution. The 3 rooms are very small, the exhibits are arranged absolutely without order or system of any kind, but according to the way the different sizes would fit in. The quadrupeds are in general very badly mounted, although there is a wide range of imagination displayed, as for example in the case of a wolf devouring a sheep, both of which with the greatest possible exactitude display their natural attitudes. The collection of minerals is quite small, although in all the public papers you read just the contrary of what I observed, for they praise extremely highly this beginning of a museum and even go so far as to claim falsely that it is arranged on the system of Linnaeus, etc. I saw in one box a monkey beside a rattlesnake.

January 1, 1799 Today I was presented by our Minister to the President of the United States John Adams. He holds a levee every Tuesday and today was in addition to the levee the first of the year, which is much observed here. The residence consisted of an ante-room or waiting room, where there were two servants in livery, and where the people entering left their coats (and some even their hats). Beyond this room were two more, one where the President was and another with a table with punch, wine and some sweet cakes, which

28 The Library Company of Philadelphia occupied a handsome building on Fifth St. facing Philosophical Hall and the State House Yard. The bust referred to was actually a full-length statue of Franklin by Lazzarini. This statue had been presented to the Library by William Bingham and was placed in a niche over the front door in 1792.

29 Charles Willson Peale's museum was housed in Philosophical Hall on Independence Square. In 1802 the collection was moved to the State House. Charles Coleman Sellers, "Peale's Museum," Historic Philadelphia, 253–259.

30 The Swedish botanist Linnaeus (1707–1778) originated principles for the classification of species and genera.

31 The Philadelphia home of Presidents Washington and Adams was 190 High St. (Market St. below Sixth).
everyone was expected to take according to etiquette and with which
some people were stuffing themselves. The President was standing,
wearing a long coat and sword and carrying his hat under his arm
and conversing with some of the people who were there. When you
go in you walk right up to him and greet him. He takes your hand,
asks after your health and says something else. He asked me how I
liked his country. After this all the people converse together, even
walking around through the house and the President himself moves
about frequently, so that everyone is mixed up without order or
arrangement of protocol. The senators and other distinguished
people came, some in boots and others without powder in their hair,
almost all had old coats on and for the most part they came on foot.
As a result, with the exception of the foreign diplomats all the rest
breathed very little civilization and polished manners. On going
home none of the guests spoke to the President but merely nodded
their heads, to which he replied in like manner.

January 2, 1799    Today I went to pay a visit to the great local
botanist Mr. John Bartram, who lives on his little farm 5 miles from
Philadelphia, in Kingsessing beyond the Schuylkill River. There I
found only his daughter, a girl of 15 years of age, who received me
beside her stove, where she was sewing.32 I told her I was looking for
her father, whereupon she replied most affably to wait for him, for he
would not be long, and indeed he came in a half-hour later. During
the interval she talked with me about geography, for there was a
book on the subject lying by the stove. We then turned to talking
about botany, a field to which she was no stranger, for she knew the
names of many plants and could apply the system of Linnaeus, about
which she could also talk with exact, though limited, knowledge.
Then her father, who had been working, came in. I expected a
gentleman; I found a poor peasant very badly dressed with a huge
greatcoat much mended, a pair of old country boots, and with rather
crude though extremely pleasant manners. With him came his two
sons, one 12 and the other 20, who carried spades with which they
had been working.33 We all sat down around the fire and since I saw

32 John Bartram, Jr., had four daughters, one of whom, Mrs. Robert Carr, became a part
owner of the botanical gardens after her father's death.
33 The younger son was James Howell Bartram (1783–1818); the elder, John Bartram, III,
died in early manhood.
four botanists together with the rude customs of the countryside but with sufficient knowledge of their subject, I stayed on until nightfall, enjoying with this little family the best afternoon I had spent in America. Bartram showed me the drawings of plants made by his younger son and his daughter, which not only were very good but extraordinary for two children who have never left their farmhouse. He then showed me the catalogue of American plants that he wants to print, etc., etc. At 6 o'clock I left this estimable company to return to Philadelphia, crossing the Schuykill on a bridge of wood called Gray's Ferry Bridge (because it is more like a boat than a bridge) and there I paid 18 cents, for me and for the chaise with one horse in which I was riding.

January 3-5, 1799 Today there appeared in front of my house the body of a newborn child lying dead in the snow. I was told that the crime of infanticide was very common here a few years ago. This was because there was no free orphanage and the only places where children were brought up required someone with money to pay for the child's education or the parents must make themselves known, thus exposing the reputations of the mother and child. Hence they resorted to infanticide. This has declined since the establishment of the college for women at Wilmington. Nowadays when a pregnant woman goes to the country to hide her state her family lets it be known that she is in Wilmington.

January 6, 1799 The thermometer of Réaumur went down today to 8 degrees above zero. The reason why the oxen here are so fat is because in wintertime they are fed on beans. Today the river froze completely so that people could walk across. As on Sunday a great number of boys went sliding on the river on their skates and even many men. All the streets in Philadelphia have wells with pumps to draw the water, which comes up in great

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34 The catalogue was not printed until 1807 when it appeared under the title, Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, and Herbaceous Plants, Indigenous to the United States of America; Cultivated and Disposed of by John Bartram & Son, at their Botanical Garden, Kingsess, near Philadelphia.

35 The floating structure known as Gray's Ferry Bridge was named for the Gray family, which had operated a ferry there as early as 1747. Jackson, III, 650.

36 A possible reference to the Wilmington Academy, which was renamed Wilmington College in its charter of 1803.

37 René Antoine Ferchault de Réaumur (1683-1757), a French scientist noted for his work on the thermometric scale.
abundance throughout the city. But since into these wells naturally filters the water of the privies, which exist in all the houses, this together with the cellar dwellings inevitably causes the pestilence they have here every summer. In New York all the well water is salty and so they are obliged to bring it in from the country and there you pay a penny for two gallons. In Boston, on the contrary, the water comes through pipes to all the houses.

January 7, 1799

The bridges are almost all of wood, even on the Schuylkill, where there are 3 in front of the city on the west,\(^{38}\) while to the south, which is the road to New Castle, the river is crossed in boats. These bridges are really floating boats tied together by chains of iron and thus the 3 on the Schuylkill are called ferries. Everyone who crosses them must pay and there are lotteries to get permanent bridges in some places. Meanwhile very little has been begun and nothing has been done on the Schuylkill at the nearest point to the city. But the lotteries increase. In one of today's newspapers, where there was a proposal for a new lottery the editor called it a goose trap. N. B. It is not to be wondered that they dare to put this in a public paper because in Philadelphia and in general in the United States it is customary when you want to get back at someone to print in a newspaper the most shameful facts you know about this person's life and then he replies in the same fashion and some of these disputes in the newspapers have been known to go on for a month or more, with the revelation of generations of personal defects, shortcomings of wives and daughters, etc. I learned on good authority that Mr. Jay, who was the one who made the treaty with England, was burned one night in effigy and, although it was well known, the culprits received no punishment.\(^{39}\) Ministers to foreign courts, secretaries of state, etc., when they leave office publish all their negotiations and, if they want, even give away the greatest secrets, while for all this there is no legal remedy. This was the conduct of the Minister who was in France, Mr. Monroe, who to justify his conduct and show

\(^{38}\) The bridges crossing the Schuylkill were the Upper Ferry, Middle Ferry, and Gray's Ferry bridges. To D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho in Lisbon, Costa reported as follows: “wooden bridges are characteristic of the local architecture of this country and with my letter no 7 from New York, dated June 15, 1799, I sent Your Excellency a statement on what I considered the easiest and most practical American way of constructing them.” *Memoria,* 359.

\(^{39}\) John Jay's unpopularity originated with the treaty bearing his name concluded in 1794 with Great Britain over spoliation and debt claims.
that the President had acted in bad faith published the principal secret negotiations of his mission, and there are many other examples.\footnote{James Monroe, as Minister to France from 1794 to 1796, did not approve of Jay’s Treaty. On Monroe’s recall to the United States in 1796, he published a vindication of his mission entitled \textit{A View of the Conduct of the Executive, in the Foreign Affairs of the United States}.}

\textbf{January 8, 1799} \quad Today I bought some works of Brissot de Warville relative to America.\footnote{Jean Pierre Brissot de Warville (1754–1793), French newspaper editor and political writer, recorded his impressions of a visit to the United States in 1788 in \textit{New Travels in the United States}.} I dined at the Minister of Portugal’s. It was a formal dinner at which were present the English envoy Mr. Liston and his wife and secretary of legation, Mr. Wharton,\footnote{The diarist apparently misunderstood the name of Edward Thornton, secretary of the British legation.} some of the English commissioners and their children.\footnote{The commissioners were serving under the authority of Article VI of Jay’s Treaty to arbitrate indemnification by the United States to British creditors. Procedural difficulties arose between the American and British commissioners and arbitration became impossible. Samuel Flagg Bemis, \textit{Jay’s Treaty} (New York, 1923), 318–319.} It was an entirely British company. The dinner began at 5 o’clock in the afternoon, with candles already lighted, and ended at 9 and \(\frac{1}{2}\).

\textbf{January 9, 1799} \quad I saw a Frenchman, Mr. de St. Memin, who being a man of good education in France learned in his youth to take likenesses and this has become his main support and that of his family. He draws the profile on the wall by means of following the shadows upon a red paper and then fills in the features with a pencil. This is the big pencil drawing. Later he reduces it in scale and engraves a plate from which he prints 12 impressions. He gives you the 12 impressions, with the plate, the small portrait from which it was made and the big pencil portrait all for 15 dol.\footnote{C. B. J. Fevret de Saint-Memin (1770–1852), using the physionotrace technique (profile drawing), depicted the likenesses of hundreds of prominent Americans during the years he resided in the United States, 1793–1810 and 1812–1814. \textit{The St.-Memin Collection of Portraits} \ldots{} (New York, 1862).}
January 11, 1799  Today I returned to Bartram's. He welcomed me warmly and arranged to sell me a chest of seeds for 5½ guineas, promising to send me more. A coat and pair of trousers which I sent to be dyed cost me 1,600 reis [two dollars]. I have observed that in Philadelphia there is only one café, which is called the Coffee House and is located in the City Tavern. It is there that the merchants each day hold their exchange. The market consists of 3 sheds in the High Street, commonly called Market Street. Each shed is the length of a city block, is built of brick posts and is provided with flat tables and hooks for hanging meat and everything else that is sold there. It is infinitely clean and the quiet that reigns in the midst of this infinity of people is worthy of note. There is no other guard or superintendent than two officials who supervise the weighing in any case where there is suspicion of dishonest dealing. A vast number of wagons arriving from the country with all kinds of food stop in this same street before the market opens and there unload without any confusion at all. The street is so wide that even with these extensive sheds there is plenty of room at the sides for carts and carriages to get by and in addition there are walks beside the houses where only pedestrians pass. Although there is market every day, it is infinitely more consequential on Mondays and Saturdays. There are two more markets at either end of Second Street.

January 12, 1799  One more observation upon the market, which was extended from Third Street to Fourth Street by an act of the legislature in Philadelphia on Feb. 12, 1795, authorizing the wardens to extend it further when the need arises. Today I went with the Minister of Portugal to visit several persons. The Minister of Spain was not at home. The British Minister said that he never argued with anyone about anything. Mr. Rosse, who is an Irish physician, is widely traveled, having been to India, Turkey and almost all of Europe. He speaks many languages (even Portuguese, for he has told the Minister he would like the Decades of Couto and

45 "The Merchants' Coffee House & Place of Exchange" occupied the two front rooms of the City Tavern. Historic Philadelphia, 323.
46 The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, Pa., 1911), XV, 219–220.
47 Carlos María Martínez Casa-Irujo (1765–1824) was a well-known Spanish diplomat of the early nineteenth century who represented his country in the United States for twelve years. In 1808 he was sent to Brazil and later completed his diplomatic career as ambassador to France.
Barros\textsuperscript{48}). He informed me that in Egypt the reputation of Carolina rice is worse than their own. . . . He also told me that in Canada they sell sugar taken from maple trees. This is extracted by merely making an incision in the trunk and then placing below it a square wooden box. When this is full of sap, they let it dry out and then have huge lumps of the stuff to sell. He told me that if it is refined it is almost like sugar, but he could not answer my questions as to how much profit there is in the business.

\textit{January 13, 1799} The United States Government has offered Portugal a site in the Federal City to build a residence for the Minister. The offer has been accepted and Her Majesty’s Minister has chosen the best available site. This has caused such a reaction of jealousy as to place in doubt the authority of the commissioners, who may have to revoke their gift.

\textit{January 14-15, 1799} Today I dined at the Portuguese Minister’s with Mr. Law,\textsuperscript{49} who is married to Gen. Washington’s niece, the Chevalier Colbert, who is a direct descendant of the great Colbert of the time of Louis XIV, and M. Lefebure, a well-known French émigré, etc. The first gentleman, in spite of being an enthusiast for America, told me that there is more vice here than anywhere and that in Pennsylvania the dishonesty of merchants is greater than in any other part of the United States. To a question from Mme. Freire\textsuperscript{50} he replied that the most beautiful parts of Virginia and indeed most of the United States are subject to intermittent fevers. Exports last year are estimated at 50 million dollars. A recent event here was the expulsion of Mr. Blount from the Senate for high treason.\textsuperscript{51} His fellow citizens of Tennessee have named him not only their senator in the legislature but have made him Speaker in Tennessee. A senator here has told me how the people of Tennessee are openly stealing the lands of the Indians and are committing many

\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{Décadas da Ásia} was a history of the Portuguese military and commercial exploits in India which was begun in 1552 by Joãa de Barros (1496?–1570) and continued in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries by Diogo de Couto (1542–1616).

\textsuperscript{49} Thomas Law married Elizabeth Parke Custis, daughter of John Parke Custis.

\textsuperscript{50} Wife of the Portuguese Minister.

\textsuperscript{51} William Blount (1744–1800) served as president of the convention to form the state of Tennessee in 1796. He represented the convention in the U. S. Senate until he was expelled in July, 1797, for his involvement in a conspiracy to give New Orleans to Great Britain and to encourage the Indians to aid the British in conquering the Spanish territory of Louisiana. Impeachment proceedings against him in 1799 were dismissed.
other insolences, being assisted greatly by this Blount, who will make a lamentable Speaker. Some Englishmen who served in the American war against England have gone to Canada and the British government has quite weakly granted them lands there; even many Irishmen, who came to the United States attracted by the great fame of this country, are now emigrating and establishing themselves in Canada. This information given me by MM. Colbert and Lefebure is worth reflection. The Bank of Pennsylvania was robbed last year and the two robbers received no punishment, one (who was the porter) because he died, and the other because he gave back all he stole except 2 thousand dollars which he had spent. No investigation was made of the dead child I mentioned on the 5th of this month. This evening the Minister advised me that when I speak with the Spanish Minister I should make myself out a republican or at least say nothing against the French. This cannot hurt me and is the way of pleasing him and perhaps getting what we want of him.52

January 16, 1799
Tonight I attended a ball held in honor of the President in the city theater. The pit was used for dancing and the stage for the supper tables. There were almost 200 ladies and as many men present. The first row of boxes served as seats, the pit having been raised to their level. The theater was divided with ribbons into 3 parts for the dancing of 3 country-dances. Everything was poorly arranged. The President was seated in a box where there were ladies (but not his own or any belonging to him) and he sat directly in front of them. When we went to supper he was led by the hand by the master of ceremonies as though he himself were a lady.55

52 The Bank of Pennsylvania was robbed of more than $150,000 on Sept. 1, 1798, by Thomas Cunningham and Isaac Davis. The former, a porter at the Bank, died of yellow fever after the robbery, while the latter, a carpenter, was apprehended and returned most of the money. Patrick Lyon, a locksmith, was falsely accused of the crime and imprisoned for three months.

53 Costa's awkward position arose from the fact that while Portugal was at war with France, Spain supported France against England, the traditional ally of Portugal. In 1800 Portuguese and Spanish relations rapidly deteriorated as it became apparent that Spain with the aid of the French contemplated an invasion of Portugal.

54 This ball was given at the New Theatre at the corner of Chestnut and Fourth sts.

55 Supper was served on the stage; Gen. William Macpherson was the master of ceremonies. Gazette of the United States, Jan. 17, 1799. The ball was given by the subscribers of the City Dancing Assembly. Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser, Jan 19, 1799. This social organization had previously honored Washington with a ball on Feb. 23, 1792. Joseph P. Sims, The Philadelphia Assemblies, 1748–1948 (Philadelphia, 1948), 5.
were no servants to serve the supper, nor were there any plates to be changed and the knives and forks were only of iron. These were neither changed nor washed. And yet harmony reigns everywhere; there was no discontent, no perturbation, not even outside with all the private servants and immense number of carriages that were there. I heard only one fracas in spite of the fact that there were absolutely no guards. But this peacefulness is the general character of the nation. The Portuguese Minister enjoyed first honors in everything after the President himself. The newspapers assure us that this is the greatest function that has been held here, which makes me think that in the United States there has never been a really brilliant social event.

January 17–18, 1799  In today’s newspaper appeared a plan for bringing water from the Schuylkill to the city. The engineer confesses that the nature of the soil leads to infiltration, which is apparent from the acrid taste of the well water. This confirms what I observed on January 6. For 5 days now the thermometer has been 4 degrees above freezing. The river is open again and some ships have left. When the snows melt more there will be no traveling and even the mails will be halted. Since there are no proper bridges the snow in this state keeps even the ferries from passing.

January 19–20, 1799  The United States have made so much money in bringing merchandise from Santo Domingo here for transshipment to Europe that an experienced merchant of Baltimore has estimated the profit at 40 thousand dollars a day. A merchant of New York has arranged his affairs in such a way that from the 28 of May to the 28 of Sept. he will have no payments to make or collect. By this clever arrangement all his business ceases in this period and he can stay in the country to escape the epidemic which in all probability will strike then and which the doctors think will be still worse than it was last year. Many people insist that it is still going on in Philadelphia and that in the last few days 8 people have died of the yellow fever. Today in the Catholic church the priest announced that this afternoon there would be a sermon in German. He made the announcement in German. This is done frequently.

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80 See advertisement of Robert Worrall, Claypoole’s American Daily Advertiser, Jan. 19, 1799. It was not until 1802 that Schuylkill water was piped into the city. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, History of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1884), I, 510.
January 21, 1799

This morning at 10 I filled a bottle with water from the pump to see how long it would take to become infected and I am going to establish the state of the atmosphere by the Fahrenheit thermometer. A fellow here tells me that one summer he left a cup of water uncovered in a cemetery of the city for one night. The next day a third of the water had evaporated and the rest had the consistency of soft jelly with a great deal of sediment of yellow color which was foul-smelling.

January 22, 1799

The Minister from here who is in Lisbon\(^{57}\) has written to the Secretary of State Mr. Pickering\(^{58}\) that during a journey to Spain he found the Spanish language much sweeter sounding than the Portuguese. This is an opinion of Mr. Smith’s which I can in no way understand.

January 24, 1799

Today I subscribed to the *Aurora* starting on the 11th of this month and continuing until the 11th of July. I paid 4 dollars. This is a daily newspaper which belonged to Benjamin Franklin Bache, a nephew of Franklin, which continues in the same house and uses the same press.\(^{59}\) Since he is now dead it is run by his wife with an Irish editor.\(^{60}\) The following newspaper article is worthy of notice. “The brothers Bickers inform the public that they are returned to their old professions of hatters, which they abandoned to defend the liberty of their country.” Note that they were both captains in the army.

January 25, 1799

Here they always use horses in all kinds of carts, wagons and plows. However a clever farmer assured me that oxen would be very much more suitable for these duties, first because their flesh and hides can be used and second because they eat less and their training is less expensive than that of horses and thirdly because a horse’s harness is very costly. To this I objected that the harness used here is the simplest imaginable. But the man replied with some calculations which showed that horses’ harness for use in agriculture really is dear in this country. Also he told me that white and red clover are indigenous here and that they are preferable to

\(^{57}\) William Loughton Smith (1758–1812), Minister to Portugal from 1797 to 1801.

\(^{58}\) Timothy Pickering (1745–1829) served as Secretary of State from 1795 to 1800.

\(^{59}\) Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769–1798), the anti-Federalist editor, was a grandson, not a nephew, of Benjamin Franklin’s.

\(^{60}\) After Bache’s death from yellow fever, William Duane became editor of the *Aurora* in November, 1798.
guinea grass. Today I attended an orchestral concert given for the benefit of a French musician, etc. Here there was an Indian who by the color of his skin, the look of his eyes, form of his body and muscles, the breadth of his shoulders, his gestures and accent could only have been a Brazilian Indian. He was dressed in English clothes and in his hat wore the insigne of a Federalist or volunteer which is now being used here. He paid great attention to what was being played or sung. At the end of an aria which a woman sang, when she did some staccato trills, he let out a great laugh, which seemed to me to be inspired less by pleasure than a sense of the ridiculous.

January 26, 1799 Today came the news that the Negroes in Santo Domingo have murdered all the whites on the island. In spite of this the French who are here, and who have thousands of relations there, gave a great public ball.

January 30, 1799 Today I went to a French billiard parlor which is run by subscriptions and is probably the only public billiard place in the city. The billiard man, who is also a hairdresser, is the nephew of a Frenchman who was a colonel of cavalry and who in Santo Domingo became so rich he lost track of all he had.

February 2, 1799 Today I dined with the Minister of Portugal and invited company, which included the greater part of the members of the opposition and the Minister of Spain and his family. The Portuguese Minister was very happy and as he told me he had had letters from Lisbon, I judged he had permission to go there.

February 3, 1799 Today I dined again at the Minister’s and he told me he had been given leave to go to Lisbon, which he would do in two months’ time.

February 5, 1799 In Philadelphia there are different fire insurance companies, which have various names and their own signs which they put on the fronts of houses they have insured. For example, there is the Friendship company, which has as its sign four clasped

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61 Costa later wrote on the subject of guinea grass: “In the United States they got the seed from Jamaica, where in turn it had been imported from the coast of Africa. It yields well in low lands, resists the great heat of summer, and requires little care. . . . The northern and even the middle states are not right for this plant because it cannot survive real cold.” Memoria, 356.

62 Many political partisans of the period joined volunteer military units and wore cockades or other insignia peculiar to their organizations.
hands. When a house catches fire people know to what company it belongs and notice is given at once. These companies have pumps in various places in the city and arrive promptly to fight the fire. The majority of the houses seem to be insured, for I rarely see one without a sign. Today there was a funeral of a Mason. The description is to be found in the Freemason’s monitor.

*February 6, 1799* Today I was in the house of the Minister of Spain, who spoke somewhat about the natural sciences, assuring me that agriculture in the northern states was much better than in the southern states. He showed me a kind of plow invented by Mr. Jefferson and also in a cabinet 193 species of woods from the Philippines. He told me that Mr. Jefferson has brought to Virginia in the neighborhood of 20 varieties of rice, etc.

*February 7, 1799* In the *Aurora* today I found the following words of a speech of Mr. Baldwin in the Congress. They are important because they agree with what I had heard about the dissatisfaction with the institution of the Cincinnatus: “There was no doubt . . . that it shewed itself before the disbanding of the American army, in the attempts which have been well known, which were made to prevent their disbanding, and to go and demand their pay with their arms in their hands.”

*February 8, 1799* Today the Minister of England came to pay me a visit and he gave me the news that the British have taken Malta. Today I sent to our Minister a case of seeds to be sent on the 1st to D. Rodrigo, and I accompanied it with a full report.

*February 9, 1799* Today there arrived some French from Santo Domingo whom Toussaint sent to the United States and from conversing with some of them I gathered that he will expel all who are suspected of sympathy for the French government.

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63 The fire mark of the four clasped hands was actually that of the Philadelphia Contributionship. Fire insurance companies like the Contributionship did not maintain fire-fighting equipment as suggested by the diarist. Such equipment was the property of the city’s numerous volunteer fire companies.

64 *Aurora*, Feb. 7, 1799. Abraham Baldwin (1754–1807) was a Congressman from Georgia.

65 The following day, Feb. 9, 1799, Lord Nelson introduced a provisional British government at Malta to replace the French rule established by Napoleon I in 1798.

66 Pierre Dominique Toussaint L’Ouverture (c. 1746–1803), a former Negro slave, became commander in chief of the armies of Santo Domingo in 1796. Declaring himself the “Buonoparte of St. Domingo,” he overthrew the French rule of Haiti.
February 9, 1799  The two Irishmen who were . . . in the courtyard of the Catholic church were arrested. See the account of this in tomorrow's *Aurora.*

February 11, 1799  Today I gave the Minister letters for Lisbon, but since the one I wrote to D. Rodrigo must accompany the box of seeds which I have turned over and this cannot yet be sent, the Minister is going to keep my letter.

February 12, 1799  I deposited today 400 dollars in the Bank of the United States, so as not to run the risk of keeping this money at the hotel. I signed my name in a book this way—Hippolyto Costa—and they gave me a little bank book in which only they can write.

February 13, 1799  At Peale's Museum there is a stuffed buffalo and many people say that they are much stronger and move faster than oxen. It appears that farmers have domesticated some of them. Their hind legs are considerably smaller than those in front and the horns are very small because though the buffalo (or the one I saw at the museum) is almost the size of an ox, his horns are only a palm in length. I believe that they can be exported to Portugal, although I have never seen any in Philadelphia.

February 14, 1799  The Minister of Portugal came to see me this morning. In the evening I went to a meeting of Anabaptists, commonly called Baptists. A man was reading aloud from the Scriptures and giving an explanation of what he read. This church has no altar and the meeting consisted only of preaching. The pulpit occupies the place of the altar in Catholic churches. I went into a law court where the 4 magistrates were wearing tunics of black silk which inspired considerable respect.

February 15, 1799  Today the French Minister Blanc arrived at our boardinghouse. He has come from Guadaloupe to negotiate with America. I visited Mr. Boudinot, the director of the Mint, a good

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On Sunday, Feb. 9, 1799, William Duane, Dr. James Reynolds, Robert Moore, and Samuel Cuming visited St. Mary’s Church to obtain signatures to a memorial for the repeal of the Alien Law. A scuffle took place and all four Irishmen were subsequently arrested “for Seditious Riot.” James Morton Smith, “The Aurora and the Alien and Sedition Laws,” The *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), LXXVII (1953), 124–125.

The Bank of the United States, incorporated in 1791, was housed after 1798 in a Greco-Roman temple, still standing on Third St. opposite Dock.

The diarist probably attended services at the First Baptist Church on Ledger Place, Second St. south of Arch. Scharf and Westcott, II, 1306.
agriculturist, who after some conversation invited me to return.\textsuperscript{70}

\textit{February 16, 1799} The Mint here has 3 windows in front. It is two stories high, 40 feet deep and has no iron bars or other means of security.\textsuperscript{71}

\textit{February 18, 1799} I dined with the Minister of Spain, where I found Mr. Jefferson, to whom I was presented by the Minister. A few minutes later the Portuguese envoy asked me if I wanted to be introduced and I told him I already had been.

\textit{February 20, 1799} Today I went to the medical class and began to hear the lectures of Mr. Rush on practical medicine.\textsuperscript{72} The classroom is 40 palms long and there are rows of benches, and a ridiculous little table. In short it looks like a kitchen. There were 125 students at the lecture, which was about the yellow fever. I went afterwards to the class in anatomy, where I saw a dissection of the eye very well performed.

\textit{February 21, 1799} Today I dined at the house of the Minister of Portugal. There were two ministers of state there, Pickering and Wolcott,\textsuperscript{73} and other members of the government.

\textit{February 23, 1799} I went to General Washington’s birthday ball, which was held in a kind of theater called the circus, which is a circular building with boxes all around it.\textsuperscript{74} It is here that they have exhibitions of acrobatics and performing horses, etc. In the center of this round house had been set up a stage supported by four columns upon which was the orchestra, while on each side in front of it there was a place for a country-dance. At the end there was a supper. The subscribers paid 6 dollars apiece to attend the ball; the rest paid 2 dol. admittance. The ball was attended by the President, etc., etc.

\textit{February 24, 1799} Today I dined with Mr. Hamilton, who lives on the other side of the Schuylkill.\textsuperscript{75} He is a learned man very

\textsuperscript{70} Elias Boudinot (1740-1821) served as director of the Mint from 1795 to 1805.

\textsuperscript{71} The U. S. Mint was located at Seventh St. above Filbert.

\textsuperscript{72} Benjamin Rush (1745-1813), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was perhaps the most famous physician of his time in the United States. Rush was lecturing at the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{73} Oliver Wolcott (1760-1833) succeeded Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury in 1795, resigning that office in 1800.

\textsuperscript{74} The “New Amphitheatre,” corner of Sixth and Chestnut sts., which housed Ricketts’ Circus, opened in 1795 and was destroyed by fire on Dec. 17, 1799. Jackson, II, 454-458.

\textsuperscript{75} William Hamilton (1745-1813) was a wealthy Philadelphian noted for his lavish house and gardens, The Woodlands, located on the west side of the Schuylkill River.
much taken with the subject of botany. In his hothouse he has many plants from China and Brazil, including 15 species of the sensitive plant and many other kinds of mimosa. He had one variety of sugar cane that comes from an island in the Pacific and which is already being cultivated in the West Indies. It gives twice as much sugar as the regular plants and requires no more labor. He promised me seeds, etc., etc. I will make a catalogue of all the plants he has. He also has tea trees, jambo trees, guavas, etc.

February 25, 1799 I went today to Mr. Boudinot's. . . . He told me that the Indians who came to make a treaty with the President (Washington) instead of writing down what they heard recorded it with beads and after consulting with their chief came with the same beads or rosaries to answer with exactitude each of the articles they had heard. Being questioned as to why they remained in lands now occupied by whites they answered that they or their ancestors had received these lands from the author of all nature when he made the world and they had divided them, but now the whites were expelling them from their lands, thus working against the will of the author of the universe. The gold which is coined in the United States comes from the coast of Africa, the silver from Spain, and the copper from England, so that the mines here produce no metal for use at the Mint. This information came from Mr. Boudinot, the director. In regard to how they could negotiate with Brazil, however, I could get no information.

February 26, 1799 Some silver mines which were discovered in Virginia came to nothing because the Frenchman who undertook to develop them asked more for his services than the mine would produce.

March 1, 1799 Today I saw a female buffalo which had no horns and the stupid proprietor could not tell me whether that was common in all the female buffaloes.

March 2, 1779 I visited the city hospital when Dr. Parke was making his visit. I went into 3 wards. One for men had 20 beds all full, another for women had 15. A third was for venereal diseases. I did not visit the rooms for the insane, which are in the cellars. (See

76 Pennsylvania Hospital.
77 Dr. Thomas Parke (1749-1835) was a leading physician at the Pennsylvania Hospital for nearly fifty years.
the entry for the 1st of April.) The rooms are well arranged and everything in the building is very clean. There is space above including a belvedere, which is newly erected. The students followed the doctor-professor who made some observations, but they made no investigations of their own. In short, the sheets were all freshly washed and the patients all looked well taken care of. Everything was well arranged in spite of being very small. On the first floor, which is almost at the ground level are the men, on the second floor are the women and the infirmary for venereal diseases is in a little building on the other side of the court. There, there are two small rooms, one for men and the other for women. 

March 3, 1799  The Secretary of State has told me that there should be 13 stars in the flags and coins and wherever the arms of the United States appear although at present there are more than 13 states and there can be still more. The 13 stars will be kept because the 13 original states included all the territory before the other states were founded. Against this, however, I find an act of Congress approved on Jan. 13, 1794, which orders 15 red and white stripes and 15 stars for the flag. Mr. Pickering then told me in support of his statement that he had sent to the director of the Mint an order to do as he had said. Today I dined at the English Minister's house, where there was a Mr. Harper, a member of Congress. The Minister asked me what I thought in the case of a declaration of war with France and if the latter were to send 100 thousand men across Spain for the invasion of Portugal, "What do you think will become of Portugal?" I answered him with that blend of dignity and annoyance which such a question deserves.

78 The building of the Pennsylvania Hospital on Pine St. between Seventh and Eighth sts. was begun in 1755. By 1757, the east wing had been completed, and years later a similar west wing, finished in 1796, was added. A center house connecting the two wings was begun at this time, but not brought to conclusion until 1805. The "belvedere . . . newly erected," to which Costa referred in 1799, was the result of a compromise. The anatomical theater was located in the middle of the third floor of the center house beneath a skylight, mentioned in the minutes in March, 1798, which could be adapted to any "finish which might be thought proper." Because of shrinking funds the Managers decided shortly thereafter to omit the cupola originally intended and ordered "the Skylight finished with a light railing." The resulting platform is Costa's belvedere.

79 Robert Goodloe Harper (1765–1825) served as a Congressman from South Carolina from 1795 until 1801. After his move to Maryland, he represented that state as a Senator from 1816 to 1821.
March 5, 1799  I went this evening to a ball at the British Minister's. There I learned that he talks to no one during the week, except when he receives company every Tuesday night.

March 6, 1799  I went to Mr. Hamilton's hothouse, where he awaited me with a catalogue of questions and then wrote down the answers as I gave them to him. . . .

March 9, 1799  I paid a visit to Mr. F. Smyth, who was formerly an English magistrate and who lives on his estate with a small pension from England. I didn't find him there, but his wife, who knew about me, received me politely. She told me that she was 55 years old and had belonged to the Anglican Church but that for over 20 years she had not been to church and had no religion. This admission made with complete tranquility is not unusual here. A surgeon who lives at my boardinghouse told me, when I asked him what was his religion, "I got none." It is the custom in many families not to give any religious instruction to the children. Today I went to the Jews' synagogue. It was 10 o'clock and the religious service was over. The room is square with benches all around it. On one of the walls there was a kind of chest which was open so that I could see what looked like some silver lamps inside. It was lined inside with white silk and had red curtains fringed in gold. The outside of this chest had little or no decoration. At the top there was a coat of arms of gilded and painted wood above which was a sort of crown. The shield was blue with gold letters in Hebrew. Further on there was a small lamp. In the middle of the room I saw a high table covered with a red cloth and beside it chairs facing the chest. The floor space occupied by the table, which was higher than the rest of the room, was surrounded by a wooden railing, as was also the area around the chest. Beneath this were two steps covered with carpet. The only man I found here seemed to be one of their priests because he went up and opened the chest looking for something and then shut it again. He invited me to come back on Saturday at 9 o'clock in the morning, or on Friday at night.

March 15, 1799  Today I went to the circus, or the place where they do tricks with horses and pantomimes. One of the horses which

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80 Frederick Smyth (1732-1815), the last royal chief justice of New Jersey, lived in Philadelphia on a pension of £400 from the English Crown. Lorenzo Sabine, Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution (Boston, 1864), II, 319-320.

81 On Cherry St. above Third.
I saw best was a white one, which is said to have been President Washington’s campaign horse in the late war. He was sold to these comedians for them to do their tricks with.82

March 17, 1799 Today in the Catholic church the palms were blessed. These were in reality myrtle and laurel. There was no procession and the palms were divided up among the people immediately after the Mass. They were avidly sought by all. Although the Catholics are tolerated here along with all the other denominations, the most important of which is the Presbyterian, they are looked down upon and called superstitious. When Chief Justice McKean83 was proposed for governor, one of the things his enemies told the people was that he was a Roman Catholic, listing this among his vices. I went also to a Methodist church, where the pulpit was draped in black.

March 22, 1799 Today I visited a church of German Protestants84 where there was a very high pulpit above a table covered with a white cloth on which were three great silver containers of wine and a silver soup tureen with Communion wafers in it. The place where this table was placed was surrounded by a wooden railing against which were pressed a great many men. Inside were two ministers dressed in black, one of whom took from the soup tureen or silver urn a large number of the wafers and put them on a plate before distributing them to the men around the railing. At the same time the other minister was pouring wine from one of the containers into a cup which he passed around for each of the men to take a swallow or two. These men then went away and their places were taken by women, who after taking Communion in the two forms in turn retired only to be succeeded by more until all had come to the railing. All the women who took Communion were dressed either entirely in black or in white and this was impressive because they came in groups of black or white to the table. All these women, who took Communion standing, were crying or seemed to be crying and were constantly putting handkerchiefs to their eyes. In general they wore

82 Ricketts’ Circus, referred to in Note 74, was run by a Scottish equestrian, John Bill Ricketts.
83 Thomas McKean (1734–1817), a signer of the Declaration of Independence, served as chief justice of Pennsylvania from 1777 to 1799, and as governor from 1799 to 1808.
84 The diarist could refer either to the Zion Lutheran Church at Fourth and Cherry, or to St. Michael’s Lutheran Church.
a cloth on their heads and those who had hats or other headdresses took them off, leaving only the white cloth. As it was Good Friday I went to the Catholic church to witness the ceremonies of the day.

March 25, 1799  Today I was practicing fencing in my boardinghouse when I received a message from a minister of a Lutheran church asking me not to fence any more because it was Easter Monday. This is American toleration. A minister who knows nothing about my religious affiliations tries to make me observe some religious holiday of his when it isn’t Sunday and expects me to keep this day so rigorously that I cannot practice fencing, which is in no way forbidden by the Catholic Church. But I have already noticed that intolerance is so great here that when they are in church they block the streets with iron chains so that no carriages or horses can pass, and thus the public use of the streets is impeded by the exercise of religion.85

March 26, 1799  Today I saw in Mr. Hamilton’s hothouse two more varieties of mimosa, which I sketched.

March 30, 1799  Today I dined with Mr. Hamilton, who sent me a precious collection of seeds. There I saw a Jew who has been a member of the grand jury and is now named naval agent for Santo Domingo. At night I visited Mr. Gibson, where I learned that they call the least severe Quakers “gay Quakers” and the strictest ones “hickory Quakers.”

April 1, 1799  Today I saw the Prison, Hospital and Almsghouse or Bettering House.86 This prison takes up half a block and faces Sixth St. on one side and an alley between Walnut and Spruce streets on the other.87 Another side looks out on the yard of the African

85 On Apr. 4, 1798, the state legislature passed an act declaring that “religious societies had a right to worship peaceably, and that having such rights it was proper that they should be protected in them.” Churches were given the right to chain off the streets where they were located during divine services. Scharf and Westcott, I, 628.

86 The Almshouse or Bettering House stood on Pine St. between Tenth and Eleventh on a large lot extending back to Spruce St. In 1803, by an act of Assembly, it was decided that the Managers of the Almshouse should be elected annually, thus correcting the policy of too-brief terms of office criticized by Costa. Scharf and Westcott, II, 1450–1452.

87 The Walnut Street Prison was erected at the southeast corner of Walnut and Sixth sts. between 1773 and 1775 by the well-known Philadelphia architect Robert Smith (c. 1722–1777), who designed it along lines he had previously used for Nassau Hall, which he built at Princeton in 1754–1756. Robert C. Smith, “John Notman’s Nassau Hall,” The Princeton University Library Chronicle, XIV (1953), 109–134.
church or Negro temple and a fourth onto Spruce St. This side contains the entrance with a house beside it. The Sixth St. side is part building and part wall, while the alley side has a house and a stone wall surrounding the prison yard, about which I shall speak later. In this prison there are three parts: one for women, one where men are put together, and the solitary cellars, which correspond to our secret cells. The women’s section is divided into two separate dormitories—one for women who have committed all kinds of crimes and have been sentenced to prison, the other for prostitutes. These are turbulent and are shut up without process of law for a certain time, in the hope that they will be reformed, but this period is never longer than a month. The only work these women do in their part of the yard, which is separated from the men, is washing. They have their own kitchen. The men’s section, which is larger, has 4 dormitories with large cells which hold many prisoners. These cells have a door opening on a corridor and one or two windows, which on the street side are so closely barred that the prisoners cannot see who is passing in the street or be seen by those below. In each one of these cells there are a number of beds, one for each prisoner, and the bedclothes consist of a mattress, two sheets, a pillow and a cover. In the center of the cell there is a table for the night school of which I shall soon speak. The solitary cells have the same arrangement but are much smaller, since there is only one occupant. Furthermore, in one dormitory there are two large cells which serve as infirmaries for the prisoners and which are changed about every three or six months so that the walls can be scraped and whitewashed freshly. There is also a small and simple pharmacy which is little used, as I shall show. The corridors on which the cells open serve as workshops for the men who continue in an orderly fashion to pursue their regular crafts as though they were still at home. Thus there are shoemakers, tailors, etc. In the prison yard are the forges for the blacksmiths, and the looms, while in the middle of the yard the masons labor. Here I found 6 looms with men working, some shoemakers, 20 who were making the heads for nails and 4 who were cutting the nails. There were 140 workmen. In the yard there is also a pool where the prisoners bathe in warm weather. As soon as a prisoner enters he is given an account where what he earns is noted and what he spends as

88 The African Church was located on south Fifth St. between Walnut and Spruce.
well. He is asked what kind of work he does and is given an opportunity to pursue it because they make almost everything here. And if he knows no trade or was employed as the helper of a smith or mason they teach him some kind of work. Every morning early each prisoner sweeps his room, makes his bed, arranges his clothing and waits for the work bell to ring. This occurs as soon as it is light enough to work. The doors are thrown open and the prisoners leave their cells to take up their work until midday. Since conversation is forbidden while work is going on, the greatest silence and order imaginable prevail. It is interesting to note that the women are permitted to talk because, as the director told me, it was found impossible to keep them from doing so. Those prisoners who were formerly condemned to solitary confinement are employed in ruder tasks such as making nail heads, and the noise of their hammers is such that although they are quite near they cannot hear each other. (The jailer can inflict the penalty of solitary confinement upon a prisoner, but he must at once inform the warden of what he has done.) At noon the dinner bell rings and all the prisoners leave their work and go and sit at tables. There are 3 refectories which have long narrow tables with benches at the side, where the prisoners are assigned their regular places. Each table is covered with a clean cloth and each prisoner has a small china plate and soup bowl with knife, fork and spoon of iron. At intervals along the table there is a big plate filled with roast beef, potatoes and rice soup and bread enough for every prisoner. They enter the refectory in twos and go directly to their places where they find their soup plate already filled. One of the prisoners who works in the dining room ascertains that each is in front of his own place and then gives the signal to sit down. They sit and eat their rice soup and this plate is immediately removed, leaving a clean one beneath it. Each one then helps himself to a piece of meat, 2 or 3 potatoes and a quarter of a loaf of bread from the big plates. Thus they continue eating without anyone saying a word. When all is finished the prisoner in charge of the room makes a sign and they all march back two by two to their work. In one of the refectories were the Negroes and since at this table there were also white men, the latter were all at one end of the table and the blacks at the other. All however preserved the same order and decency. Note that this difference between black and white is maintained by
the Quakers who are the advocates of liberty and equality for Negroes. In the women's dining room two prisoners serve the meals, one white, the other Negro. Here there is the same order as with the men, although it is a rule that the women never eat meat. The rest of their food is the same as the men's. The reason for this difference is that they perform no fatiguing labors like the men and take no exercise. Hence they have no need for a stimulating diet, for strong foods like meat would so arouse their natures that it would be impossible to keep quiet and order among them. For this very reason the diet of the prisoners is carefully controlled, since the experience of the place has taught that food has a direct influence on the human system. They allow 50 lbs. of meat at dinner for 300 persons, along with the potatoes, rice and bread. For breakfast they have porridge with molasses. At sunset the bell to stop work is rung. The prisoners go to their cells, the lamps are lighted and every room becomes a schoolroom for the teaching of reading. Those who best know how instruct the others. After this they go to supper, which consists of cereal with 7 pints of molasses for all. After supper lest the prisoners be tempted to converse in their cells one of them is obliged to read aloud to the others from books of devotion and morality. When he grows tired another takes his place. At last when all have fallen asleep, the reader goes to bed. The bedclothes are always washed and the mattresses aired twice a week. Winter covers are washed and put aside during the summer to be used again the next year. The expense of each prisoner per day is 5½ cents or 44 reis but he is charged at the rate of 15 cents or 120 reis, so as to take care of the further expense of clothing (which is made from cloth woven in the prison) and for those who need them, the doctor, pharmacy, etc. A half cord of wood per month is sufficient to heat the women's quarters. All the prison servants are inmates, such as barbers, cooks, waiters, administrative helpers, etc. To these posts are appointed those with the best behavior and those who hope to be paroled by the governor of the state on account of their conduct, since he can do this (the governor can even pardon a death sentence, but he never does it except when the petition is signed by the relatives and friends of the condemned) if the prison authorities report that their charges have been reformed (and have saved up some money for use after being released from prison). Thus good conduct is a means of obtaining the
best positions in the prison and even pardons. Since none of the prisoners are kept in irons, all are quiet and peaceful so that for many years the jailer at the gate was a woman. And now to prove that this place serves to correct the habits of the inmates by means of diet, constant work, the imposition of order and other arrangements I shall cite one or two facts. A mulatto arrested for serious crimes was pardoned after many years of imprisonment. This man realized that his pardon was due to his reformed character, thanks to the good influence of the prison, and so he offered to continue to live there and said he wanted to perform some useful service. His offer was accepted and today he is the prison pharmacist. A brother of General Muhlenberg, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who had lived in Paris in the greatest luxury, fell upon evil days and to support himself had recourse to forgery. For this crime he was sentenced to many years in prison. I saw this man, who had lived in so much grandeur, threading a loom and dressed in a suit of coarse woolen cloth made in the prison. He seemed very happy with a young sailor friend he had found and showed it, like all the other prisoners, in his smiling face. They do not ask alms of the people who visit the prison and very decently they reply to questions asked them. All this makes the place seem more like a well-run factory than a prison. As I was leaving a lens fell from my pocket and a prisoner brought it to me, saying that he had found it in the yard. I wanted to give him some money but he refused, because they are forbidden to accept it. It is also forbidden to visit the prisoners without special permission because it is felt that these men, during the time they are incarcerated, are dead to the world outside. On Sundays they all wash and clean themselves and come together at 8 o’clock, when there is almost always a minister of some religion to preach to them and if there is not then one of their number reads some chapters from the Scriptures or some devotional work. This is over at 11 and they go to the prison yard to walk until noon, this being the only period of complete relaxation and repose in the whole week. Naturally they have no pleasures, for convicted men do not deserve them, but on the other hand they do not suffer misery. They always acquire some measure of virtue, so that the Philadelphia prison is a true house of correction.

89 It was Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg (1750-1801) who was speaker of the House of Representatives, not his brother Gen. John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (1740-1807).
and its existence for so many years a proof of the possibilities of improvement of those infamous houses of corruption and schools of vice which bear the name of prisons in Europe. (Out of 100 prisoners who leave prison either pardoned or having served their sentences not even as many as two return to their evil ways. Compare this with Europe!) In Philadelphia the death penalty is almost always commuted to life imprisonment. If a prisoner will not work he is deprived of some of his food, placed in a solitary cell and exhorted. That is all the punishment he can receive. There is a society for alleviating the miseries of the public prisons and to do justice to the Quakers I must confess that it is they who founded it. . . .

The Bettering House, of which I have already spoken, is very badly administered, although the institution itself is excellent. It is maintained by a tax or tribute. In it are placed the aged and helpless poor people of the city. But since every year or every 6 months they change their managers it cannot be well administered. These cannot understand the business of the house in 6 months nor acquire a real affection for it. Thus the land around it, which should serve to give employment to the poor who can work, has become a pleasure garden with fancy decorations which in no way belong there. Meanwhile the inmates are badly clothed and dirty, the women being especially dishevelled and there is an unbearably evil smell about the whole establishment.

April 10, 1799 I have been to Gray’s Ferry to a place of recreation on the banks of the Schuylkill. It has the most picturesque location in the world, with the view of the bridge, the woods, the house itself, etc., etc. In the summer everyone in the city goes

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90 The Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons, founded in 1787 by a group of Quaker humanitarians, had made the Walnut Street Prison a model institution, which was widely visited and described during the last years of the eighteenth century. Thorsten Sellin, “Philadelphia Prisons of the Eighteenth Century,” Historic Philadelphia, 326-330.

91 The inn and garden at Gray’s Ferry was the most famous of those open-air places of entertainment which flourished in Philadelphia at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. On a rocky site dominating the lower east bank of the Schuylkill stone steps had been cut leading to a well planned and planted garden, which attracted large numbers of people. At the time that Costa visited Gray’s Ferry there were “embowered summer-houses, temples, groves, alcoves,” where at night illuminations, concerts, and fireworks were offered as entertainment. The fine trees of the garden were marked with brass plates giving their botanical names. In the cold winters of the last years of the eighteenth century the inn became a popular rendezvous for skating parties. “Gray’s Ferry, Inn and Garden,” Atkinson’s Casket (1829), 73–74.
out there to sup or dine or have a picnic meal. It costs nothing to enter, but you pay for what you eat and drink. It is 3 miles distant from the city. I have also been to another similar establishment called Harrowgate 62 miles away in the direction of Trenton. The location is not so fine as that of Gray’s Ferry, but here the garden is larger and more tidy. I am told that the two places are very much frequented in the summer months.

April 11, 1799  Today I was at Mr. Hamilton’s and there I talked with Mr. Muhlenberg, a German who lives in Lancaster. He is the best botanist in the United States and a pastor in that area, but he was so crude and gross in his manners that I found him unbearable. 63 I feel so weak and tired that I can write no more.

April 12, 1799  Today there departed for Bremen General Player and his adjutant Bechet, two Frenchmen whom I have come to know in Philadelphia. I saw at Peale’s Museum the wooden bridge with a single arch and I bought the booklet published by him with its description. 64 I also saw two more models, one for lifting weights and the other a sort of cart for taking manure from the barnyard to the fields.

April 13, 1799  The Quakers have their annual meeting on Monday the 15th of April on Pine Street 65 where they assemble the elders of all the individual meetings to report on their business and the money for the expenses of the Society. The description of a meeting is so firmly impressed on my mind that I have no need to write it down to remember it.

The Minister of Spain today told the Minister of Portugal that he could not give me a passport for Havana because since promising to do it he had been ordered by his government to give them only to Spaniards. 66

62 Harrowgate, near Frankford, was noted for its mineral spring of “medicinal waters.” Shower baths and a swimming pool distinguished this establishment. PMHB, XLVII (1923), 214–216.

63 Gotthilf Henry Ernest Muhlenberg (1753–1815), a brother of the two Muhlenberg’s mentioned in Note 89, was a prominent Lutheran clergyman and botanist.

64 Charles Willson Peale published in 1797 An Essay on Building Wooden Bridges.

65 The Pine Street Meeting was located between Second and Front sts. and was first used in 1753.

66 In amplification of this statement Costa wrote in 1801: “The first step I took was to ask our Resident Minister, Cypriano Ribeiro Freire, if he would inquire of the Spanish Minister in Philadelphia, with whom he was on friendly terms, whether it would be possible to obtain
April 19, 1799

I left Philadelphia at 8 o’clock in the morning. I had heard that those who came to the stage first got the best places. I took a place yesterday, but today as I was the last to get in I was forced to take the worst place, which is the seat beside the coachman who is called the “Driver.”

from him a passport to visit the colonies of Spain around the Gulf of Mexico. Senhor Freire advised me that I should pass as a naturalist who desired to see the physical appearance of these countries. The Minister of Spain not only told him he would give me the passport but promised letters of recommendation to the governors of all the cities I intended visiting. However, when the time came for my departure he refused to grant the passport and informed our Minister, who was always the one who discussed this matter with him, that he could not even recommend to the governor of Havana that he let me go to Mexico. He merely gave me two letters of introduction to the governors of Havana and New Orleans. This refusal and the terms of the two letters were so suspicious that I tried to find out through a third person what the Minister thought about me and I found that he supposed I was some kind of political spy.” Memoria, 362.