The Diary of Samuel Breck, 1839-1840

With this, the fifth installment, we conclude our serialization of excerpts from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's diary of Samuel Breck. Breck continued to journalize after 1840, but the contents of his later notebooks dealt less with current events than with his interests in religion, history, and literature.

Breck's useful career carried on into his old age. He was elected President of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia in 1845, President of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind in 1850, and Vice-President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1857, to all of which, as well as to a number of other organizations,
he made notable contributions. He long remained in the public eye through his chairmanship of civic and political meetings, and through his speeches and writings.

The last of his journals is a fifty-five page volume of transcriptions from the writings of others as well as of his own, interlarded with literary reflections and recollections. He commenced this book on February 1, 1862, with the following introduction:

I began a diary in June 1800, and have continued, with occasional intermissions, until within a year or two. In looking over the early numbers lately, I found several extracts from authors, who were in vogue sixty years ago, which appeared on perusal worthy of a better exhibit than I gave them in the Journal. This opinion prevailed also in reference to certain original essays of my own; and especially of numerous translations from the French, both in prose and verse, made by me when reading books in that language.

I have accordingly taken an early opportunity of starting this volume, with the hope, under Providence, of making some progress therein, should a life, already numbering ninety years and a half, be sufficiently prolonged.

On May 14, 1862, he copied into this volume a poem he had written in 1808. This is the last dated entry in the book which contains but three more pages of his handwriting. In the installment of his diary which follows, Breck noted the purchase of a house "in Arch Street a little west of broad" (1412 Arch). It was there that he died on August 31, 1862. Devoted to literature, music, and the fine arts, Breck had found in his diary yet another cultural outlet. As J. Francis Fisher observed in his Memoir of Samuel Breck, published by the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind, "Thus, in his protracted and childless old age, he was not desolate; for he found in his elegant tastes as well as his benevolent pursuits the most cheering occupation." Samuel Breck's remains were interred in his father's vault at St. Peter's, where his wife's had preceded him four years earlier.

N.B.W.
January 18, 1839  I mentioned this evening at the Philosophical Society that Maurice Talleyrand, the ex-Bishop of Autun and a kin collaterally to Royalty, had resided two years in Philadelphia, had become a naturalized Citizen of Pennsylvania, that his oath of Allegiance, renouncing nobility, was a long while hung up in Peale’s museum. We wanted the Society to authorize a biographical sketch of that Old Fox. . . . I knew the sinner personally.

January 23, 1839  There arrived at Philadelphia a few weeks ago a beautiful, high spirited lady, about six and twenty years of age, a native of Florence, whose name is Amerigo, and who is a lineal descendant of the brother of Americus Vespucius, or more properly Amerigo Vespucci. This young heroine engaged in several battles in one of the late political commotions in Italy and received some severe wounds. She is warmly patronized by the Queen of France, and receives the greatest attentions from the French consuls in the United States. She is now at Washington where it is thought she means to apply to Congress for a donation, on account of her progenitor’s name. It will be labour lost.¹

January 26, 1839  A most destructive storm of rain and wind today has broken up the Schuylkill ice and that of other rivers around the city, and caused enormous damage. Bridges, mills, houses etc to a large amount have been swept away. No bridge remains opposite to Philada. except the “Permanent” one at Market Street.

January 30, 1839  Stephen Van Rensalear, commonly called “the Patroon,” died at Albany last Saturday afternoon of strangulation in a fit of coughing. I was in the 18th Congress with him, and from my acquaintance with him do most sincerely join in the great praise bestowed, as it were with one voice, on his character, both as a public man and private individual. Though the richest landowner in the United States, his deportment was unsophisticated, plain, cheerful and modest. Everybody loved him.²

January 31, 1839  Successful efforts have been made this win-

¹ The truth of the stories this young adventuress told about herself may be doubted. Subsequently, she became “Prince John” Van Buren’s mistress until he lost her in a poker game to George Parish. Thomas P. Govan, Nicholas Biddle (Chicago, 1959), 347.

² Stephen van Rensalear (1764–1839), the eighth patroon, was noted for his simple tastes and genial manners.
ter, in the midst of heavy ice, to keep the navigation of the Delaware open by means of steamboats, so that two millions and a half of dollars have been brought to our wharves, which else must have remained in the river or gone round to New York.

February 10, 1839 I went to Christ Church this morning. The reason is that my pew in the Epiphany, which I only hired, has been sold, and I seize the occasion to disconnect myself from Dr. Tyng, whose sermons, altho’ ably written and delivered with ultra-spirit, are too gloomy, condemnatory, anathematical, loaded with denunciation, and never relieved by commendation for pious efforts. ... I shall look out for some seats in another Episcopal church. Mr. Dorr pleased me much today at Christ Church. But that place of worship is one mile and a quarter from my residence, and of course too far off.

February 13, 1839 My good brother passed last night with us. We went together to the magnificent and spacious saloon (240 feet long) of the Museum to hear a concert performed by a band of coloured musicians with Frank Johnson as leader. They played very well to the delight of between one and two thousand people. On this same evening two theatres are open, a lecture delivered to a large class at the musical fund hall, the large Zoological Exhibition open, and two fashionable soirees, or evening parties given. I mention these things to show that Philadelphia is well supplied with places of amusement, and that they received good support from her two hundred thousand inhabitants, which compose as many think the number of her people.

February 20, 1839 This morning John Read, William Meredith, Mr. VanderKemp and I met at the Bridge office as a committee. While discussing the business before us, John Hare Powel came in. This man is labouring with might and main to destroy our property by forcing the charter from us, and obliging us to give up the bridge, which cost three hundred thousand dollars, for less than

3 Dr. Stephen H. Tyng of the Church of the Epiphany, Chestnut Street near Broad.
4 The Rev. Benjamin Dorr, Rector of Christ Church from 1837 to 1889 and author of *A Historical Account of Christ Church, Philadelphia* (1841).
5 The Philadelphia Museum’s “Great Hall” was at Ninth and Sansom Streets, admittance twenty-five cents.
6 J. J. Vanderkemp, agent for the Holland Land Company.
one half that sum, in order to open it to the public free of toll. For
six months he has put forth almost daily anonymous pieces in the
newspapers, to which we have replied by official statements signed
by the officers of the company. In one of these Powel is put down
by name as the author of a pamphlet containing several misstate-
ments. Upon seeing this at Harrisburg, where he has stationed him-
self as a borer7 all winter, he started for Philada., got a paper signed
by a parcel of his coadjutors, vindicating, as he says, the afore-
mentioned misstatements. This paper he produced and read, and
when he had finished he addressed George Rundle, our treasurer,
and told him that, Mr. Read being too old to expostulate with, he
called upon him at the younger man for satisfaction. Mr. Rundle,
who, as well as the rest of us, was very much surprized, answered
him that what he had signed was the act of the board, and was
signed in the capacity of Treasurer. Mr. Read cross questioned
Powel and elicited such answers from him as proved that he had
written part of the pamphlet, and furnished some of the materials.
Nevertheless, with rage in his eye, and passion in his gestures,
Powel insisted on satisfaction. Our expostulations on behalf of
Rundle and the board were mild and playful, but did not pacify
that irritable Hector. . . .

After interrupting the business of the committee for an hour, he
left us. Nor can I be sure of his ulterior plans. Probably he will cool
down. This man, who inherited a good deal of property, and has
talents, is generally disliked, but nevertheless possesses influence.

February 25, 1839 Miss Mease paid us a visit. She had been
to Dr. Mitchell’s with 20 others to witness his essay in animal
magnetism, and somnambulism, upon a poor girl from one of the
Asylums, whom he put to sleep and drew from her jaws five teeth,
one of which was treble rooted without awakening her, or even
occasioning a wince!!

March 8, 1839 Yesterday the following named gentlemen
called on me as a committee to invite me to act as chairman at a
public meeting of the citizens of the city and county of Philadelphia
for the purpose of promoting the passage of a bill now before the
Legislature for widening and embellishing Broad Street, so as to

7 A “borer” was a lobbyist, many of whom resorted to bribery.
extend that noble avenue 7 or 8 miles and make it a boulevart, according to the Parisian acceptance of the word: a bulwark against sickness: a promenade on foot, in a carriage or on horse back. The gentlemen were Geo. Cadwalader, Wm. M. Camac, and Doctor Elkinton. I agreed to serve.

In calling at the Recorder's office today, I saw a hard-featured, vulgar looking man at the centre table. I enquired who he was? He turned out to be, as I expected, the newly appointed recorder of deeds! He is by trade a blacksmith and a Jacobin or Loco-Foco of the first water. The truth is that the intelligence of this country is excluded from all public stations. The witty Judge Brackenridge was asked for a letter of recommendation to Governor McKean for office. He wrote something like the following: The bearer is an honest plain dutchman; he is wholly illiterate, and my father in law; and entirely unfit for the office he seeks. Yet, being so much better qualified than all the other candidates, I think he ought to be appointed. Perhaps the blacksmith was placed here upon the same reasoning.

March 9, 1839 I presided this evening at a public meeting in the district courtroom, where 60 or 70 people came to consider the propriety of supporting a bill now before the legislature, authorizing the widening of Broad Street to 113 feet north of Spring Garden, and grade, pave the sidewalks and ornament it with trees. In opening the meeting, I stated that among other matters Penn, who was a man of great taste, left in his plan of the city proper five public squares, which some London writer calls the Lungs of large cities; while the suburbs which have grown up since the days of Penn, and which were never contemplated by him, have not left a single acre for public use, either for pleasure or health.

March 13, 1839 John Price Wetherill, chairman of the Watering Committee, sent me yesterday his reports of the last three years. In looking over them I see confirmed what I have always thought Philadelphia took the lead in; namely the number and

8 Dr. John A. Elkington, port physician.
9 The new Recorder was Samuel Rush.
10 Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748–1816).
11 On Mar. 27, 1839, an act was passed authorizing the commissioners of the County of Philadelphia to widen, grade, and culvert a certain portion of Broad St.
excellence of her private and public Baths. In the report for 1838, they are treated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City proper</td>
<td>1673 private baths, paying</td>
<td>1673</td>
<td>$5,061.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 public baths, one of which pays $300</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>660.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Liberties</td>
<td>195 private baths, paying</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>877.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Garden</td>
<td>217 private baths, paying</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>976.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>202.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moyamensing</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>103.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>1 bath and water closet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add the public baths 10

2164 baths for the small sum of $7,887.00

Now, let it be understood that these baths are not limited in the use of the water to one or two tubs full a day, but are supplied with whatever quantity is wanted by the tax-payer.

**March 16, 1839**  
This evening Mr. William Welsh called upon me to join 14 gentlemen who have agreed to advance each fifteen hundred dollars for the purpose of building a Protestant Episcopal church in 13th Street, a little below Spruce. The advance to bear interest, and be reimbursed by the sale of pews. As I am desirous of procuring a pew, I readily subscribed.12

**March 23, 1839**  
I signed the constitution of our contemplated new church in 13th south of Spruce, which has been named, with the consent of the Bishop, Saint Luke.

**March 26, 1839**  
This morning was brought to my house a new daily paper of folio dimensions called the North American.13 I can hardly tell how I was entrapt into a subscription for this new journal, considering that it is an addition to my stock of newspaper reading already too large, for besides this I take the United States Gazette,14 the National Gazette,15 both daily, the Albion of New

---

12 William Welsh (1807-1878), one of Philadelphia's most prominent businessmen and philanthropists, was a foremost supporter of the Episcopal Church.

13 The *North American*, first issued on this date, was backed by a number of Philadelphians, including William Welsh (note 12), who were disturbed by the want of interest shown by the city's press in religious and charitable matters. Long one of the city's outstanding journals, it was merged into the *Public Ledger* in 1925.

14 The *United States Gazette*, founded in 1789, was merged into the *North American* in 1847.

15 The *National Gazette*, founded in 1820, was merged into the *Inquirer* in 1842.
York, the Church Banner of the Cross, Episcopal Recorder, and a monthly colonization magazine. The country is flooded with periodicals, the one containing in a great measure the ditto of the other.

March 28, 1839 The United States Gazette of this morning says that Cab No. 1 appeared in Phila. for the first time yesterday. Cab is an abbreviation of the French carriage Cabriolet, and has been introduced of late years into London as a hack or public vehicle. I saw them on the stand at Quebec, among the Canadian French, last summer.

Mr. Sanderson of the Merchants' Hotel in Phila. has caused one to be built in this city, and used it for the first time yesterday, taking with him Mr. Chandler of the United States Gazette.

March 29, 1839 This day Nicholas Biddle resigned the Presidency of the Bank of the United States. He has served that great institution twenty years, namely four as director and sixteen as President with singular ability, honesty and independence. Thomas Dunlap succeeded him. The event produced a great sensation.

April 2, 1839 A party of ladies with Mrs. Breck and I went to doctor Swaims, the celebrated Panacea man who has made a splendid fortune by selling a nostrum to an extent in Europe as well as America which would seem to justify its alleged good qualities. It was by the Doctor's invitation to me that we waited upon him to hear a German musical instrument of singular power and mechanical construction. It contains an entire orchestra. . . . We spent an hour at the Doctor's magnificent house, looking at other musical instruments of first rate finish.

April 5, 1839 Visited Catlin's Indian Gallery, containing a great many portraits and landscapes and furniture, implements of war etc, showing the manners, customs and costumes of the Indians of the "far west," collected by Mr. Catlin during seven years travel amongst 38 different tribes, speaking different languages.19

April 19, 1839 Attended the Philosophical Society this eve-

---

16 J. M. Sanderson & Son, Merchants' Hotel, 4th Street above Market.
17 Joseph R. Chandler.
18 Dr. James Swaim, successful manufacturer of patent medicines.
19 George Catlin's collection came into the possession of Joseph Harrison, Jr. of Philadelphia in 1852 and was put into storage. That part of it which survived years of neglect was given to the Smithsonian Institution by Harrison's widow in 1879.
ning. Saw there Nicholas Biddle, the celebrated head of the Bank of the United States, from which institution he has retired recently. In shaking hands with him, I told him that the pleasure I had in seeing him relieved of that load of business and anxiety was lessened by the fear that he could not be replaced. "That is not at all difficult," said he: "No man, however useful or eminent, ever lived who has not found a competent successor in a quarter of an hour." "Upon the principle," said I, "of the King's never dying: Le roi est mort, vive le roi." 20

April 22, 1839 The papers announce the death at Newbern, North Carolina, of Mr. Pollock by a fall from his horse, of which he died in fifteen minutes, and they add that he was probably the largest slave holder in the United States, owning at the time of his death three thousand seven hundred slaves!!

I knew Mr. Pollock very well. He generally spent six months of the year at the North, and 3 of these in Philadelphia. He was a native I think of Connecticut, and in his manners a very accomplished gentleman. Bland, sociable, unpresuming and intelligent. 21

April 25, 1839 How exceedingly flattering to the industry and ingenuity of Philadelphia is the following statement of the work shop of a single manufacturer of our city. William Norris at Bushhill has within a few years made 78 locomotives and tenders, distributed thus: 1 sent to Canada; 1 to Cuba; 1 to England; 2 to Germany; 2 to Austria; 71 to different parts United States. To which add foreign orders now on hand which will all be shipped before the first of August next, and are for Prussia, 2; Austria, 3; Hungary, 2; England!! 9. 300 hands are employed and sixty locomotives and tenders are made yearly besides much other work.

April 26, 1839 Today the stockholders of the permanent bridge agreed to comply with an act of assembly which takes their property from them at half cost by threatening to put up a free bridge along side of theirs!! This is the doing of a Mr. John Hare

20 Biddle was wrong about his successor, Thomas Dunlap, "a fat, dull man, not fit to sit in Biddle's seat," according to the diarist Sidney George Fisher. By the end of 1840 Biddle was trying to get Dunlap to resign.

21 While George Pollock of Newbern was immensely wealthy, owning half a dozen plantations, the newspaper seems to have exaggerated the number of his slaves, which was perhaps more like 1,500. He generally spent his summers in Philadelphia.
Powel who has been the enemy and successful persecutor of that company because they would not break their by-law and permit him to pass over by the year. . . .

May 24, 1839  Comes news today of more mob work in the state of Mississippi at the town of Decatur by burning the Real Estate Bank and all its books!! The situation of the money institutions in the southwest, and particularly in that state, is verging towards universal bankruptcy. More than three millions of dollars are held, it is said, by Philadelphians in stock of banks in that quarter, some of which is as low as 60 dollars for 100 paid in, and this mobocracy news must sink it still lower. My next door neighbour Doctor [John K] Mitchell is daily expected to return from Vicksburg, where he went as one of a committee of the Philadelphia stockholders of the Railroad bank in that city, to examine its affairs and report thereon. The banking business has been much abused and the people grossly cheated in many places.

This afternoon I went to Bishop Onderdonck's as one of the Vestry of Saint Luke's church, now being erected in 13th south of Spruce. I found a large assemblage of clergymen and others there who formed a procession and marched to the site of the church to lay the corner stone, in which stone were deposited by the Vestry a Bible and a Prayer book.

June 15, 1839  A newspaper editor says: "A gentleman in the country, who lately sent us information of the death of his wife, adds the following. 'Post script—Just give her a little puff, will you?'" Mr. Elliott Cresson brought me some time ago a portrait of my father's friend William Short, which is well engraved and has been framed by me and hung up in my study. He is doing some good to the Colonization society with his large fortune (fifty or sixty thousand dollars a year income). No doubt the Society, at whose expense the portrait has been got up, expect a fat legacy at the death of the old gentleman, who is now about eighty; yet I say to my aged friend, Long may Short live.  

22 Bishop Henry Ustick Onderdonk succeeded Bishop William White in 1836 as Bishop of Pennsylvania.

23 Wealthy William Short (1759-1849) was painted by John Neagle. His portrait, along with many others, was presented to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1923 by the Pennsylvania Colonization Society. Included in the gift was Thomas Sully's portrait of Elliott Cresson.
June 16, 1839 I expect to move into a new house in Arch Street a little west of broad. It is a first rate house, of the first class in size etc., being nearly 25 feet front, 4 stories high, covered with zinc, fine kitchen (dining room etc in back buildings), splendid white Italian carved mantel pieces in other parlours. Parlours 14 feet high, a marble Portico to this and the adjoining house that cost upwards of three thousand dollars, exceeding fine cellars, with cistern and furnaces, water closet and shower and common bath up stairs, marble mantels and fireplaces in dressing rooms, as well as in the rooms to which they are an appendage, and finally the gas at the door, which has been introduced into the next house, and can be (as I intend) introduced into mine, and has been done. This splendid house cost upwards of twenty-five thousand dollars. I bought it for twenty-two thousand five hundred.

July 8, 1839 On the 16 of June I noted the cost of a house in Arch, west of broad street, and briefly described it. I have since purchased the adjoining lot east, containing 24 feet 9 inches on Arch, and 140 deep, which I am making into a garden, and have given for it, payable at my option, or that of my heirs, in 10 years, the sum of eight thousand dollars.

August 12, 1839 A crowded rush at the savings fund today by the poor people who have deposited their earnings. This is a charitable institution, intended to allow 4 p cent on deposits, and at the same time take care of the small savings of the labouring classes. Owing to the failure of several of the shaving shops which have usurped the name of this institution, and located themselves almost along side of its office, a panic has seized upon the depositors, and today they draw out eighty thousand dollars, on Thursday, thirty, and on Monday fifteen thousand. Whether a returning confidence will take place before then is very doubtful. Meanwhile the institution is put to great inconvenience, and is obliged to call in its mortgages. How they are to be paid without a sacrifice of 10 or 15 percent seems impossible, so that those for whom this money was lent out in order to procure 4 p cent, and who are the only persons benefitted by the institution are the means of greatly distressing the Directors and others who manage the charity gratis, and of occasioning severe loss to the borrowers. I begin to doubt the expediency of continuing a business subject to such shocks and vicissitudes.
August 30, 1839  On Monday last [August 26] I began to move my family into the Arch Street house. The weather was hot, yet by Tuesday night, being strong handed, we were able to sleep at our new abode. Much furniture is left behind, which we shall continue to haul over leisurely. China, glass & books are yet to come.

September 4, 1839  This day I lit for the first time the Gas, and a very splendid light it makes. I have in each parlour 8 burners, with tubes to add six or eight more, and there are in the vestibule and hall three; so that upon a gala occasion I can put in play about 35 burners. And as each burner is at least equal to three Astral lamps, and each lamp equal to 8 candles, we may state the gas power thus: \(35 \times 3 = 105 \times 8 = 920 \text{ candles!} \) [Arithmetic!]

October 7, 1839  I sent in a resignation of my place as manager of the Philada. Savings fund, on account of my residence being too distant from the office of that Institution, and the meetings for business being in the evening.

October 9, 1839  This day we had another stoppage of specie payments by our Banks in Philadelphia. I cannot but look upon this as a mark of dishonor which will long stand as a stain upon the reputation of our city. The excuses are not good, and the entire banking system must be reformed. It grieves me to see the commercial reputation of dear Philada. thus blasted.

October 14, 1839  A pageant of considerable beauty was exhibited today in the streets of Philada. on the arrival of Martin Van Buren, President of the United States. An escort of all the volunteers, superbly dressed, with several bands of good music and a long line of horsemen, carriages and pedestrians formed a procession and promenaded their guest up one street and down another for 3 or 4 hours. The President sat bare headed, while the Governor of the State, who was along side in the same carriage, looked like an unmanerly clown, as he is, with his unbrushed hat on his head.\(^24\)

October 19, 1839  Sad work in our currency. The Banks, by stopping specie payments, have ruined the credit of their paper, which is 15 p. cent discount in New York. . . . I have no hope of seeing things put to rights until 4 or 500 banks are wound up, and the others be made to do legitimate banking business, and be in that so snug as not to make more than 6 p. cent profit.

\(^{24}\) The Governor of Pennsylvania was David R. Porter.
October 26, 1839 The following trifle was written by John Brown Cutting (well known in Philada. forty years ago) on the occasion of an Irish gentleman named Lysle, whose peculiar mode of dancing I well remember, which was with a bent body and projected rear. Miss Chew & Mr. George Harrison are still living in Phila. These verses were composed, however, nearly 50 years ago.

With Gallant George, danced charming Chew,
In mirth and wit exhuberent,
When Lysle's chief end, sprung out to view
Prodigiously protuberant.
Quoth Julia, archly, with a smile,
Gay, heedless and unguarded,
Avoid the citadel of Lysle,
Or we shall be bombarded.

December 17, 1839 Corruption follows corruption! A few days ago, the cashier of the Western Bank was detected in making investments of the funds entrusted to him. Overcome by shame, he shot himself and died. Not long since, Mr. Hassinger, President of the Norristown Railroad, was convicted of taking blank shares of the stock in a clandestine manner, filling them up, and selling them to the amount of one or two hundred thousand dollars! And now we have today the discovery of an act of villany that puts these in the shade. It seems that the Bank of Kentucky employed Mr. [Hosea J.] Levis, late cashier of the Schuylkill Bank, as agent to attend the transfers of its stock. Levis, who appeared to have suddenly grown rich in a mysterious way, has been detected in issuing false certificates of the Kentucky institution to the amount of a million dollars. . . . The Bank has, in consequence, stopt payment. But where will these bold acts of rascality stop?

December 18, 1839 Yesterday the Bank gave out until 2 o'clock the notes of other banks for their own under 100 dollars, but did not pay depositors. The crowd in the banking room was great, until 2 o'clock, receiving other paper for the Schuylkill Bank paper. At that hour an injunction, issued by Judge [Joseph] Hopkinson on

25 John Brown Cutting was a well-known wit. It was he who termed William Temple Franklin "a double-distilled bastard." James Lyle (1765–1826) was a prominent merchant. Miss Chew was Juliana Chew (1765–1845) who married Philip Nicklin. George Harrison (1762–1845) was at this time a partner of Robert Morris. See Sophia Cadwalader, ed., Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher (Boston, 1929), 212.
behalf of the Kentucky Bk, closed the doors. The whole capital will be sunk to the stockholders in all probability! And there is no penitentiary by law for this plunder! It is only a breach of trust!!

December 26, 1839 I was sent for by the Grand Jury, in the case of Fraud by H. J. Levis, late cashier of the Bank of Schuylkill. The Jury examined me today. I told them my resigning my seat at the board of the Bank, in June 1837, was the extensive power assumed by the cashier in lending very large sums of money without consulting the board; and I gave as an instance the loan to two brokers, as I understood Mr. Levis to say (McAllister & J. Nevins)26 of three hundred thousand dollars, for five days, as he said. I remonstrated with him upon the imprudence of this act. The next cause of dissatisfaction was the neglect of attending personally to the Branch at Pottsville, when 3 or 4 hundred thousand dollars were left, without proper supervision. . . . Another reason alleged by me for retiring was my age, which admonished me to leave banking matters to younger heads.

January 3, 1840 In paying my tailor's bill today at Charles C. Watson's, the old gentleman (his manners and conduct entitle him to that appellation) sat near the desk, totally blind, as he has been for many years, a picture of health and contentment. He has been a master tailor for more than fifty years. Some short time ago, his numerous journeymen presented him with a gold snuff box, suitably inscribed as an evidence of their attachment, respect and esteem.

January 28, 1840 Nicholas Biddle, who is one of our finest belle-letter scholars and graceful orators, says in a speech, most excellently composed and pronounced at a dinner lately given at Pottsville, that such is our national spirit for industry and enterprise: "Every man seems born with some steam engine within him, driving him into an incessant and restless activity of body and mind. Every head and every hand busy, with a thousand projects, and only one holiday—the 4th of July—working from morning till night with the most intense industry. They work, not so much to accumulate as to appease the restless spirit within, and because, like the Scots at Bannockburn, they must 'do or die.'" The whole speech is truly fine and truly Pennsylvanian. It was spoken at a

26 Charles McAllister and James Nevins.
dinner given in honor of Mr. Lyman's discovery of smelting iron ore by hot blasts of wind with anthracite coal, a discovery that must place Pennsylvania in the foremost rank, possessing as she does such boundless fields of iron and coal.\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{February 13, 1840} The winter seems breaking up, after having held our port ice-bound for twenty-five days. Two steamboats have helped to lessen the embargo by many days. The distress among the poor has been great. There are now in the almshouse, over the Schuylkill, two thousand and twenty-four paupers, which is 400 more than was ever there before. The banks do not pay specie and our currency is greatly deranged.

\textit{March 19, 1840} The neglect at Harrisburg to provide for the interest of the state debt on the first of February has affected all kind of American stocks in London, and very specially that of Pennsylvania, which has fallen 10 or 12 percent below most of the stocks of the other states.

\textit{March 30, 1840} I was invited a few evenings ago to the observatory over the High-school marble edifice to see a new comet.\textsuperscript{28} The sky was clear, and a nebulous spot of small dimensions was pointed out to me as the wandering star, now about 120 millions of miles from the sun.

Last Friday the firemen of the city and suburbs had their triennial parade. It was a gorgeous pageant, consisting of 46 magnificent engines and hose-cars, drawn by horses attached to the heavy ones, and by the firemen themselves when not too bulky. About two thousand five hundred of the firemen, all in new uniform dresses, walked in procession with 8 or 10 bands of music. The day was fine and all passed off in good style.

\textit{April 3, 1840} There was a medical commencement held this morning, at which one hundred and sixty three graduates recd. their diplomas from the Provost of the University of Pennsylvania. And in the evening the Junior class of that Institution delivered 13

\textsuperscript{27} William Lyman built an anthracite furnace at Pottsville in 1839 and kept it in blast from Oct. 19, 1839, to Jan. 17, 1840, thereby winning a prize offered by Biddle and his associates.

\textsuperscript{28} The Central High School, opened in 1838 on Juniper St., between Market and Chestnut Sts., was crowned by an "Astronomical Observatory" which was, perhaps, the best equipped in the country.
orations of original composition. I attended both these exhibitions as one of the Trustees. The University is in a prosperous situation and numbers under its control 908 scholars, as follows: Collegiate Department, 111, Medical ditto, 444, Academical, 215, and charity (English) schools, 138.

April 4, 1840 In furnishing shrubbery for my garden, I have had occasion to visit a few of the nurseries in the neighbourhood of the City, and have been greatly surprized at the quantity of glass which the proprietors use for the protection of their plants, and at the surprizing beauty and gaudy magnificence of the flowers in which these green houses abound. One of these nurserymen, Mr. Buist, told me he had thirteen thousand square feet of glass. There are perhaps a dozen other nurseries, tho' not all so large.

April 8, 1840 Disorder in our Legislative halls have reached a height fitted to arouse the indignation of every good citizen. An habitual drunkard, named McElwee, who frequently disturbs the House of Representatives at Harrisburg, got into a quarrel a few days ago with a Mr. Higgins, and while the house was in session and a member speaking, he left his seat and went over to Higgins, and after some further altercation, he spat in his face, whereupon a battle ensued. They were soon parted, however, and a committee appointed to report upon the subject.

April 9, 1840 I am happy to say that the Legislature have so far vindicated the honor and dignity of the house of Representatives as to have expelled by a vote of more than two thirds that drunken, impudent, and good for nothing member McElwee.

May 9, 1840 The political party called Whigs assembled at Baltimore to the number of fifteen thousand Delegates, from every state in the union, on Monday 4. This multitude paraded thro' the town under the banners of their several states, carrying along with them Log Cabins, barrels of hard cider, and rolling a ball ten feet diameter. In the Log Cabin the door was opened by a wooden latch, with the string hanging outside. The ball was intended to be rolled on to the State of Maine, but when in Philadelphia performing

29 R. Buist, florist.
30 Thomas B. McElwee of Bedford County.
31 Charles W. Hegins of Northumberland County.
its gyrations up Walnut Street, it broke in two. I do not see the wit of this orbicular exhibition, but the Log Cabin, hard cider, and out-hanging string of the door latch are meant to represent the humble and hospitable way in which General Harrison (Whig candidate for President) lives in Ohio. He has often told the soldiers, who served under him, “come and see me; you will never find the string on the door drawn inside.”

June 13, 1840 My journal has been neglected for more than a month. During that time I have written an historical sketch of the Old Continental Money, which I design, under Providence, to read before the Philosophical Society. It is in a quarto book, where I have pasted specimens of those bills, which were issued in the years 1775–76–77–78 and 79, to the amount of two hundred millions. For the first two years they passed pretty nearly at par, because the amount did not much exceed the amount required for currency. That amount was about thirty millions of dollars paper, and ten millions specie. But when millions upon millions were put forth in addition, prices rose twenty fold, and the bills depreciated accordingly, so that Congress at last circulated them at the rate of 40 for one!!

This money gave us our Independence, and then fell to one thousand for one! It died unhonored, and unfortunately, unwept, for it was never paid off, and no one regretted its loss. Hard money took its place. And altho’ thousands, who had confidence in those who issued it and promised to pay it, were ruined, yet it had its day of extreme usefulness, and by depreciating gradually operated like a tax upon those thro’ whose hands it passed, sinking a little of its value with each one. . . .

June 17, 1840 Clergymen are often reproached with worldliness for relinquishing an establishment of a certain pay for one more lucrative. I think this accusation cannot with justice be often made against our pastors of the Episcopal church. I may cite as examples in the affirmative of this opinion the trial that the vestry of the beautiful new church of Saint Lukes has been making to obtain a Rector. Two clergymen have been invited, who receive only $1,500 and $1,000 a year, to come to Philadelphia and take charge of it at $2,000, and they have both declined. . . .

The community is greatly agitated about the approaching Presi-
dential Election. Processions, public meetings, the number of persons attending which are measured by the acre... so that it is said ten acres or fifteen acres of people assembled; these form the pleasures of our Republicans, who having but one holiday in the year (4th of July) turn these Election matters into an amusement. We had in Philada day before yesterday a Whig meeting of 10,000 or six acres of people, at which there was much speechifying. The Mayor of the City went to Washington, and brought up for the occasion three or four whig members, and a certain Mr. Baer from Ohio, who goes by the name of the Buck-eye Blacksmith. He is a first rate stump-orator. I heard him in the Statehouse yard. There he stood, in his shirt sleeves, hammering away, and bringing forth sparks and fire, in fluent language (badly pronounced) and warming up his audience into a blaze of enthusiasm. The Mayor told me he had bound himself to him for a month, during which time he is to be an itinerant orator.32

Meantime the Loco-Focos, or Van Buren men, are bolstering up the little man by praising his predecessor Jackson. As they have nothing to put forward in favor of Van, they eulogize the wicked old general in whose footsteps Van Buren affects to tread. This the Whigs say is making him wear his grandpa's old clothes!

June 19, 1840 At the Philosophical Society, Professor Henry33 experimented and lectured upon electricity and galvanism. One of the miseries of these societies is the constant recurring tax in the way of subscriptions. First of all we pay entrance money, 10 dollars; then 5 dolls. annually; then 30 or 40 dollars for the set of transactions; then subscriptions to the bones of a Mastodon, and then to some portrait. This evening it was a demand upon 20 gentlemen for 10 dollars each to pay Sully two hundred dollars for painting the minister of War Poinset, who has been a benefactor to the museum.34 And so it is with the Academy of Natural Sciences. First, 10 dolls. entrance; then 10 dolls. a year; then 50 dolls. to help build; then a

32 John W. Baer, the Buckeye Blacksmith, rose to a measure of fame during the election year of 1840 when Albert Newsam lithographed his portrait after a likeness by Eichholtz.

33 Joseph Henry (1797-1878) of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), later the first head of the Smithsonian Institution.

34 Joel Roberts Poinsett (1779-1851) was painted for the American Philosophical Society by Thomas Sully in 1840. He was at that time Secretary of War.
gentleman publishes some expensive work such as the *Crania Americana* of Doctor Morton, with the full sized lithographed drawings of 70 sculls. This truly magnificent work cost twenty dollars, and you are solicited to buy it etc. etc.

*June 27, 1840* I made myself ready to pay off a mortgage of ten thousand dollars that I found on my house, when I bought it. This mortgage was purchased by a stiff-rump lawyer (Horace Binney) of an Insurance Co. when paper was at a discount of 15 p.cent, last November, and now forsooth, when bank paper is at 4 only, he refuses to take anything but specie. This is entirely against the common practice.

*July 3, 1840* I read this evening before the Philosophical Society an historical sketch of the Continental bills of credit issued by the old Revolutionary Congress. . . . The Society have ordered it to be published in their Transactions.

*July 6, 1840* The whigs have a travelling orator name Baer, and nicknamed the Buck-eye-blacksmith, being from the state of Ohio. He is a forcible speaker in his way, and the blacksmiths of his politics in the city are about getting up a dinner for him. On the 4th (last Saturday) at a great meeting at Kensington, hearing that the “Globe” newspaper denied his being a real blacksmith, but said he was a broken down lawyer, Mr. Baer had the implements of his trade brought to the platform where he stood and made a horse shoe from a bar of iron in the presence of the multitude. The times are in a queer state. Log Cabins, hard cider, and itinerant tinkers to win and flatter the people!! And all this to coax them to elect Harrison, who is a great, good and honest man, instead of Van Buren, who is the leader of a corrupt party, intent it would seem on the destruction of the better half of the nation.

*July 15, 1840* I walked in procession with the Trustees of the University to attend the annual commencement. The company was numerous and the exercises good. This institution is in a flourishing condition, well supplied with scholars, having a large income, and out of debt.

*July 17, 1840* Again, thro’ divine goodness, I am permitted to

---

35 Dr. Samuel George Morton (1799–1851), physician and naturalist. His *Crania Americana* was published in 1839.
record my birthday, in good health, and as yet, thanks to a merciful Providence, without any of the infirmities of age, except a little dullness in hearing. Today I am sixty nine years old.

July 23, 1840 The descendants of a very intimate friend of my father’s, the late David Sears of Boston, have got themselves into trouble. That gentleman left a fortune of eight hundred thousand dollars to his son, an only child, who married Miss Mason, and after building himself a palace in Boston, and surrounding himself with every luxury, he and she were seized with a malady that attacks all our very rich people, and the millionaires elsewhere, who do not work or engage in some occupation, and that malady I must call by its French name, for we have no word in English to represent it. I mean Ennui. This Ennui or weariness generally drives our American Nabobs to Europe. And there, at Paris, or Geneva, or Florence etc they sit down for a while with their sons and daughters, alienate their regard for home, bring up their children in ways, language and notions foreign to those of their native land, and expose their daughters to the hazard of contracting marriage with outlandish Counts and Barons which lead to unhappiness, separation, and if practicable, divorce.

Now it happened just so with the daughter of Mr. Sears, who, tired of Boston and his fine house, has been for the last quarter of a century moving with his family across the Atlantic, passing and repassing every year or two. In one of these trips, while rusticating among the mountains of Switzerland, Miss Sears, who was only seventeen, was addressed by a French Swiss named D’Hauteville, and married her. It was stipulated that this lady, born of Republican parents in sober New England, the land of steady habits, should, forsooth, spend her winters in the midst of the frivolities of Paris. A child was born about 20 months ago, and after a winter or two at Paris the phlegmatic Swiss began to admonish and scold, and insist on keeping his young wife at home at his chateau or castle as every Frenchman calls a country residence of half a dozen rooms. To this order, Madam rebelled, left her husband, put herself under the protection of Genl. Cass, our minister at Paris, who sent her to her parents at Boston. I write from report, and rumour is oftimes a sad deceiver. She was followed by her husband, who came to claim his son, after receiving from his wife a positive refusal to live
with him again. He does not ask her to do so, but demands his child. A suit on this issue has been brought in our Courts in Philada. where a mother is permitted to retain her child during infancy. Many great lawyers are engaged, and the proceedings are going on.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{July 24, 1840} A fuss was made this week on the arrival of Charles Nailor, member of Congress from the 3d district, from Washington.\textsuperscript{37} His seat had been disputed by one of the most profligate politicians in America, where political rascality so much abounds. Charles Jared Ingersoll,\textsuperscript{38} to whom I allude, has spent the winter at Washington for the purpose of ousting Nailor, but he failed, and a procession was got up to welcome the latter. To show the extravagant exaggeration, which is commonly made in estimating numbers, I will state that professor Walter [R.] Johnson, who was at the window with me, looking on, counted the people on horseback in the line of march and made them 210. The next morning the papers reported them 700! The number of carriages was 72. Many people walked. Nailor himself was in a Barouche, drawn by six white horses, driven in hand.

\textit{July 27, 1840} We rode to Laurel Hill and Girard College, found both much improved. College superb. Nothing like it in America. The cemetery divided by handsome iron railings, and ornamented with mausoleums, cenotaphs, vaults, columns etc. Sir Walter Scott and Old Mortality at the entrance, sculptured by Thom, is of exquisite truth and beauty.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{July 28, 1840} I feel mortified to have to record another riot in Kensington (the northeast suburb of the city). Men and women assembled to prevent the execution of the law in regard to the laying-down a rail-road. The police were assailed in the house

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36} The case was tried before three judges in the Court of General Sessions. John Cadwalader and William M. Meredith represented Ellen Sears d’Hauteville, and William B. Reed, Joseph R. Ingersoll, and John M. Scott represented the plaintiff, Paul G. G. d’Hauteville. The verdict in the case was in favor of the defendant.
\item \textsuperscript{37} Charles Naylor (1806-1872) was a Whig congressman.
\item \textsuperscript{38} Charles Jared Ingersoll (1782-1862), a fiery Democrat who served a number of terms in Congress, was disliked by Breck because of Ingersoll’s opposition to the Bank of the United States and subsequently because of his attack on Webster.
\item \textsuperscript{39} To encourage an interest in viewing works of art at Laurel Hill Cemetery its owners acquired the figures carved by James Thom which depict the encounter of Sir Walter Scott and an aged peasant, known in Scott’s story as “Old Mortality.”
\end{itemize}
where they were at supper, and driven out when the building was fired and burnt. The women were the chief instruments of excitement. The laws must be executed and those who oppose punished. This is an old sore that has been a long time festering.

**August 1, 1840** My sister, Mrs. Lloyd, who has spent a week with us, left Philada. this morning, under my care, for Boston. We arrived at half past two o'clock at New York, where Mr. John Aspinwall met us, and conducted us to the Staten Island ferry boat, in which we went to the Quarantine ground, and were taken up there by my nephew, William H. Aspinwall's coachman and carried about 3 miles to the temporary residence of his family. William, who had taken passage to the island in a brig belonging to his house, and bound to the Pacific Ocean, came to us at 5 o'clock. The British Queen steamer was in sight from the piazza. We passed close to her on our arrival at New York. She was full of passengers. About six o'clock Mr. Aspinwall took his wife, Mrs. Lloyd, a Miss Stroble, governess to the children, and myself to view the ground which he has lately purchased, and on which he is going to erect immediately a gothic villa, to be called Sweetbriar, and from the intended site of which there is a fine view of the Never-Sink and Sandy-hook and the ocean. After promenading about the grounds, we drove some ten miles over the island, and stopt before the great hotel of South Brighton. Leaving me there for the night, the carriage returned with Mr. Aspinwall and family to his residence. This is a grand establishment, where I am, consisting of capacious porticos, well kept gardens, and genteel company. The house stands like a palace, in the midst of villas, decorated with every order of Grecian architecture, richly decorated and neatly enclosed.

**August 2, 1840** Dined with Mr. Aspinwall, and in the evening returned to New York and slept at Bunker's. Weather hot and crowds of people going to the Battery for a little sea breeze.

**August 3, 1840** At seven we drove to Beekman Street wharf and embarked on board a very nice steamer for Newhaven. The vast number of ships on the East River, both along Brooklyn and New York, and prodigious increase of buildings on each shore, particularly that of Long Island, are truly astonishing. It is only two years

---

*William J. Bunker's Mansion House, 39 Broadway.*
ago that I sailed in these waters, and the Brooklyn side appeared to me to have doubled. The view, take it all together, is one of the most exciting I ever saw. In about $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours we ran down ninety miles, and landed in the classic city of Newhaven. This nursery of the sciences, and collegiate lore, in every department of learning, is enriched by commerce, and superbly built. The rail-road to Hartford, 36 miles, was passed in two hours. At this city the traveller is again astonished at the splendour of the houses. Every one seems ambitious to bedeck his residence with colonnades, cupolas, balustrades, and above all, as many of the houses are of wood, a profusion of white-lead. Thus decorated, they look singularly beautiful. We took a stage here for twenty five miles to Springfield. This is another pretty New England town. Fifty years ago I used to traverse this country often, going about 40 miles a day, and taking six days to go from Boston to New York. The towns along the route were then small and shabby. They have improved surprisingly in size and beauty, but the husbandry of the whole country seems in my eye and recollection to be in statu-quo. There are the farms, filled with weeds, bad fences and dirty hedge rows which are far from doing credit to the yeomanry of the land of steady habits. We met Mr. & Mrs. [Condy] Raguet of Phila. at Springfield, just arrived by railroad from Boston, which city they left at 3 o'clock, and had traversed nearly one hundred miles in five hours!

August 4, 1840 The railroad from Springfield to Boston through Worcester is well conducted, except the absence of proper warning, by printed notices, not to put arm or head out of the car, the rails are so close to the bridge walls that scarcely six inches separate them from the side of the car. My hand rested just on the edge of the car and received a severe blow. One half inch further out and it would have been mashed and ruined. About a month ago, the superintendent on this very line, thinking something was wrong, put his head out just as the car approached a bridge, and was killed on the spot. A few broken limbs or heads will probably induce the proprietors to expend 2 or 3 dollars in cautionary hand-bills. For the rest everything went on well, and in about five hours we reached Boston. Mrs. Lloyd’s people were in readiness to get us a good dinner, while several of the neighbours call’d to see her, and welcome her home.
August 5, 1840  Reconnoitred the city. Boston, the cleanest town in this hemisphere, improves daily. My residence is directly opposite to the Park, or Common, which contains 45 acres and is wholly surrounded by an iron-railing, and stands open to the country. It is kept in good order, and occasionally much frequented. All the inhabitants of this beautiful town seemed prosperously occupied, looking pleased, and showing good humour and contentment in all they did. Great amenity when asked for information in the streets. These streets, by the by, are kept so clean and sweet that cigars are not allowed to be smoked in them, under penalty of two dollars! This is being rather over-nice. I met in the outskirts of the town a whiskered, bearded dandy, with a cigar in his mouth. Thinking I ought to save him from the two dollar penalty, I apologized for asking whether he were a stranger? "I am, said he, an entire one." "And so am I, and you will excuse me, I hope, for letting you know that a law fastidiously ridiculous prohibits smoking in the streets." He thanked me, and laughed, no doubt, at this New England blue-law. Boston has increased more than twenty thousand inhabitants in ten years, and numbers nearly eighty-four thousand. If Charlestown, which with Roxbury and other adjoining villages, be added, the number would go to one hundred and twenty thousand. In the year 1790 it contained only eighteen thousand and thirty! And was then an unsightly, wooden town, without lights, watchmen or side pavements. Today it is built for the most part of granite and brick, and is lighted well, and some parts with gas, and has a good night police.

In the afternoon Mr. Borland\(^41\) gave me a drive round the matchless vicinity, of 10 or 12 miles. Much as I think the state of husbandry in New England at a stand-still, I must speak differently of the horticulture of the district immediately adjacent to Boston. It is perhaps the richest in the United States, abounding in fine garden truck (or in vulgar language, Belly timber).

August 10, 1840  At 10 this morning, my dear sister accompanied me to the cars, where I embraced and bade farewell to that beloved lady. In 2 hours we were on board the Massachusetts steamboat at Providence, 41 miles from Boston. In two hours more we

\(^41\) John Borland, merchant.
ran down to Newport, 30 miles. This is a crack steamer, very fast and capacious. From New Port to Stonington we had a beautiful passage, arriving there at 5 o’clock. Here we were to wait until half past eight, for the cars that left Boston at ¼ past 4. So that the passengers were to pass over 90 miles in 4¾ hours. And they arrived very punctually. More than 250 rushed into the steamer from this source. Supper was served to this multitude in a fore and aft cabin, of the whole length of the boat. When the tables were cleared away, the berths, 3 deep, numbering some 140, were filled, with an additional number of temporary berths, placed on frames, also 3 deep, which accommodated perhaps 30 more. In this vast room, with 170 sleepers, all was quiet, no conversation, no snoring, nor even hard breathing. A wonderful degree of order prevailed. Besides this room there was the ladies apartment, and the state-rooms on the upper deck, and several forward passengers, so that we must have had 300 in all.

August 11, 1840 Fine day. At early dawn I willingly left my sleepless bed and saw the sun, “with rosy fingers, ope the gates of morn.” Everything around was exciting. For three hours we beheld new beauties opening, until we approached the vicinity of New York, when sailing between the two cities of Brooklyn and N.Y. we came into the Hudson. The Phila. boat had departed, but at 9 o’clock the rail-road cars, starting from Liberty St. were ready, and in about 5 hours brought us to Phila. 95 miles.

August 22, 1840 We have in our neighbourhood an exhibition every evening of Fireworks, that are surprizingly grand. The Pyrotechnist is a Mr. Hall. We went this evening to see the Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, which was displayed on a magnificent scale and far exceeded anything of the kind I had ever seen. These shows are in a large public garden, and are well encouraged.

Geology has made vast progress since Bishop Watson (who wrote about forty years ago) compared a Geologist to a gnat mounted on an elephant and laying down theories as to the whole internal structure of the vast animal, from the phenomina of the hide.  

August 23, 1840 I have often thought that our clergymen of

42 Jersey City.
43 Richard Watson (1737–1816), Bishop of Llandaff.
all denominations of the present day are defective in their modes of preaching, in as much as they let the doctrinal instruction engross their whole time or nearly so, to the exclusion of moral topics, and current duties of life. I mean by the word doctrinal, the holy mysteries of our religion, such as Baptism, original sin, justification, and faith. Upon this subject I wrote to my nephew, the Revd. Charles Breck, and sent him ninety nine heads of moral discourse, taken principally from that superlatively excellent work, “The whole Duty of man.” I am glad to see this opinion sanctioned by the following Extract from the “Banner of the Cross”: “There is a very general, and a very injurious defect in the preaching of the day, to wit—preaching to the people to do nothing but to believe, and trust in Jesus Christ, without specifying the duties which constitute Evangelical morality.”

August 31, 1840 We have perhaps at this date fifteen hundred newspapers. The first that was ever printed in this hemisphere dates from Boston, 1705, called “The Boston News letter.” In 1776 the whole number in the United States was fifty six. Philadelphia began in 1719 with the “Weekly Mercury.” The first daily paper appeared in that city, and for many years was without a rival in any of the cities. It was printed and edited by Dunlap and Claypole [sic], and was called “The American Daily Advertiser.” It continued in a flourishing condition, under the care of Zachariah Poulson, until 1839. Mr. Claypole, one of its first editors, is still living, and so is Mr. Poulson.  

September 2, 1840 Electioneering seems now to be the chief amusement of our great Republic. The French dance and sing; the Spaniards go to mass & vespers; the English fight cocks and race horses; the Italians show pictures and eat macaroni; and we Americans assemble by thousands to hear from demagogues and stump orators a repetition, one thousand times repeated, of what is to be read daily in every one of our fifteen hundred newspapers! Vive La République! Hail Columbia happy land! Let us sing out too, with our lively friends, the French, vive la bagatelle! for a light heart is a treasure.

44 John Dunlap and David C. Claypoole converted their thrice weekly Pennsylvania Packet into a daily on Sept. 21, 1784. The paper merged into the North American in 1840.
September 6, 1840  An illiberal Act of the British parliament has been in force until lately, prohibiting preaching in the pulpits of the established church to all clergymen who were not subjects of Great Britain, so that our Reverend American gentlemen of the protestant Episcopal church could never be heard from the pulpits of England when they visited that country. Very recently the Archbishop of Canterbury has obtained a repeal of that law, and the disability which has prevented our clergy from preaching there has been removed. The venerable prelate has expressed himself in terms of high satisfaction at this result, and spoke with the deepest interest of the church in America.

September 15, 1840  That silly fellow, Prince Napoleon Louis, has again tried to disturb the Government of Louis Phillippe by landing from an English steamer at Boulogne, with a handful of men. He has been taken prisoner, and old General Montholon, with several other foolish officers, who accompanied him, have shared the same fate. They had large sums of money, and printed proclamations, declaring the throne vacant, dissolving the chambers etc. These harum scarum blockheads have all been killed, wounded, or captured. Has Joseph Bonaparte anything to do with this treasonable act of his nephew? He was, about that time, on the Rhine, in some of the German states. It is said that, being solicited to recognize the royalty of Louis Phillippe, he replied: “I would recognize him, if like us he had received four millions of votes.” (Alluding to the votes said to have been given when his brother Napoleon was elected Emperor.) “These votes,” continued Joseph, “are our title. Let Louis Phillippe produce as many and I will not hesitate to recognize him.”

September 25, 1840  We have no lack of amusement for the idle. On the contrary, the business (and many make a business of amusement) seems to be in a fair way of ruining the projectors, as well as the morals of our youth. Think of seven theatres open every night in the City of Philadelphia, with a population not exceeding

45 Charles Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1808-1873), as Napoleon III future Emperor of the French, made this attempt at Boulogne on Aug. 6, 1840. Arrested, he spent six years in captivity.

46 Charles Tristan Monthalon (1781-1853), a close associate of Napoleon I, acted as chief of staff of the 1840 expedition and suffered seven years imprisonment.
two hundred thousand!!! And such is the fact, and here are their names. 1. Chesnut, near 6th. 2. National, Chesnut, near 9th. 3. Walnut and 9th. 4. Arch, near 6th. These are all large first rate buildings. Then comes the Eagle, in Coat’s Street; a Circus and a Vaudeville. To these may be added Peale’s museum, which is open every night for music; then frequent concerts, with full orchestra, at the great hall of the musical fund, and at the masonic hall. To these again may be added 24 public lectures given upon various subjects by the most talented members of this Athenian community.

October 2, 1840 The political exertions going forward in all quarters are truly surprizing. The first men of the nation are abroad, visiting the different states; now addressing thousands in mass, in Massachusetts; then in a few days appearing before increased numbers in New York; then again in Delaware. And so in the west and far west. Thus we have Harrison himself (and I am sorry for that) in Ohio; Clay in Kentucky and Tennessee; Webster in the eastern and middle states. Bad weather does not prevent these meetings. Whenever the sky is leaky (as the slang term is), they congregate notwithstanding, speechify and listen. On one occasion lately at Wilmington, they displayed a banner on a wet day with these words on it: “Any rain but the reign of Van Buren.”

In these elections, they assess the candidates pretty heavily. As to the place (common council man) for which they have made me a candidate, it brings in nothing but trouble, yet have they called on me for fifteen dollars, which I have paid this morning, towards defraying expences of elections. This is, truly, working for nothing, and finding myself!

October 9, 1840 The new and showy Church of St. Luke was opened this evening to a large company for the purpose of testing the powers and melodies of the organ. The trial was perfectly satisfactory. It was made in Boston and cost five thousand dollars.

The Church was, generally, very much admired. The stucco-work is superb, and the gas burners, giving a bright flame, from the top of ewer-like urns, are in good taste. The pews are wide, and furnished all in uniform coverings of a drab-coloured marine. Next Friday this fine church is to be consecrated. I was one of eighteen who advanced each fifteen hundred dollars to build it. The cost of ground was 10,000 dollars, edifice 36,000, and furniture and organ 10,000.
Grand aggregate, about 56,000. It stands in 13th Street, a little below Spruce.\(^47\)

Several of the gentlemen who associated to build this church have joined a company of twenty, who advance one thousand dollars each to build another church in the suburb of Spring Garden, which is to be like Saint Luke, dedicated to the Protestant Episcopal sect, and to be named St. Philip.

October 15, 1840 Our general State Election took place on the 13th. The increase of votes was enormous, \textit{and all on one side}. Of course an immense number of illegal voters were brought forward by the Loco-focos. The city proper gives a large majority for the Whig tickets, and I, by consequence find myself a common council man.

October 25, 1840 We had divine worship in our new church today, when the new Rector, Rev. Mr. Spear, preached, and preached exceedingly well too.\(^48\) About 26,000 dollars worth of pews was sold a few days before and the congregation will soon be large, I hope. I bought a small pew for three hundred dollars. It has 4 seats, near the pulpit, and I want but one. This leaves me 3 seats for my friends.

October 26, 1840 The first ice in this neighbourhood was made last night. In committee on City property this evening, I voted for granting the Philosophical Society permission to erect an observatory in the centre of Rittenhouse Square. Should Councils confirm the vote of their Committee, a handsome structure will be placed there, sixty or seventy feet high, in which will be placed some splendid instruments made at Munic [sic].\(^49\)

November 11, 1840 At length Pennsylvania stands redeemed. It is officially announced that on the late Presidential Election she has carried the Ticket for Genl. Harrison as President, after casting the largest vote that ever was polled, being thus: 144,019 Harrison; 143,676 Van Buren—total 287,695 votes! being 109,109 votes more than were given in at the Presidential Election four years ago. . . . It is consolatory to the friends of Republicanism to see and know that

\(^{47}\) The architect for Saint Luke and the Epiphany Church, 330 South Thirteenth St., was Thomas S. Stewart. He copied the design of this church in 1845 when he built St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Va., another Greek Revival edifice.

\(^{48}\) The Rev. William W. Spear.

\(^{49}\) Because of a lack of funds, this observatory was not built.
Virtue is strong enough among the people to counteract the corruption and disorderly conduct of a plundering faction that has brought the country into sad confusion. Andrew Jackson was the evil spirit who created and has sustained for the last twelve years, by a system of shocking mendacity, thro’ the press and postoffices, the turbulent and disorderly party now so signally defeated and displaced.\(^{50}\)

November 18, 1840  Mr. Nicholas Biddle, who is one of our finest belle-letter scholars, delivered an address to some agriculturists lately replete with instruction, wit, point, and beautiful writing, concludes thus: “The three great master influences which now rule the world are force, opinion, and affection—the cartridge-box, the ballot-box, and the band-box.”\(^{51}\)

November 26, 1840  Philadelphia was all in motion today, on the occasion of the translation of the bones of General Hugh Mercer from Christ Church to Laurel Hill. He was killed at the battle of Princeton in 1777, and now, after 63 years, an exhumation has taken place in consequence of a street being about to pass thro’ the church yard, and for the purpose of placing his remains under a suitable mausoleum. At least 20 well uniformed companies of soldiers, composing an escort of 6 or 700 military, and a vast procession of others in carriages and on foot accompanied the bier. The Govrs. of Penna. and Virginia were present, and many other distinguished strangers. It was a splendid sight. Perhaps as fine as ever before exhibited here.

December 1, 1840  I find by the newspapers that Philadelphia City and County contain within a fraction two hundred and fifty eight thousand inhabitants. The number ten years ago being, according to the census of that time, 188,000. The encrease in those ten years being seventy thousand!! To accommodate this vast encrease of nearly 40 pr. cent, ten thousand houses must have been built, allowing seven persons to a house. And that number has no doubt been erected within that time.

New York has encreased about 110,000, being about 50 pr. cent on the number (202,000), which it contained in 1830. Its present

---

\(^{50}\) Harrison’s national majority out of 2,402,481 votes cast was 1,458,890.

\(^{51}\) Biddle’s speech was delivered on Oct. 7, 1840, at the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture exhibition at the Rising Sun, several miles north of Philadelphia.
population is 312,000. And if you add Brooklyn, which stands as a suburb on the opposite side of East River, and contains 36,000, the population of New York may be put down at about 350,000!! When I recollect seeing that city in 1787, with only twenty thousand, I may well wonder at this stupendous growth. Baltimore contains 101,000, by this new national census; New Orleans 106,000 (when ceded at the beginning of this century to the United States it contained only 10,000).

*December 15, 1840* It would be worthy of a Philadelphia lawyer, so famed and so astute as to become proberbial, to make out the following case, covering, as it does, the whole ground: “Gentlemen,” said an eminent counsel, “there are three points upon which we rely for the defence. In the first place, the kettle was cracked when we borrowed it—in the second place, it was whole when we returned it—and in the third place, we never had it.”

*December 31, 1840* As chairman of a committee appointed jointly by the two City Councils, on the subject of railroads in our streets, I gave into the Common Council this evening an elaborate report upon the occasion. The frequent meetings of the committee, the hearing of evidence, and composing the report has occupied me for the past fortnight. The report consists of about 35 manuscript pages and took up about 40 minutes in reading. Council ordered 500 copies to be printed in pamphlet form. We reported in favor of leaving the rails in the streets, and this we did unanimously.

The year 1840, now about closing, will be famous in our annals: 1st As showing the good sense of the people, from one end of the Republic to the other, in carrying on an election of great excitement without the smallest disturbance; 2 dly That our exports exceeded our imports 27 millions, thus showing our vast resources in money matters.