Since the publication in this Magazine, in July, 1949, of detailed information on William Birch's Philadelphia Views, the circle of devotees of the book and its plates has steadily grown. Its rank as the most important eighteenth-century series of American views has been increasingly recognized. Now, the recent discovery of new material has made it clear that four, and not three, editions of the Views were published in Birch's lifetime, and that every known William Birch engraving of a Philadelphia scene was, in fact, a part of the published volume as comprised by these editions.

It has always seemed incongruous that with the popularity of the venture proved by 1804 by nearly three hundred listed subscribers, Birch did not publish a new edition of his views in 1808–1809. His finances were then at a low ebb, and he was soliciting sales for his Country Seats of the United States. As he said, he was reduced to considering returning to England. It would have been but natural, once the decision was reached to stand his ground here with a new publishing venture, to seek additional income by publishing another issue of the accepted favorites.

Indications pointing to an 1809 edition were not solid enough to permit the statement of any positive conclusion. Birch's original subscription book told, without ascribing a date, of a "Second Edition with Supplement containing Fourteen Plates," which found twelve listed buyers. The true nature of this item was unknown, although its title suggested that presumably it consisted of the full


3 To be found at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP).
Second (1804) Edition of twenty views plus the fourteen discarded in 1804 from the First Edition of 1800. This view has now been proved incorrect.

It was also known that in January, 1809, Birch entered in the copyright docket of the local court not only his Country Seats volume, but also the elusive Second Edition of the Views of Philadelphia “with Supplement.” It was assumed that he had then discovered for the first time the availability of copyright registration and had used it for a form of the Second Edition.

Again, the Second Edition had promised that “The work will be continued in Supplements, as the City shall increase in public Buildings, and other ornamental elegancies.” This had been dismissed as an unfulfilled promise along with Birch’s accompanying statement, not as yet proved correct, that “The City of New York is now in hand as a companion volume to the Philadelphia.”

The meaning of these confusing facts and promises has now become clear. Birch’s extremity did lead him to the issuance in 1809 of a new and Third Edition of the Philadelphia series, even though there was little time left from the Country Seats project to produce it. The new volume did not contain a full Second Edition set of twenty views plus the fourteen discarded ones, but only eleven scenes from the Second Edition, plus the map and a supplement of two new plates, or a total of fourteen. Thus, the fourteen plates did not form the supplement itself, as had been earlier surmised from the subscription book, but rather the entire new, Third Edition.

There is ample evidence that this was indeed a new edition of the book. Birch made still further changes in the engraved title page, introduced a wholly new letterpress page describing his plan in offering the volume, cut down the number of the existing plates, listed the twelve now republished, and printed a separate title page for the “Supplement” of two views now published for the first time.

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4 See “Birch’s Views,” 285.
6 “Birch’s Views,” 280 (Note 21).
7 Ibid., 286.
8 Apparently, because Birch wanted to concentrate on the “Supplement” feature by which the owner would add prints to his volume, he did not revise the wording to show a “third” edition, but simply engraved the further legend “Continued by a Supplement” in place of the words he now erased from the copper which stated the number of plates in the volume.
The two-paragraph introduction to the new volume reveals much of Birch's thinking on the general subject of views of Philadelphia—a subject even then of proved collector interest. Because of "the astonishing progress in improvement made in this City since this work was commenced in the year 1800, although at that period justly considered a prodigy of early maturity," and because of "the present animated zeal for building, the ardour for public edifices, the new and elegant style of architecture," he said, it had become proper to regard his Views "as the basis for a more extensive scale, rather than a finished work in itself." "When it is considered that Philadelphia is one of the most prominent Cities of a recently established nation—placed upon a continent so vast, flourishing under a free government, its future advancement must be viewed as an object of interest and worthy of attention." For these reasons, Birch said, he "has taken from the first and second editions of his work, all the plates of minor importance in order that it may comprize only the most beautiful and interesting subjects, and that the supplement may be continued as the City shall progress in elegance."

Next, Birch proposed following a style of extra-illustration then popular in London. "For instance, Pennants' London has been frequently embellished in this way. Dr. Combs, a well known Physician at London, and various others, have as many as thirty large port folio volumes of prints and drawings interbound with this work of Pennants' London. If a volume of blank pages with guards was prepared of the size of this volume, as an appendix to the Philadelphia, for the reception of whatever subject might occur in this early state of the City, either curious or useful, or of what might peculiarly appertain to the City in other publications, historical or otherwise, . . . would it not prove most useful and entertaining, and if selected with taste and judgment, be valuable as affording perhaps, subject for future history."

Birch actually provided in the volume a set of the "guards" to which he referred, looking toward the formulation of individualistic books. The separate title page for the Supplement provided ample blank space for listing additional prints, and for the guidance of the collector stated, "The above blanks are left open for the reception of new subjects" which "can be fixed on the gards following this Supplement. . . ." Thus, each copy of the Third Edition would
PHILADELPHIA.

THE astonishing progress in improvement made in this City since this work was commenced in the year 1800, although at that period justly considered a prodigy of early maturity; the present animated zeal for building, the ardour for public edifices, the new and elegant style of architecture, with the rapid increase of the City at large, render it necessary to renew the plan on which this work was originally formed. When it is considered that Philadelphia is one of the most prominent Cities of a recently established nation—placed upon a continent so vast, flourishing under a free government, its future advancement must be viewed as an object of interest and worthy of attention. It will therefore be proper to consider this as the basis for a more extensive scale, rather than a finished work in itself. For these reasons, and that it might not be rendered unnecessarily voluminous with the ordinary course of Buildings, every where to be met with, the proprietor has taken from the first and second editions of his work, all the plates of minor importance in order that it may comprise only the most beautiful and interesting subjects, and that the supplement may be continued as the City shall progress in elegance.

There is a practice now in London with many of the Amateurs, of collecting prints and drawings relative to the subject of particular works, by way of embellishments; for instance, Pennant's London has been frequently embellished in this way. Dr. Combe, a well known Physician at London, and various others, have as many as thirty large port folio volumes of prints and drawings interwoven with this work of Pennant's London. If a volume of blank pages with guards was prepared of the size of this volume, as an appendix to the Philadelphia, for the reception of whatever subject might occur in this early state of the City, either curious or useful, or of what might peculiarly appertain to the City in other publications, historical or otherwise, as should suit the genius or turn of mind of the Collector or the purpose of his collecting; together with notes or occurrences as time may produce matter—would it not prove most useful and entertaining, and if selected with taste and judgment, be valuable as affording perhaps, subject for future history. The present proprietor of this work will perhaps have little more to do for it than to supply it with a few more subjects for the supplement. But he flatters himself that from its present plan, the subjects being well chosen, and adopted with taste and correctness, it will never be objected to by any artist of consequence, as a proper work to be continued, as the city shall increase.

CONTENTS.

A plan of the City taken in 1800. Bank of the United State.
A general view of the City. Bank of Pennsylvania.
Arch-street Ferry. The Theatre.
Second-street with Christ Church. The Water Works.
State House and Garden. The Schuylkill Bridge.
First Presbyterian Church. The Market House.

With the Supplement.

INTRODUCTION TO THIRD EDITION
WILLIAM BIRCH'S Philadelphia Views

Courtesy of Martin P. Snyder
Second Street North from Market Street, with Christ Church
commence with the fourteen engravings Birch provided, but would proceed beyond that point “as should suit the genius or turn of mind of the Collector or the purpose of his collecting.”

The “proprietor” made no promises for his own part in the supplying of more views for such a book. He would “perhaps have little more to do for it than to supply it with a few more subjects for the supplement.” This prediction remained true until 1827. He failed to execute any further plates until 1823 and in that year published one, the New Theatre. Four years later, however, he produced a Fourth, hitherto called third, Edition of the Philadelphia Views. This appeared only a few years before his death.

Comparison of the Second Edition of 1804, with twenty plates, excluding the title page and map, and the Third Edition of 1809, with eleven of the same twenty plates, readily shows the nine subjects Birch weeded out as being “of minor importance.” Hardly viewable in that light today, they included the New Lutheran Church, the Library Company of Philadelphia building recently reconstructed, and the Pennsylvania Hospital—all items which had been a part of the project from the First Edition—plus the Jail, on the site now occupied by the Penn Mutual Life Insurance building, and the Chestnut Street front of the Independence Hall complex, both from among the views newly created for the Second Edition of 1804 and the latter one of the most successful of those scenes.

In addition to reflecting what was, perhaps, the current architectural taste of 1809, the deletions demonstrate Birch’s increasing predilection for the delineation of buildings as opposed to the street life so prominent in the First Edition. He had already in the Second Edition discarded many plates replete with figures showing the activities and occupations of the streets. Now, he also removed two interesting scenes in High Street and one of the populace in the State House Garden. This increasing tendency can only be regretted as depriving the remaining editions of considerable value and appeal.

Further cause for regret arises when one considers the quality of the two scenes Birch chose, in preference to any of the omitted views, to begin the Supplement. The first of these is the Philadelphia Bank which stood at Fourth and Chestnut streets. This has always been known to be a William Birch plate, although unsigned. The quality of the copper engraving is probably equal to that of the earlier
Philadelphia views, but both the concept and the size are inferior. In containing only two small separated figures, "The Philadelphia Bank" lacks the vitality in the streets which doubled the interest of the earlier plates.\(^9\) The size departs from the standard previously selected and still used for eleven of the published scenes.

The new plate gains some importance because only one other rendering of this building is known. The bank was architecturally "an important example of the first phase of the Gothic Revival in America"\(^10\) and businesswise was the home of the fourth bank to be organized in Philadelphia. Yet it merited better treatment from Birch. Particularly does the result seem pedestrian because the other view of this structure, lithographed from William Mason’s drawing "Horizontorium," made in 1832 shortly before the building was removed, is amazing for the originality of its approach. It is unique among prints of the period.\(^11\)

Even with these faults, Birch’s "The Philadelphia Bank" ranks well in comparison with his rendering of the new "Masonic Hall" on Chestnut Street, the second of the Supplement plates. Essentially, this is but a full-face architectural rendering of the façade of the building.\(^12\) It is devoid of life and the least attractive Philadelphia view Birch is known to have prepared. The far larger Kneass engraving of this hall\(^13\) is much superior, was published only four years later, and successfully blends the architecture with the flavor of city life in a dignified way. It is this, or the Chillas copy of it drawn on stone in the 1850’s,\(^14\) rather than Birch’s plate, which forms the

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\(^9\) However, Fourth and Chestnut Sts. was then a location somewhat removed from the business center of Philadelphia.


\(^11\) "Horizontorium." From the original drawing by William Mason, in the possession of Charles N. Bancker, Esq., Philadelphia. Published by R. H. Hobson, 147 Chestnut St. Entered according to Act of Congress, 1832, by R. H. Hobson in the District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Drawn on stone by J. J. Barker. Lithograph, 14\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 20\(\frac{3}{4}\)".

\(^12\) Birch may have been hastening to complete the edition and may simply have copied an architectural drawing before the building was completed or opened for use.

\(^13\) "Masonic Hall, Philadelphia." William Strickland, architect; engraved by William Kneass, 1813. Engraving, 18\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 17\(\frac{3}{4}\)".

companion piece for the well-known "Conflagration of the Masonic Hall," the figures for which were drawn by Krimmel.

The two Supplement views were of reduced size, approximately $7\frac{3}{4}"$ by $5\frac{3}{4}"$, in contrast to the larger earlier plates. It may be concluded that this differentiation was consciously planned so as to embolden the collector to insert on the "guard" pages other prints, the sizes of which would vary among themselves.

Until the discovery of the Third Edition, Birch's "Masonic Hall" was not known to have been included in his Philadelphia series. This position must now be accorded it. But Birch recognized its inferiority by failing to include it in his Fourth Edition, 1827–1828. The plate was then still available, for it was later used by Desilver and MacAllister for their restrikes.

Along with the alteration of the engraved title page to mention the Supplement, the completely different printed page of introduction, and the separate Supplement title sheet, the Third Edition was completed by the list of subscribers printed for the Second Edition, unchanged. Of the twelve subscribers recorded for the new edition in Birch's subscription book, seven were already listed because they had purchased earlier editions. The five who now subscribed for the first time were hardly a group sufficient to cause a new printing of the list.

It is very doubtful that the eleven pictures and map now used, which had formed a part of the Second Edition, were changed in themselves. No states of the plates have appeared differing from those already known and described.

The known copy of the Third Edition lacks the covers, the map, and the pictures. It uses thin, unwatermarked paper. It is possible that printed cover pages were issued for the new volume, which could then be bound in boards as desired. The price of the edition is known, and was comparable to that of the two earlier ones: one dollar per plate "plain" (uncolored), and fifty cents additional per engraving.


16 The statement in "Birch's Views," 287 (Note 31), must be revised, and similarly those on pages 286 and 287 to the effect that "The Philadelphia Bank" was "not a part of any plan for a new edition" and "was not at the time considered a part of the Philadelphia series."
for hand coloring, i.e., fourteen or twenty-one dollars for the volume complete.  

Another interesting Birch's *Views* sidelight, having to do with the First Edition, has appeared. This is a printed flyer, or advertisement, released before the volume appeared. The pictures to be published are listed and those already available are identified. Judging from the dates engraved on these latter plates, this "Memento for the 18th Century," as it was titled, was released at about the end of 1799. Its language makes it clear that Birch consciously planned from the start to publish prints "richly embellished with figures" and to release his "handsome companions" in "an elegant Volume, to show the progress of the City in its first Century."

The flyer is also important because it states explicitly that "The Prints may be had separately, as the subjects are well calculated for framing." Present-day estimates of the number of copies of the individual pictures are thus pushed even higher.

The advertisement announced the price of the plates as $1.11 each in black and white, and $1.61 each hand colored; the whole book could be subscribed for in 1799 at $27 in black and white, or $40.50 colored. This was a dollar less than its later First Edition sale price.

By specifying Richard Folwell, No. 33 Carter's Alley, as the printer, the flyer clarifies his participation in the venture from the beginning and establishes him as printer of the First Edition.

Lastly, the handbill recites that Birch's work was already on display "at principal booksellers" in New York and Baltimore, as well as Philadelphia. This being a year or more before publication of the First Edition, an indication is provided of the nationwide scope and importance of the undertaking even at such an early time. Birch must have deposited samples of the prints in these other cities.

Nothing will ever detract from the striking originality of the views themselves. But study of Philadelphia maps of the years before 1800 has shown that one map, published two years after Birch came to

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17 The prices appear in Birch's Subscription Book, HSP.
18 This handbill is in the Americana collection of Roger Butterfield, to whom the author acknowledges his indebtedness. The collection has now been placed in the New York State Historical Association Museum, Cooperstown, N. Y.
19 This information resolves the question raised upon this point in "Birch's Views," 279. The flyer makes no reference to issuance of the set in successive "numbers" or "parts." Cf. *ibid.*, Note 20.
20 This again was a subject of some doubt when mentioned *ibid.*, 278.
America and four years before the *Views* appeared, served as the direct predecessor of the one engraved by Barker and included in the first three editions of the Birch work. This was a map prepared by T. Stephens, a part of the Philadelphia directory of 1796. Its scale of one hundred perches to the inch was the scale Barker used. Its orientation of the city with the cardinal compass point at the top of the page became Barker's as well. Its shading of the built-up parts of the city completed a presentation too close to Barker's for the similarities to be fortuitous.

It has been thought that the numerous reproductions of the Birch plates began at about the time of the Centennial, many years after commercial restrikes from the original plates had stopped. This, too, has now been disproved with discovery of what was probably the earliest reproduction of one of the prints—a lithograph, uncolored, copying in almost identical size a popular plate of the first and all later editions, "High Street with the First Presbyterian Church."  

Titled identically with the original, plus the simple insertion of the date "1800," it does not preserve the name of the person who drew it on the stone, but does state that it was a publication of Thomas Sinclair. Sinclair's address on the print places it in the 1840's.

When this lithograph was marketed, the original Birch plate was still being used for restrikes by the bookseller Desilver. Sinclair's actions are difficult to explain. Possibly he had an order from the congregation of the "new" Presbyterian church for the only known picture showing the old one. In such a case, it would have paid him to prepare a new plate, and he would have used the lithographic medium without a thought as cheaper and easier than engraving. Possibly Sinclair intended a series of lithographs of Philadelphia in an earlier day, for at least one other example of an antiquarian interest on his part is known. Whatever the reason, his early copy takes the story of the Birch reprints back to a point not more than a decade after his death.

**Villanova**

**Martin P. Snyder**

21 "High Street, with the First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1800." Thomas Sinclair, lithographer, 79 South Third St. Lithograph, 11 3/4" x 8 3/8".

22 Not listed in Wainwright, who assigns Sinclair's address at 79 South Third St. to this decade.