During the past twenty-five years much study has been devoted to the revival of historical painting in Rome in the 1760s. An extensive periodical literature has explored the sources and influences of that movement, with special interest in its effect upon art in Britain. One of the most important events in this trend was initiated by Benjamin West's journey to Italy in 1760. He arrived at Rome at the beginning of the historical painting movement and with his remarkable receptivity absorbed and made that movement his own. When he came to London in 1763 he was an accomplished practitioner of the new style. His first narrative paintings exhibited at the Society of British Artists in 1764 appeared as a novelty among the portraits, landscapes, and still lifes of that exhibition and attracted immediate attention. In a few years he was the most successful history painter in England, was appointed History Painter to the King in 1771, and president of the Royal Academy in 1789. The influence of his success was great both in London and on this side of the Atlantic, because hardly was he settled in London before aspiring young artists from America began to arrive at his door. West received them all with great kindness—Charles Willson Peale, Henry Benbridge, Matthew Pratt, Abraham Delanoy, Joseph Wright, Gilbert Stuart, John Trumbull,
William Dunlap, Ralph Earl. Few American painters of talent in the next twenty-five years were not helped by West with advice, instruction, jobs and assistance. All this derived from West's success in the style of painting he had learned at Rome.

But how and why did he go to Rome? Although Philadelphia maritime trade reached into the Mediterranean, the city's cultural connections were all with London. For example, from the migrant English portrait painter, John Wollaston, who passed through Philadelphia in the spring of 1758 on his way back to England, West learned much, and shortly after followed the Englishman to New York in the hope of earning enough there by portraits to take him abroad. The normal course for West would have been to go to London, where he would have arrived as an unknown provincial portrait painter. He failed to find business in New York and the next thing we know he was on his way to Italy.

Our information about West's youth and early years is confused and imperfect. It derives from John Galt's life of West, published in 1816. Galt made special claims to accuracy because he had received his information directly from West. The old artist was approaching eighty, however, and was recalling events sixty or seventy years in the past. It was natural under these circumstances for him to be forgetful or inaccurate; then too the old man's vanity ("an infirmity that prevailed in him" as the sculptor Flaxman expressed it, and which his friends were willing to overlook) focused his memories exclusively upon himself. Galt accepted uncritically and repeated a series of rambling anecdotes that are neither of dependable accuracy nor tell the historian what he would wish to know. Galt's sentimentality has in time proved a misfortune for West's reputation. As early as 1834 William Dunlap complained in his History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States of the puerilities and absurdities included in Galt's biography, writing "Such passages are almost enough to make us disbelieve the whole of Mr. Galt's book."

In 1962 a collection of papers of the Shippen, Burd, and Hubley families was given to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Among them was a letter book used by Edward Shippen (1729–1806) from

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1783 onward, which contains (beginning at the other end) the correspondence of its original owner, William Allen, for the years 1752-1770.

Allen (c. 1700–1780), the man who made West’s journey possible and who chiefly financed his studies in Italy, was an important and attractive figure in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. He succeeded his father-in-law Andrew Hamilton in 1741 as recorder of Philadelphia, and from 1750 to 1774 was Chief Justice of the province. He was one of the men who, together with Franklin, established the College of Philadelphia; yet as the leader of the proprietary party he bitterly opposed Franklin in politics. He founded and developed the city of Allentown upon his large land holdings. A passage from one of his letters to the Proprietor, written when the merchants of Philadelphia planned an expedition to search for the Northwest Passage, gives us something of his calibre.

Notwithstanding the repeated attempts of gentlemen in England to discover the Northwest Passage without success, yet there has appeared among us a spirit to undertake that noble design which if effected will redound to the honour of your province and to the advantage of us the undertakers . . . we think (by proper planning) to be able to effect the discovery of the passage or at least put it out of doubt whether there is one or no.

When the Revolution came, Allen was a Loyalist. He died in England, a circumstance that no doubt has contributed to the neglect into which his memory has fallen. He is not mentioned in the Dictionary of American Biography.

In the winter of 1759–1760 Allen received a letter from a firm in Leghorn with which he had formerly done business, suggesting that the war had made sugar scarce and that a shipload of sugar might be a profitable venture, if one could reach Italy. That was a real question. A naval war was raging and the British navy did not gain the upper hand in the Mediterranean until the following

2 A biographical essay in the first volume of this Magazine (1877), 202–211, by Edward F. DeLancey, is still the chief source for Allen’s life.
summer (August 1760) when Admiral Boscawen defeated the French Toulon fleet off Cape Saint Vincent. Allen had also other reasons to hesitate. He had retired from business on becoming chief justice and was hesitant to re-engage in it. In addition, he remembered that he had taken a heavy loss in 1748 when three cargoes of sugar sent to Italy arrived after peace had been declared and the price of sugar had fallen. He nonetheless showed the letter to his friends. His son, John Allen and Joseph Shippen, among others, decided to make a venture in sugar and to use the opportunity to see something of Italy, Accordingly, Allen wrote to his London agents, Messrs. David Barclay & Sons.

Philada. 10th March 1760

Gentlemen

Since writing my last letter, my Son John, who is now of age, having an Inclination to see a little of the World, is about to take a Voyage to Leghorn, and proposes to stay a few months in Italy, and from thence to come down the Streights & take his Passage from Lisbon or some other Port to London. I should take it as a particular Favor, if you would procure him Letters of Credit & Recommendation to some Gentlemen at Leghorn, Naples, Genoa, Rome &

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4 John Allen (1742-1778), eldest son of the Chief Justice, was a strong supporter of the American colonies' resistance to British taxation, but stopped short of independence. He was a member of the Committee of Inspection and Observation for the City and Liberties of Philadelphia, and a delegate to the Provincial Convention of New Jersey in 1776. But he remained loyal to the Crown; and when General Howe had advanced as far as Trenton and was thought to be on the march to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1776, John Allen, to avoid being pressed into the Pennsylvania militia, put himself under the protection of the British army. He married Mary Johnston of New York in April 1775 and died at Philadelphia in February 1778. A portrait of him by Benjamin West, probably painted at Rome, is owned by Allen descendants in England. It was exhibited in The World of Benjamin West at the Allentown Art Museum in 1962.

5 Joseph Shippen (1732-1810) graduated from Princeton in 1753 and entered the provincial service as captain in the regiment commanded by Col. William Clapham. He served at Fort Augusta, and with General Forbes at the capture of Fort Duquesne in 1758. After his return from Europe he was appointed Secretary of the Provincial Council, 1760-1775. In June 1786 he was appointed a judge of Lancaster County courts and died at Lancaster in 1810. He married in September 1768 Jane Galloway, whose portrait, painted by Benjamin West about 1757, Shippen had celebrated in graceful verses. The portrait is now owned by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
Milan. When I travelled, I found that those Letters of Credence were of great use to me, as they procured me acquaintance in every place I came to. The Vessel in which he goes being loaded with Sugar, will be addressed to Jackson & Rutherford of Leghorn; if they are a House of Credit, perhaps Letters to them, would procure from them Letters of Credit to the Sundry places above mentioned, upon which Subject I shall write them; but in case you should be of Opinion that Letters to other persons would be of more use to the young man, I must beg leave to refer myself to your Discretion.

He is accompanied by a young Gentleman, a Relative of mine, Mr. Joseph Shippen, who has been an Officer in our provincials ever since the war, was Major of Brigade to Genl. Forbes, and last year Lieut. Colonel in one of the Province Regiments; he is a very sober, virtuous, sensible young man, and I think my Son happy in such a Companion. My Son has hitherto proved a virtuous well inclined Lad and [I] have not perceived the least Turn to Vice in him. I have not therefore limited him as to his Expense but have earnestly recommended Frugality. I wish when you write to your Friends you would be pleased to mention in your Letters Colonel Shippen, he carries with him about £1,000 Ster[ling] value in Sugars, & proposes to return hither, & part with my Son when he sets out for England. I beg you would be pleased to get insured on Goods £1,600 Sterling on board the Ship Betty Sally Edward Sneed master from hence to Leghorn. Three Quarters of said sum on account of John Allen and One Quarter on account of Alexander Stuart with Liberty to touch at Gibraltar in case the Wind should not be fair, when they come to the Streights mouth, or to endeavour to procure Convoy up to Leghorn; Said Ship is a Letter of Marque, and carries 12 Carrage Guns & 20 men. I beg leave to assure you that I am

Gentlemen
Your most Humble Servt.
WA
To Messrs. David Barclay & Son via N. York p. Pacquet. Copied & sent in Hollyhead 2d Copy
Allen followed this by a confirming letter on March 22.

Philada. 22 March 1760

Gentlemen

I herewith confirm the Contents of the above Copies, the Originals of which, I sent to the Care of a Friend to be forwarded from New York. My Son will sail in about twelve days; if his Sugars sell well, he intends to make you a Remittance of a large part of the neat proceeds.

My worthy Friend Mr. John Gibson requests I would intreat your favors in helping the Ship Boreas Capt. McDougal to what Freight you can. The Vessel sails about this Time from Jamaica, and is intended for this Place after her Sugars are delivered in London. I should esteem it an Obligation if you would afford him your friendly assistance in the concern, and beg leave to assure you that I am

Gentlemen

Your most Humble Servt.

WA

To Messrs. David Barclay & Sons
p. Clifford's Ship bound to Hollyhead

Galt says that West's friend and patron, Provost William Smith, hearing of this intended voyage by two members of West's circle, suggested that West be given passage. If so, Allen agreed and West returned from his unsuccessful pursuit of portrait commissions in New York to join the ship Betty Sally. Allen then wrote to Jackson & Rutherford in Leghorn.

Philada. 5th April 1760

Gentlemen

Your very agreeable Favor of the 26th of October by way of New York, and copy of the same from London, in which you are so good as to propose a Renewal of our Correspondence, gave me great pleasure.

As I have had the Honor to be Chief Justice of this Province for near ten years past, I have, in a great Measure, declined all trade. But, agreeable to your desire, I mentioned the Contents of your Letter to some of my Friends, particularly the encouraging prices
of Sugar at present at your Market. A Number of us sent three Ships the last year of the late War laden with Sugars. The precipitate fall of the prices, at that Time, made us great Sufferers; however, upon so good a prospect, as you mention, some of my Friends here resolved to make a Trial; among the rest my son John, whom I have brought up to business and a relation of mine, Mr. Joseph Shippen, who had both a mind to see Italy, with some other Gentlemen agreed to load the Vessel by which this comes & put her under the Care of Mr. Shippen & my Son, to whom I have recommended to put the Concern into your Hands, which they will undoubtedly do, in case they arrive safe.

Our Flag of Truce has lately met with an Interruption, a great part of them, near fifteen Sail being taken & carried into Jamaica, Providence etc. Had they arrived safe, we should have had French Sugars in plenty; and I could, I am persuaded, have prevailed on some of my Friends to have sent some of their Vessels to your address, of which I still do not despair, should any Number arrive safe, which, I presume, will be the Case. I have a sort of promise from Mr. Gibson, a relation of my wife's, who has a Vessel sailed for Holland last Fall, the master of which has Orders to proceed to Moneto Christi, and there take in a Cargo of white Sugars for this port; that he will, upon the Vessel's arrival, if the war continues address her to you.

Mr. Shippen & my Son propose chiefly by this Voyage to have the pleasure of visiting the different parts of Italy; I must request therefore the favor of you to procure them Letters of Recommendation and Credit to the several Towns they shall go through. I have wrote to my friends at London likewise to this purpose, who, I doubt not will procure such for them. I received part of my Education at Clarehall in Cambridge, at which time Mr. Horatios Man, the present Resident of Florence, was then a Fellow Student; upon the Strength of which I have ventured depending on his Character for Humanity & Kindness to his Countrymen, to write to him on Mr. Shippen's & my Son's Behalf, to which I should be much obliged to you, if you would add yours & some of our Friends

7 Sir Horace Mann (1701-1786), the friend and lifelong correspondent of Horace Walpole, was famous for his hospitality to English visitors to Florence. The poet Gray described him as the best and most obliging person in the world.
Weight. Mr. Shippen has been an officer in our provincial Troops for four or five years past, was Brigade Major to General Forbes at the taking of Fort DuQuesne, and served as Lieut. Colonel last Campaign under General Stanwix. He is a very ingenious virtuous young man, and I think myself happy in my Son's having such a Companion. I am fearful, however, he will soon lose him, except there should be a peace as he intends to become a Trader, to which he was in part bred, and is desirous of going to Alicant & Malaga in order to load the Vessel with Wine & Brandy & other things, the Produce of Spain.

I have told him that part of the Business can be as well done in his Absence, by your writing to your Correspondents to get such things as are wanted ready again the Vessel comes down; however, in case he should go down with the Vessel, I am in hopes he will return while my Son continues at Florence.

As Sundry of the Owners will give Orders for purchasing of some Silks & other things for their Family's Use, I presume you can procure them, while the Ship stays, from Genoa, as sundry Articles cannot be purchased so cheap, or so good in kind with you. I beg you would be so kind as to let the Parmesan Cheese be rich & mild, as I am very fond of what is good of that kind of Cheese, and that the Other things that are for family Consumption be well chosen. The small Gorgona Anchovies, I think, are the most esteemed. In this Vessel comes a passenger, Mr. West, a young ingenious painter of this City, who is desirous to improve himself in that Science, by visiting Florence & Rome; but being unacquainted how to have his money remitted has lodged with me one hundred pounds Sterling, which I shall remitt to Messrs. David Barclay & Sons upon his account; I beg therefore you would give a Credit for that sum and take his Bills the amount, and should be further obliged to you for any kindness you shew him, as he has among us the Character of a very deserving young man. I am in hopes I shall have more Opportunities of writing to you this summer. In the meantime conclude with assuring you that I am

Your most Obedt. Humble Servt.

WA

To Messrs. Jackson & Rutherfurd Merchts. in Leghorn per Mr. John Allen in ye ship Betsy Sally Capt. Sneed
Copied 19th May p. Capt. Reily
He followed this by a letter to his London agents.

Philad. 16th April 1760

Gentlemen

I now confirm the Copies you have herewith. My Son sailed out of our Capes the 12th of this Inst.; I am in hopes that his Sugars will come to a good Market, as what has been sent from these parts has sold well. You have inclosed William Plumsted & David Frank’s Bill of the 15th Inst. (No. 64) on Sir Charles Colebrook etc in my Favor for £101 . . 6 . . 2 Sterg. which I am desired by Mr. Benjamin West to remit to you, and which you will be pleased to carry to his Credit when received. As I have upon the Strength of this, given him a Letter of Credit on you for £100 Ster. I beg you would honour his Bills for that sum. He is a young Painter that goes Passenger in the Ship with my Son, in order to improve himself in the Science of painting, and lodges the money with you in order to answer his Expenses whilst in Italy. You have likewise another Copy of the Power of Attorney you ordered in relation to the Navy Bill. Capt. Falconer & his mate (by whom this comes) are witnesses thereto. I am

Gentlemen

Your Most Humble Servt.

WA

To Messrs. David Barclay & Sons Merchts in London
p. Capt. Falconer copied p. Capt Rittner

Allen next wrote a long letter to Leghorn.

Philada 19th May 1760

Gentlemen

The Copy herewith was sent by Capt. Sneed, who left our Capes the 12th of last month; I hope before this comes to Hand, my son and Mr. Shippen will be safe arrived—to the latter of which, pray present my Compliments. I herewith inclose you Letter from his Father, which I beg you would forward to him wherever he may be, as likewise that to my Son, who I suppose will be in company with him on an Excursion to some part of Italy. In case Capt. Sneed should not be sailed when this comes, I desire you would procure for me from Genoa six pieces of good Black Traduasoy [?] without any Selvage, being for mourning Scarfs much used at Buryings in
this Country. The Selvage of a different Colour, which is often the case of Italian Silks renders them unfit for this Use—please to charge [charge] my Son’s accot. with the amount of their Cost. If Captain Sneed should be sailed or the Silk cannot be got in Time, please to send them by the Bearer Capt. Ritchie, who is to return here. When I heard of his intended Voyage I spoke to the Owners Mr. Charles Coxe to send her to your address. He has a great Confidence in the Captain (as well he may) he having greatly increased his Fortune by several fine Voyages he has made for him in this Vessel, and particularly by the Capture of two rich French prizes, he said therefore he would consign the Vessel to him, but upon my representing that Capt. Ritchie could not do the Business, he has promised me to order him to apply to you. I therefore presume, in case the Vessel unloads at your port and does not proceed to Venice, which will depend on Markets, the Interest will come under your management. I beg therefore to recommend Mr. Coxe’s Concerns to you, which he has requested me to do. He has a very fine Fortune, and is a very pushing man in Business, and bears the Character of an honest man.

The Other Vessel of my Friends, I mentioned in the Copy, bound here with white Sugars does not yet appear. If she arrives safe, I believe the Owners will forward her to your address.

Captain Rutherford, who married a Lady at New York, has had a Windfall, his wife’s mother Mrs. Alexander being lately deceased, by which one Sixth part of her Estate real & personal come to Mrs. Rutherford—Various are the accounts of the amount of her Share—in my opinion it will be worth between £15 & 20,000 Sterling there being a very great Estate in Lands and a considerable personal one.

I had forgot to mention to my Son to write to Messrs David Barclay & Sons about insuring his & Mr. Stuart’s Effects of the Homeward bound Voyage.

In case therefore the Vessel arrives safe with you as [sic] desire you would be so good as to write to these Gentlemen to get insured Six twelfths of the Homeward bound Cargo on my Son’s Accot., and two twelfths on Accot. of Mr. Alexander Stuart, as well of what is shipped with you as what will be shipped from Alicant & Malaga, taking care to have the Value from the different ports
properly specified in the Policies that there may be no disputes in case of a Loss.

I have wrote to my Son to send me by Captain Ritchie two Barrells of best Anchovies, and two half Chests of Florence Oyl, which, I beg, in his absence you will do. I have lately had the Misfortune to lose my good ancient Mother, and last week died my much loved Wife, which has Shocked me to a great Degree, and I am at present so disordered in Mind that I must conclude with assuring you that I am

Gentlemen

Your most obedient Huble. Sert.

WA

To Messrs. Jackson & Rutherford

Merchts. at Leghorn

P. Capt Ritchie

There was a moment of difficulty when the Betty Sally stopped for convoy at Gibraltar. Allen's letter to Messrs. Barclay & Sons explains this (Galt's version is rather different).

Philada. 25th Aug. 1760

Gentlemen

By the last Pacquet I rec'd your agreeable Favor of the 14th of June, in which you give me the pleasing Accot. of the Betty Sally's being arrived at Leghorn. I see the Insurance runs high, occasioned, I presume, by the number of Privateers appearing in the Streights, I could have got the Policies filled up here at 12 p cent.

The Owners of the Cargo here have been much alarmed by an article in the General Evening Post of the 12th of June, in which it is said "the Betty Sally of Philadelphia is seized at Gibralter, and is like to be condemned"; but cannot credit it, as my son writes me from Gibralter of the 11th of May of his being to sail that day, and you of the 14th of June advise me of her arrival at Leghorn. If an attempt of this Kind has been made, it must be very illegal, the Cargo being bought out of stores here and of sundry people. If the Sugars were imported from Hispaniola or purchased originally in any illicit Trade, the Owners were in no way concerned or privy to such Trade nor in any shape concerned in it, but bought their
Cargo in open market, and obtained from the Customhouse the regular Clearances; and for my part, I must say, I shall seek for Justice in Behalf of my Son & Mr. Stuart, even to the dernier resort.

Should there be any such thing as a Seizure or Condemnation at Gibraltar; for which reason, I must beg you would concur with the other Owners Factors in any measure to assert our right, should there be any Foundation for the Story.

Inclosed you have Willing, Morris & Co's Bill on Mr. John Nutt for £180.18.6 Ster. which I have obtained for John St. Clair's protested Bills, which when recd. please to carry to my Credit. Returns of that sort yielding 20 p ct. are no Disappointment to me. I must again renew my Request to you to invest the Ballance in your Hands, excepting £100 Ster., in the Stocks on my account.

I beg leave to assure you that I am

Gentlemen

Your Most Huble Servt

WA

To Messrs David Barclay & Sons
Merchts. in London

The anxiety about the Betty Sally was resolved by a letter from Messrs. Barclay in London. Allen's reply gives details of both business and personal affairs.

Philad. 20th October 1760

Gentlemen

My last was the 25th of August, p. Capt. Friend, & Copy thereof p. Hammel, acknowledging yours of the 14th June; since which I have received your very agreeable Favor of the 8th of July, including a Copy my Son's Letter to you from Leghorn, and advising me of your having purchased £1500 more Stock for me in the 3 p cent Consolidated Annuities @ 82 7/8 p. ct. for which with Brokg you debit me £1245.

I am now very anxious to hear of my sons welfare, and was in hopes should heard from him, or you by the Pacquet lately arrived. I presume may have lettrs. by some of our London Vessels that are expected.
I have some distant thoughts, in case there should be a peace this Winter, of coming to London & bringing with me two of my Sons, whom I intend to place in the Temple, and think to spend a Winter in England, and return in the Spring: of this, I beg you would apprise my Son, the next time you write him. I imagine he will stay this Winter in Italy, and will get to London about May, or June Next, where, if I keep in the mind, we may probably meet.

Mr. Turner has been some time at our Iron Works, and not expected in Town this Week or ten days. I take notice in the Company Letters, of our Fears that young Griffits has overdrawn for the amount of what we ordered, which was only six pillars for the Slitting Mill, which would weight about One Tun and an half, and a Couple of Forge Hammers, all which, I conceive, cannot amount to the Money he has drawn for, and what confirms me in my Suspicions is that he has sent us no Invoice, nor accot. of the Cost, but it is not impossible that I may be mistaken; am, however, impatient till this matter is cleared, as I was in great hopes, if he came over here, he might, if an honest man, been of great use to us in our Business.

I must request you would be so good as to get a Mourning Ring made for our Governor, of five Guineas value, on account of his Sister's Death, I had in the time of my Distress, desired Mr. Turner to mention this to you, but I fear he has omitted it. Margaret Allen died the 12th May 1760, aged 51.

I have, by this Opportunity, drawn on you for £43.8.2 St., in favor of Evan Paterson, which please to pay & charge my account with the same. I beg leave to assure you that I am

Gentlemen

Your most Huble Servt.

WA

To Messrs David Barclay & Son

Merchts in London


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8 Joseph Turner, a partner of William Allen, was owner with Allen of the Union Furnace or Union Iron Works in New Jersey, fifteen miles east of Easton.
A subsequent letter of August 19, 1761, shows William Allen and his brother-in-law, Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton, continuing their support of West.

Philad. 19th August: 1761

Gentlemen

This serves to confirm the Copy herewith & to inclose you the 2d Bill for the £300 Stg mentioned in the Copy. I have not time, at present, to write to my Son John; But beg you would tell him that I have received his Lett by the Packet, and that I approve of his advancing the £60 to Mr. West; and that his Uncle and I have agreed to advance him £100 more, which additional sum I desire he would remit Mr. West as soon as possible; which I beg you would be so kind as to pay to my Son, or Mr. West’s order. From all accounts he is like to turn out a very extraordinary person in the painting Way; and it is a pity such a Genius should be cramped for want of a little Cash

I am, Gentlemen
Your most Humb’l Sevt

To Messrs David Barclay & Son
per Capt Hammalt—copied via Liverpool—Triplicate
per the Assistance Man of War—Capt. Norton.

West’s troubles are explained in a letter to his traveling companion, Joseph Shippen, from Florence (May 11, 1762), that is now in the Winterthur Library.

Dear Sir

I have just heard with Pleasure from my worthy friend Mr. Rutherford of your safe Return to Philadelphia, and I beg you to except my hearty Congratulations both on this acct. and on your being appointed Secretary of the Province, which I am also informed of. I most heartily wish you the long Enjoyment of this and every other advantage, and think myself doubly happy in having a Friend whose Merit has entitled him [to] so considerable a Post, and whose kind partiality for me joint to the valuable Favours of the worthy Governor, and Mr. Allen cannot but be greatly to my benefit, and deserving of my continual grateful acknowledgement.
It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the two Copies of the Sybil and St. Cecilia are arrived safe, and judged deserving to be hung up in the Governor's House, and I find I owe you many thanks for your favourable opinion about them, which must have set them off to greater Advantage, as you had the opportunity of comparing them with the Originals, and the Taste with which you have enjoyed the sight of the fine paintings in Italy, may surely without making you any Compliments put you in the Rank of the connoisseurs. I look the Liberty to desier [sic] Mr. Rutherford to recommend that no copies of them be taken by anybody. Not that I am jealous of anyones gathering Improvement from them if able, but because the paintings themselves might lose a part of their Merit of being the only ones of the Kind in the Province, and they might perhaps be liable to suffer, if lent for the use of any unskilfull Hands. But as you yourself will know the Delicacy there is among painters in this Matter I don't doubt but you have already seconded my request.

I have further to thank both you and my worthy friend Mr. John Allen in making my performances so deserving the attention of his worthy Father and the Governor, as to receive their Orders for a collection of Copies from some of the great Masters, and their Patronage and generous Assistance have contributed so much to facilitate my Studys in Italy, and alleviate my Distress under the Disappointments and Loss of Time occasion'd me by my painful Infirmities that I shall certainly think it my Duty to apply my Talents as much as possible in their Service and esteem myself happy in giving them Satisfaction. Before I proceed further I must acquaint you that after having been forced to leave Rome last summer where the Heats began again to bring on my Rhumetism pains, I met the usual kind Reception from Mr. Rutherford at Leghorn, and remained four Months in his House, where after a severe fit of Illness which confin'd me long to my Bed, my old ailment took a new turn, and appeared in a swelling in my Ancle which came so near to a Supparation that I was advised by everybody to have it cut. The operation was accordingly perform'd and without little Disturbance to me that by the advice of Surgeons and all my Friends, I set out on my return to Rome about 8 or 10 days after the beginning of Dec' last but being advised on occasion of calling
at Florence to consult a remarkably famous Surgeon there, about
the State of my Case, and having done so, I to my great Mortifica-
tion found all my Measures over-set. This Surgeon thought it
necessary to make deeper Incisions, and as I was very desirous to
get a thorough Course I submitted and he proceeded to his work.
In this Surgeon's Hands I have been for near these four months
past, most of the Time confined to my Bed, and suffering several
terrible operations in which my ankle has been laid open to the very
Bone, from where a piece of it came away, when Thank God the
wound is at length healed up and I hope I am now perfectly cured
but it will still requir some Time for me to pick up Strength to stir
about in the Manner my Studys at pleasant requirs. I have but
just made a Shift to get out to see the Gallery and other Rerities
of Florence for as I was obliged Amediate on my Arrival hear to
keep my Bed, and thus have I remain'd for near fore Months in a
most deplorable Condition Lodged in a House over against the
Palazzo Pitti without being able to stir out to see anything there,
and frequently the severest operations that Nature can bear, and
such Pains that Brought me near to Deaths Door than I have ever
been yet tho thank God my Patience and good Constitution have
get the Better at Last. Sir Horace Man's Kindness and humanity
has been of very great Relief to me in my unhappy State, and I am
to the last Degree obliged to him, as well as to Mr. Rutherford
whose recommendations introduced me to him. It is to Sir Horace
I have the Notice taken of me by most of the English Travellers
hear particularly the Duke of Grafton who desires of me a Coppy
of the Madonna della Sedia [by Raphael] which I am very willing
to Do but yet want strength to perform. I cannot yet Determine
how it will sute me to dispose of the Rest of my Time, but wherever
I am you may be assured I shall be particularly attentive to what
you desier, and this I beg the favour of you to acquaint my worthy
Patrons, with my most Humble Respects. I know I ought to write
to them, but as I really want words to express my Obligations, I
must depend upon your goodness to make my respects in this
manner acceptable to them. In regard to the Price I do not pretend
to prescribe anything for to such honourable gentlemen whose
Generosity and Compliance with what is just I can very safely
Confide and shall very willingly refer it to them in case Mr. Ruther-
ford should not choose to decide tho I doubt not but he will settle Terms equally satisfactory to them and to me. I have noted the particular Pieces desired, and shall be very glad to be able to give the Gentlemen perfect satisfaction in their Choice. I shall spare no Pains, though many of the copies will be laborious work, and any single one of the Capital Pieces may take up more than two or three Months. Such as Guido, St. Michael especially, where the figures are more than half as big again as Life. I would be no means be thought extravagant and desire no more than sufficient to Defray my Expenses which have been high, without any means of returning them because of my Infirmitys for near these six Months past but I submit to your Consideration whether the Price you hint would not be too small to answer this Effect. I recommend myself to the continuance of your friendly Regard for me, and shall be much obliged for your remembering me to all Friends, being with the utmost Gratitude and Esteem

Dear Sirs

Your most obliged

humble servant

Florence May 11, 1761

Benj'a West

To Mr. Joseph Shippen Esq. jun.

Philadelphia

The close of the correspondence regarding West in the Allen-Shippen letter book is a letter of October 10, 1762, from William Allen to his London agents.

Philada. 10th October 1762

Gentlemen

I have received your Letter of the 20th May, by my Son John, whose long stay in Bristol made me very apprehensive he was taken, or lost; his safe arrival has given me great pleasure, and his Uncle and I, are both well pleased with him, as he seems a good deal improved. He expresses a high Sense of your Goodness & Civilities to him, for which I beg leave to return you my most cordial Thanks, and request the Continuance of your kindness &
Friendship to his Brothers. I duly note what you are pleased to mention about an Increase in their allowance, upon which Subject I have received a couple of Letters from Jemmy, to which have given him an answer.

Upon consulting their Uncle, who is always rather too indulgent to them, he joins with me in Opinion that their allowance ought not to be increased, only in respect to their Chamber Rent, which I request you will give them money to pay to commence from the Beginning of their entering them.

Mr. Hamilton & I have employed Mr. West to copy for us a Number of the best pictures in Italy, where he has been very much indisposed, and his sickness has been so expensive to him that he cannot continue there without some Cash be remitted to him. I have already supplied him with £150 Sterling. Mr. Hamilton has promised to give me a Bill of Exchange for the like Sum in Order to put the young Fellow in Cash. I must therefore desire you would immediately advise Messrs. Jackson & Rutherford of Leghorn that you will honor their Bills for any Sum not exceeding £150 on Mr. West’s account and carry the same when pd. to my Debit. We have such an extraordinary Account of Mr. West’s Genius in the painting way, that we venture to afford him these Supplies, and for his Encouragement to take it out in Copies.

I now confirm what Mr. Stuart wrote you of the 29th June last, in relation to the 4500 ps 8/8 I consigned you p the Lancaster Man of War; and of my having recd. your Accot. Currt. and found it to be right, the Ball. in your favor being £218:3:8. Mr. John Watts of New York writes me that he has remitted you on my account a bill of £150 Stg. Inclosed you have a bill of 22d Septembr last on John Calcroft Esq. at Channel Row Westminster for £300 Stg., which, when received, please to carry to my Credit, and believe me to be

Gentlemen
Your Most Humble Servt
WA

To Messrs David Barclay & Sons
Merchts in London p Capt. Boletto
copied via N. York p the Cygnet Sloop of War
West recovered his health and, with the continued aid of William Allen and Governor Hamilton, completed his studies in Italy. He arrived in England, August 20, 1763, a finished artist in the Italian historical style, on which his later success rested. Another long letter to Joseph Shippen, written from London on September 1, 1763, describing his final year in Italy, was published more than a century ago by Thomas Balch in Letters and Papers Relating Chiefly to the Provincial History of Pennsylvania, with some Notices of the Writers (Philadelphia, 1855), lxix-lxxii, and completes this story.

London, Sept. 1st, 1763

Dear Sir:—Your very kind favor of the 11th October last, reached me in the month of January following, just on my arrival at Rome, after having been a whole year longer away from thence than I ever at first thought of. After having wrote you my letter of the 10th May from Florence, by which I see you were informed of the deplorable situation I was in for the first five months of that year, I went very slowly picking up; but, as you may easily suppose, my strength and spirits were so much reduced by the long, close confinement to my bed, the strict diet I was obliged to keep, and especially the cruel incisions the surgeon had made on my ancle, I still found myself unable to apply closely to my work for a long time, notwithstanding all the inclination and longing I had to do so. Every time I set down to the slightest studies, though but for a quarter of an hour, there came a giddiness and feverishness upon me that forced me to leave off. My first application was to serve my worthy and honored patrons in the copies they desired, as far as lay in my power; and as, just at that time, Lord Fordwich had ordered up from Leghorn to Florence the picture that Mr. Mings had painted for him, of a Holy Family, and was so obliging as to give me leave to copy it. I thought myself happy in having such an opportunity of studying upon my favorite master, since he was gone from Rome, and the season of the year was not proper for me to go thither to seek for other studies. I concluded also that nothing

9 Anton Raphael Mengs.
could be more agreeable to you and my other friends than the copy of so capital a piece. The agreeableness of the climate of Florence, the extraordinary kindnesses of Sir Horace Mann, which I shall always have a most grateful remembrance of, especially for that shown me in my illness, and the honorable notice taken of me by all the English nobility and gentry that were there, as well as by many of the Florentine noblemen, were great engagements to me to stay, so that, with all these advantages, I got through the copy (notwithstanding the great weakness that still hung upon me) in about two months, after having been obliged to make my excuses for not serving the Duke of Grafton, and several others, whom, even by Sir Horace's advice, I was obliged to refuse, because of my weak constitution, which absolutely forbade my undertaking much fatigue. Indeed, nothing but such a study after Mings could have made me go through with so large a copy, and in so short a time, and I thought it a happy instance of my cure, that after so much labor I was not again laid up with a fresh fit of my usual violent pains. As you and the gentlemen were pleased to give me such liberty to suit my own taste and turn, I saw nothing else at Florence so suitable for me to copy as the Venus by Titian, and a celebrated picture of Hannibal Caracci, in the Prince Corsini's palace, of Venus lamenting over the dead body of Adonis. In a reasonable time I got this picture done, and set about the Titian, when, just as it was dead colored in, the fire broke out in the gallery, and put everything there in confusion, and stopped the work of copying there, upon that picture, for some time. If it had been in the winter season, I should, immediately upon this, have proceeded to Rome, and pursued my studies there, not to lose time; but as there were still two months before it was reckoned safe for me to go that way, and as I had a very favorable opportunity of passing that interval in a journey to Bologna, Parma and Venice, I resolved to embrace it, considering those places, for different merits, as much the object of a student's attention as even Rome itself, in a certain degree. I also considered, that while I was thus not losing my time, I should be improving my health, which all my friends were of opinion required such exercise and change of air, after so long and cruel confinement, and such close application as I had given the whole summer. Perhaps you will have heard already from the worthy
gentlemen at Leghorn, that Mr. Matthews,\textsuperscript{10} having left their service some months before, and coming to Florence, accompanied me in this tour, after having consulted those gentlemen, who were pleased not to disapprove of it, but on the contrary favored us both with the kindest and most honorable letters of recommendations for all the places where we were to go in. The particular kindness of Mr. Murray, at Venice, made my stay there much longer than I ever imagined, for which I am in great measure obliged to you, good sir, and Mr. Allen, by your speaking so advantageously of me when you were there. The little enjoyment I have had of my health, you are sensible, must naturally have taken off much of my pleasure for a longer stay, and especially the dread of being laid up at every return of the summer, if I persisted to stay at Rome, where only my studies required me to stay, since I attribute my having (thank God) been so well of late, more to the exercise I have had in travelling about, than to any amendment in my constitution. On my return from Venice to Florence, I had but just time to finish my copy of Titian’s Venus. I hastened to Rome to make as much as possible of the short time that remained for me there, and thought myself happy in getting done a copy of Guido’s finest Herodias in Cardinal Corsini’s palace, and another picture which I composed as a study of my own. Just after I had got over these two pieces, Mr. Patoune,\textsuperscript{11} a gentleman, a particular friend of Mr. Crispin’s, was pleased to offer me his company to England. I therefore could not but embrace it, particularly with Mr. Crispin’s advice, and be thankful to Providence that had thrown such a lucky offer in my way, and thus, thank God, I am at last safe arrived at the mother country, which we Americans are all so desirous to see, and which I could not but desire as much, or more, than Italy itself. After leaving Rome I went to Leghorn for a few days, as well to pay my last personal respects to the worthy gentlemen there, (whose favors and friendship I shall always gratefully remember, as well as the good Mr. Crispin’s,) as to see about the dispatch of the pictures I had got ready for America, and luckily there then offered a New England

\textsuperscript{10} According to Galt, Matthews had been manager of the commercial concerns of Jackson and Rutherford.

\textsuperscript{11} According to Galt, who refers to him as Dr. Patoune, he was a Scottish gentleman of considerable learning and some taste in painting.
schooner, that loaded all the copies already mentioned, as the gentlemen will have informed you, except the Herodias, which unhappily did not reach Leghorn in time, and now lay there for another opportunity. I hope they will all arrive safe, and give satisfaction to my worthy patrons, as have been my endeavors, and as I am in duty bound to do. If I have not been able to serve them with more copies, I hope, from your and their generous sentiments, it will be considered how much my studies in Italy have been interrupted by my infirmities, from the very first. I was too uneasy and too uncertain of my health to pretend going through a regular course, (which, by the way, if I could have kept on at Rome, would have engaged me to apply more to drawing than painting of copies,) so that I have been glad to pick in any way as much improvement as my health and time would permit, and flatter myself I shall be allowed to have acquired as much as any other in my circumstances could have done, though not near so much as I could wish. I am very sensible of my own wants in regard to painting, and it will be the labor of my whole lifetime to supply them. Your useful hints upon this subject I take in the kindest part; and for the friendly intentions you have, I value them as much as if they came from Mings himself. You will give me leave always to consider you, dear sir, and Mr. Jn. Allen, among my best and most honored friends, as well as his worthy father, and the Governor; and it will always be my study to deserve the continuance and benefit of your friendship and good will. As to the price of the copies, and the manner how I am to satisfy those gentlemen for the generous assistance I have had in money from them, I desire before all things to consider what is suitable and agreeable to them. They are too generous not to make all the allowances that my circumstances may deserve; and as to myself, I had much rather that some friend would take upon him to settle the first particular, than pretend to rate my own labors, when in their service to whom I am in honor and gratitude so much obliged; but as I have the happiness of meeting here Mr. Allen himself, the principal of my patrons, to whom, of course, I shall endeavor to give satisfaction in this and every other point, it is the less necessary for me now to tire you

12 Chief Justice William Allen had sailed for England in the summer of 1763.
with a longer detail. I trust wholly in your good nature for an excuse for my not answering your kind letter before I left Italy, and hope you will ascribe my unpunctuality rather to my being so hurried and unsettled in the last months of my stay there, than to any forgetfulness of duty and obligation, which I am constantly sensible of, though I should unfortunately fail of giving you such proofs of them as you may strictly expect. It was the greatest pleasure to me to hear of my good friend, Mr. John Allen’s, safe return home, and I beg you’d make my hearty compliments to him and all friends, with my particular respects to Governor Hamilton, who makes me proud of the honor he has done my first two copies, as you are pleased to mention. My sincere compliments wait no less on all your worthy family, assuring you that I am, with all gratitude and esteem,

Dear sir, your most obliged, humble servant,

BENJ’N WEST

My dear sir, I have one favor to beg of you, that is, on the arrival of the case in which the three copies are, they may be carefully taken out, and the case fastened up again, as it is full of things I am desirous not to have seen, as they are little particulars belonging to painters. I hope you will pardon me for this liberty.

To Joseph Shippen, Jr., Esq. in Philadelphia.

William Allen, who thought it “a pity that such a Genius should be cramped for want of a little Cash,” has not enjoyed a good press among historians. He is mentioned infrequently and usually slightly. He belonged, it is true, to unpopular causes, to the Proprietary Party in Pennsylvania, and to those who remained loyal to the Crown when the Revolution came. The impression conveyed by his correspondence is that of a man of the world, generous, good natured (except in matters of Pennsylvania politics) and public spirited. In the present instance his generosity had great consequences.

The letters leave two questions open. Was West’s journey to Italy the fulfillment of a long-held ambition (as West indicated to Galt sixty years after the event) or was it an accidental piece of good fortune, typical of West’s luck. In either case, it brought him to London as an artist of reputation, already enjoying the interest
of influential young Englishmen he had met in Italy. There is no evidence in William Allen’s letters pointing either way.

And in the light of what is known of eighteenth-century cookery, what did Mr. Allen do with all those anchovies?

*Philadelphia, Pa.*  
E. P. Richardson