Charles Thomson, earlier employed at the Academy of Philadelphia as tutor of Latin and Greek and master of the Latin School of the Friends' Public School, had, since 1760, been a merchant of some note in Philadelphia. While actively opposing the English Stamp Act and other oppressive measures, he supported the building of American industries; and, in 1769, apparently, he entered into a new business himself. A man of ingenious mind, as was frequently evident during his years of service as perpetual secretary to the Continental Congress, Thomson promised the public "rum, by a new Process . . . little inferior to . . . that made in the West-Indies." On November 2 and 9, 1769, he advertised in the Pennsylvania Gazette:

Philadelphia rum, of an excellent Quality, and cordials of all Kinds, made and sold by Charles Thomson, at his Distillery, near Kensington, or at his House in Second-street, a few Doors above Race-street.

N.B. This rum, by a new Process, is freed from the disagreeable Tang which usually accompanies Continent Rum, and is so much improved in Smell and Flavour, as to be little inferior to, and scarce distinguishable from, that made in the West-Indies.

In a memorandum book of Thomson's in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania appears the following entry which gives us insight into the method used to make Philadelphia rum comparable to the West Indian product:

To Meliorate Rum or Spirits, —

for a hhd [hogshead]. Take 1 lb bohea tea, boil it in 6 quarts River or soft water till the strength is extracted then put the leaves into a long bag of thin linen & having poured the liquor into the hhd, hang the bag with the leaves in the cask. Next take about 2 lb flour made with water only into a paste & roll it out into small Rolls about the bigness of your finger; bake these very brown, but not burnt, pound or break them into crumbs & put them into the hhd.

4 oz sp: nit. dulcis [Spiritus Nitritis Dulcis—Sweet Spirits of Niter] will greatly mend home made Rum.

Wake Forest College

J. Edwin Hendricks