Of Castles in Stockport
and Other Strictures:
Samuel Preston’s Contentious
Agency for Henry Drinker

—When I look back at the heavy sums expended in settling the
Stockport Estate, the Castles built there, the large sums trusted out to
persons not likely to pay it, it looks as if too much dependence has
been placed on supplies from me without duly adhering to economy
and good management.

Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, April 16, 1800.¹

A GENTS CLEARLY ARE NOT WHAT THEY USED TO BE. They
may be middlemen of all types—messengers, expeditors, bro-
kers, even negotiators; but they seldom undertake the role
which the designation “agent” itself contemplates, that is, to act for
and bind another.

In today’s world of instant communication, the agent and the person
on the other side with whom he deals hardly have the opportunity
to ponder what the agent’s principal—or, in the older parlance, his
constituent—might intend. Gone is the sizable challenge of attempt-
ing to construe stale or ambiguous instructions or of responding
urgently to events that principal and agent failed to foresee. Instead

This paper grew out of an invitation to speak to the Equinunk Historical Society at its
annual meeting on July 7, 1984. For the warm welcome I received, I confirm my gratitude
to the officers and members of this flourishing organization headquartered in the vicinity
of Stockport. Ann Preston Vail of Middletown, New York, was present on that occasion
and has since provided much helpful information and perspective about her ancestor. I must
also acknowledge the large debt I owe to Linda Stanley, Curator of the Manuscripts and
Archives Department of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, who, in the uncharted
spaciousness of the Drinker Collection, put me securely on the track of Samuel Preston.

¹ Henry Drinker’s letterbook for the years 1796 to 1800, page 536, in the Drinker
Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (the Society hereafter cited as HSP, and
the letterbooks as L.B., followed by parenthetical reference to the period covered by the
volume consulted). The Drinker Collection is largely uncatalogued. See note 27 below
concerning the correspondence between Henry Drinker and Samuel Preston.
of an elaborate instrument drafted to endure in the various contingencies a trusted agent might be expected to confront, the modern power of attorney that is labeled “durable” confers authority to act in the very circumstance in which the agent could not have reliably exercised it at common law—when the principal has ceased to be legally competent.\(^2\)

Matters were, however, quite different in Philadelphia as the eighteenth century shaded into the nineteenth. Distance was a formidable obstacle, whether for the merchant exporting his goods to the West Indies or Europe or for the land speculator anxious to defend his investment in the backcountry of Pennsylvania. Both were dependent on agents, the old-fashioned kind that acted in the principal’s place and stead while occasionally improvising in his name. For neither merchant nor speculator could afford to hem in his agent’s authority so tightly that he would be rendered ineffective at the precise moment when, had some measure of discretion been granted, the agent might have staved off disaster.\(^3\)

\(^2\) The better view at common law was said to be that the power granted by the constituent did not terminate with his incapacity but only as a consequence of an adjudication in a lunacy proceeding. James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law* (New York, 3d ed., 1836), II, 645, and Francis Wharton, *A Commentary on the Law of Agency and Agents* (Philadelphia, 1876), 60. Nevertheless, in spite of the high authority of Chancellor Kent, it was true, as a practical matter, that the incapacity of the principal (or, even more ticklish to contend with, grounds for suspecting his incapacity) rendered useless a power of attorney—thus leading to remedial legislation like that enacted in Pennsylvania in 1982, sanctioning so-called durable powers of attorney which, when the principal so specifies, will remain in effect notwithstanding his subsequent mental deterioration. Act of February 18, 1982, No. 26, 1982 Pa. Laws 45; 20 Pa. Cons. Stat. Ann. §5604 (Purdon Supp. 1985). Very early in the colonial period, the Pennsylvania General Assembly recognized the importance of powers of attorney in land transactions by confirming titles acquired through agents and by stipulating that “all such powers [or letters of attorney] shall be accounted, deemed and taken to be in force until the attorney or agent shall have due notice of a countermand, revocation or death of the constituent.” Act of January 12, 1705, *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania From 1682 to 1801*, comps. James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders (Harrisburg, PA., 1896-1911), II, ch. 155.

\(^3\) The distinction to be drawn is between a general agent operating under a broad grant of authority and a special agent operating under a limited one that is directed to a specific business objective or transaction. See Kent, *Commentaries on American Law*, II, 619-20; and Theophilus Parsons, *The Law of Contracts* (Boston, 5th ed., 1866), I, 40-47. As a compromise, the land magnates of the late eighteenth century would often give their agents letters of attorney virtually unlimited in scope, but accompanied by private instructions which, while not detracting from the amplitude of the power conferred in the formal instrument if it
Judges of the period struggled to apply in novel situations the few received rules of the law of agency. Often the judicial task would be to determine which of two blameless litigants should bear the economic loss. In a series of cases involving the responsibility of a factor to his principal, the courts would repeatedly exonerate the factor who, under the pressure of significant intervening change, appeared to have strayed from instructions. Thus, in a 1795 decision, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania identified a “want of precision” in the letter of a Philadelphia merchant to his Charleston, South Carolina representative who was commissioned to sell casks of gin and apple whiskey, and held for the factor in the principal’s suit to obtain payment of the difference between the cash price the principal had sought and the sum the factor remitted in a sale completed partially on credit.4 A decade later, Chief Justice Marshall worked his way through the exquisite address of a Cadiz trading house to its correspondent in Baltimore and concluded that the latter was protected in disregarding the direction to ship substantial cargoes of tobacco in American bottoms.5 In Dusar v. Perit, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court reached a finely balanced result when it sustained the supercargo’s sale of the flour carried in the schooner Alligator on terms at variance with the instructions of the principal—but not the sale of the Alligator itself.6 And all of this was done while the judges in these cases paid lip-service to the proposition that “an agent is bound to pursue the orders of his principals, and is answerable for any injury consequent on departing from them, however fair may have been his motives for such departure.”7

were alone exhibited to a third party, would preserve the principal’s right to hold the agent accountable for unauthorized deviations. Such was the course taken by Henry Drinker in 1789 when he empowered William Cooper to sell about 8000 acres of land in Luzerne County. Receipt and memorandum dated as of March 28, 1789 (signed by Cooper only), Drinker Collection, HSP.

4 Geyer v. Decker, 1 Yeates (Pa.) 486, 487.
5 Manella, Pujals & Co. v. James Barry, 7 U.S. (3 Cranch) 415 (1806).
6 4 Binney (Pa.) 361 (1812). Since the terms are not prevalent in current usage, it may be appropriate to recall that a factor is a commercial agent to whom the principal entrusts his property for the purpose of sale, and that a supercargo is such an agent acting with respect to cargo on board ship—that is, a factor afloat.
7 Manella, Pujals & Co. v. James Barry, 7 U.S. (3 Cranch) 415, 439. These decisions also provide early evidence of the soundness of the rule that has traditionally assisted students attempting to disentangle agency law: “The principal always loses.”
In 1812, the principal lost again before the highest Pennsylvania court—this time in a land transaction. The principal's antagonist in *Morgan v. Stell* was not the agent but a third party who had bargained with the agent in good faith. By a power of attorney executed in Ireland in 1797 and later recorded in Philadelphia, the Camacs (the real plaintiffs in this proceeding) authorized one Halliday to lease valuable land that Mrs. Camac owned in the Northern Liberties. By a second power of attorney signed in 1801, the Camacs denied Halliday the ability to act for them except as he obtained the approval of one of two other designated representatives. Having knowledge of this limitation on his authority, Halliday nevertheless entered into a long-term lease with the defendant for what turned out to be less than advantageous rent. Not until a year later did the Camacs publish revocation of the power of attorney originally given Halliday, and this tardiness led the court to rule against them on the ground that they had failed to take sufficient steps publicly to dislodge Halliday as their agent. Said Chief Justice Tilghman:

> There is no imputation on the integrity of Mr. Camac, or any of his attorneys except Halliday, who certainly acted dishonestly in making leases after notice of the second power. The misfortune is, that too much reliance was placed on him. It was taken for granted that he would cease to act alone. Somebody must suffer by him; and under all the circumstances of the case, I am of the opinion that the loss should fall on his constituents.

In the cold light of these decisions, men of property could discern an obvious lesson: "Choose carefully those who are to act as your agents, that they may be men of loyalty and sound judgment, lest you later determine, at painful cost, that your confidence in them has been misplaced." In fact, more than one of the great land speculators hit upon a special solution to this problem which, if it did not ensure sound judgment, had at least the virtue of guaranteeing loyalty: they dispatched a son to serve as their surrogate in the wilderness.

Though he could not prevent disaster from overtaking his father,
Thomas Morris, posted to the Genessee country in 1791, ably represented Robert Morris there. On the verge of collapse, James Wilson turned to his son William; if he imagined that William, "lazy and over-much inclined to frivolity," might contrive a miracle at Wilsonville, the fanciful factory-town that now lies under the waters of Lake Wallenpaupack and that was then steadily draining Wilson’s resources, he was mistaken in the event. Timothy Pickering, who quixotically took off for the backwoods of northeastern Pennsylvania after John Adams had fired him as Secretary as State in May, 1800, left his son and namesake in Starucca to safeguard his interests, which the younger Timothy did in some sense of isolation until his early death in 1807.

The most grueling filial mission was Thomas Meredith’s. His father, Samuel Meredith, a fringe participant in the Revolution, had inherited a substantial fortune from his father, Reese Meredith, a prominent Philadelphia merchant. That fortune Samuel Meredith eventually frittered away in land investments made almost everywhere but concentrated in the northeastern corner of Pennsylvania. As the first treasurer of the United States in the administrations of Washington and John Adams, Meredith kept his wife and children in food and clothes by drawing on his government salary. When, however, his son Tom returned from a long and carefree adventure abroad, he learned that sobering responsibilities awaited him. Retired from government service as an early victim of the spoils system, his father was on the run from creditors, a maneuver that would continue until his death in 1817; and having no plan for the management of his vast empire of scattered properties except to hang on at all costs, Meredith required Tom to cope. For the next twenty years, Tom

10 Eleanor Young, Forgotten Patriot, Robert Morris (New York, 1950), 206-10.
11 Charles Page Smith, James Wilson, Founding Father (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1956), 383.
12 Octavius Pickering and Charles W. Upham, The Life of Timothy Pickering (Boston, 1867-1873), III, 486-88; IV, 1-19, 31-34, 113-20. It is suggested in Emily C. Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1873), 95, that young Timothy Pickering languished in exile and that the local girl he married was treated with disdain by his parents. The deposed Secretary of State intended to support his family in part by working as agent for other large landowners like Samuel Meredith. See Timothy Pickering to Samuel Meredith, July 26, 1800, Wyoming Historical & Geological Society (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.), in which Pickering agreed to act in this role for Meredith.
was either on the road—in ruts, mud, and general discomfort—or imprisoned in the family homestead pretentiously called "Belmont," located about thirty miles up the Lackawanna Valley from the site of modern Scranton. It was Tom who battled warily against Connecticut intruders, who constantly devised strategies of delay to prevent the sale of his father's properties for back taxes, who struggled to squeeze some return, however meager, from this remote and rocky acreage his father clung to, and who rallied the spirits of members of his family while he tried to block their passage from shabbiness to penury.¹³

At one point, Tom vowed to escape these family obligations. To do so, he was told, would be the ruin of his father:

I could not stand this appeal. I resumed the care of these lands, determined to struggle to the last in their defence. I shall never forget the melancholy that seized me as I repassed that desolate region between Pocono and Wilkes-Barre. The solitude and barrenness around me, typical of my own desolate state, almost unmanned me, and I found relief only in a flood of tears.¹⁴

The land fever also gripped that canny Philadelphia Quaker, Henry Drinker, just as it had Morris, Wilson, Pickering, and Meredith.¹⁵ Yet, during his lifetime, his two sons were not enlisted to combat the virus.¹⁶ Unlike these other speculators, Drinker combined a book-

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¹³ For background about the Meredith family, see generally Jerry Grundfest, George Clymer, Pennsylvania Revolutionary, 1739-1813 (New York, 1982). Clymer was Samuel Meredith's brother-in-law as well as his partner in the mercantile firm of Meredith & Clymer which Reese Meredith founded. As for the desperate condition of Samuel Meredith's family, his daughter was to lament: "We are in want of many articles of cloathing, of what can I say we are not in want, since our wants seem to be as numerous as the things that are necessary to the support . . . of life." Elizabeth Meredith to John Read, December 18, 1810, Clymer-Meredith-Read Papers, New York Public Library.


¹⁵ The best treatment of the subject overall remains the 1958 doctoral dissertation of Norman B. Wilkinson, Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania, 1779-1800, A Test of the New Democracy (New York, 1979), although, by and large, the author neglects the considerable land speculation in the northeastern corner of the state.

¹⁶ However, from portions of a journal he kept, we know that Henry S. Drinker, one of the sons, was on his father's business in northeastern Pennsylvania in the summer of 1788. "Extracts from HSD's journal in the Beech Woods" (1788 and 1789), Drinker Collection, HSP. The other son, William Drinker, was very much involved as executor in managing his father's land investments after Drinker's death.
keeping mentality of the most assiduous kind with a total devotion to business—his business, not politics, not a judicial career, not government service. If he responded to any other call, it was that of his religion which, consistently with his business interests, exhorted him to patience and discipline. As he came to this task relatively late in life, it was impossible for Drinker himself to exercise effective control by traveling across Pennsylvania or to his lands in the Franklin patent in New York State. Rather, he recruited a network of agents. His letterbooks and the boxes after boxes of miscellaneous correspondence, legal documents, and accounts that constitute the Drinker Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania allow us to take measure of this diverse crew of agents.

Who were they? Or perhaps, since the list can only be a partial and selective one, we should inquire what were Henry Drinker’s criteria in choosing an agent. Without doubt, Drinker inclined toward men of religious conviction, and especially Quakers, although, sad to say, they sometimes sorely tested his faith in the value of belief. Thus it was that he became associated with Samuel Wallis, a Friend from Maryland, who represented both Drinker and his partner Abel James on the Pennsylvania frontier in the 1760s. A shadowy figure, Wallis in the succeeding years glided mysteriously between Philadelphia and an almost palatial home in Muncy on the west branch of the Susquehanna. In due course, Wallis would transact land business not only with Drinker but also with Robert Morris, James Wilson, and Samuel Meredith, all of whom had reason in the end to regret the experience. A century and a half would pass after Wallis’s death.

17 Two observers with first-hand knowledge paid tribute to Drinker’s bookkeeping skills. His last clerk, Abraham Mitchell, gave a detailed affidavit about his master’s accounting practices, stating that “HD was always considered by those who knew him to be an accurate, careful and good accountant.” Affidavit of Abraham Mitchell, June 2, 1814, Drinker Collection, HSP. In a similar vein, Samuel Preston said of him: “... there never was any man more careful and correct to keep papers than the late H. Drinker.” Samuel Preston to Orthiel Alsop, February 21, 1824, Drinker Collection, HSP.

18 The extensive Wallis papers are on microfilm at HSP. The account of sums paid Wallis for various missions he undertook on behalf of James & Drinker, starting in 1765 and continuing to 1787, is in the Drinker Collection.

19 See Wilkinson, Land Policy and Speculation in Pennsylvania, 71-81, 113-17, 247-49, for the tangled relationships with Drinker, Morris, and Wilson. The squabble between Meredith and Clymer, as joint investors, on the one hand, and Wallis and his executors, on the other,
before another agency of his was uncovered: he had served as an intermediary between the British in New York City and Benedict Arnold at West Point.²⁰

Drinker was luckier with John Hilborn, a Quaker from Bucks County who founded the settlement at Harmony at the very top of the state. An honest and simple man, Hilborn loyally protected the interests of the Drinker family until he died in 1826.²¹ Another Quaker from Bucks County, John Kinsey, was put in charge of the Union Farm, a utopian venture in extracting sugar from maple trees. Deferential in the extreme to Drinker, Kinsey proved a considerable disappointment; in retrospect, it must be conceded that there were strong forces opposing him—harsh conditions on site, a complaining wife, and the farfetched expectations of the shareholders of the Union Farm.²²

The ability to survive away from home, in profound isolation and hardship, was Drinker's second requirement for an agent. If Kinsey failed to make the adjustment, two men from Massachusetts succeeded. One was Jason Torrey, who migrated south in 1793 as a jack-of-all-trades but who showed particular talent as a surveyor; he parlayed that skill into the lucrative business of acting for absentee landowners from Philadelphia, from whom he would sometimes acquire choice parcels in compensation for his services. Torrey turned a very good profit, for example, when he laid out the village of Bethany on land that Drinker donated (not selflessly, by the way) to establish the seat of Wayne County.²³

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²⁰ His cover was finally blown in Carl Van Doren's *Secret History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1941), 217-20, 272, 278-79, 411-13. There is some small irony, therefore, in the wholly incidental observation found in Work Projects Administration (Writers' Program), *Pennsylvania: A Guide to the Keystone State* (New York, 1940), 521, that the collection of Wallis documents owned by a descendant in Muncy contained "a receipt for 200 guineas, paid to General Benedict Arnold by Wallis on January 6, 1781."

²¹ See Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, 91-94.


²³ Except for the judgment of some of his neighbors like Samuel Preston and Thomas Meredith who thought him capable of sharp practice, the guardians of local history were
John Tyler also came from Massachusetts at about the same time as Torrey and settled at Nine Partners, which is now the village of Harford in Susquehanna County. He drew strength from his church allegiance and from the revivalist fervor in the Congregational community stimulated by the New Divinity movement and the teachings of the Reverend Samuel Hopkins. From all evidence, Tyler scrupulously managed Drinker's extensive tracts on the Meshoppen and Tunkhannock Creeks.  

What Drinker finally sought in his agents cannot be easily categorized. He wanted someone who was stable, yet, if the truth were told, unencumbered by family, and, consequently, by family problems. The perfect candidate would come from the country but understand city life and mercantile practice. Drinker searched for a farmer, a blacksmith, a woodsman, a carpenter, a miller, a bridge-builder, a dam-maker, but with all those qualities rolled into one, still a person of more than rustic training who would keep careful accounts, plot a survey, and submit at regular intervals detailed written reports to an exacting master in Philadelphia. In short, Henry Drinker's paragon would be equally adept in wielding the scythe and the pen, the adz and the surveyor's compass.

And in this search, not surprisingly, he never found his man. He came close, however, in Samuel Andrew Law. From his home in

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24 Blackman, History of Susquehanna County, 186, 474-75, and David Torrey, Memoir of Major Jason Torrey of Bethany, Wayne County, Pennsylvania (Scranton, Pa., 1885), 84-86. After the death of his first wife, Torrey married Tyler's widowed daughter. Like Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), John Tyler was an ardent abolitionist—another article of faith that would have commended him to Henry Drinker. Though, for most of his ministry, Hopkins preached in Newport, Rhode Island, his brand of conservative Calvinism had a particular hold on backcountry congregations. On the influence of Hopkins as a participant in both the First Great Awakening and the Second, see Joseph A. Conforti, Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement (Grant Rapids, Mich., 1981), 41-58, 127-41, 175-90.

25 See Torrey, Memoir of Major Jason Torrey, 39, for a catalogue of Torrey's varied talents.
Meredith, Delaware County, New York, Law managed Drinker's
lands in that state for some fifty years, answering to Drinker's ex-
ecutors with the same fidelity he had shown to his first employer.
Law was a graduate of Yale College (class of 1792) whose president
Timothy Dwight, while on progress through New York State, praised
Law's "taste, good sense, and good principles" in attracting "virtuous
settlers" to Meredith and thus probably securing "its prosperity, both
moral and physical, for a century."26

Samuel Preston hovered over all these qualifications, even if, in
Henry Drinker's fastidious reckoning, he never fully settled on any
of them. Especially because every signal he received from Preston
was in Drinker's first encounters with him so promising, it took
Drinker some time to appreciate that he had an enormous character
on his hands.27 Preston had solid credentials as a Quaker—his father,
Paul Preston, having been the clerk of the Buckingham Meeting.
Born in 1756, he was raised in farming country along the Delaware

(Cambridge, Mass., 1969), IV, 10, 378. Law was also Samuel Meredith's agent in New
York state, which explains the name given to his hometown. He suffered in his correspondence
from an advanced case of grandiloquence—equal in intensity to that which afflicted
the president of Yale. He wrote to Drinker's surviving executor in 1840 of the loss of his wife,
"my endeared companion," but of his intent, "the sad duties of sepulture done," to "persevere
in discharging arising and incumbent duties." Samuel Andrew Law to Thomas Stewardson,
July 1, 1840, Drinker Collection, HSP.

27 The Drinker-Preston exchange is dependent on three sources: the letterbooks of Henry
Drinker containing copies of most, but not all, of his outgoing business correspondence;
Preston's holograph letters to Drinker (hereafter cited simply by date) which are scattered
throughout the Drinker Collection, but with many items missing; and a compilation of
excerpts from the letters of Drinker and Preston, organized by subject-matter (hereafter
cited as Compilation). The 575-page compilation was assembled after Drinker's death by
someone who had access to the full run of Preston letters and who, apparently intrigued by
the agitated relationship between these two men, was prepared to let each of them speak
for himself. In all probability, this amanuensis was William Drinker, one of Drinker's two
surviving sons and an executor of his estate. Tubercular in his youth, William Drinker died

In this article, Henry Drinker has been quoted in conformity with the text of the
letterbooks—the occasional aberration in spelling being the responsibility of his clerk-copyist.
Samuel Preston, however, was inattentive to punctuation and to capitalizing at the beginning
of a new sentence. The author confesses that he had "improved" in these respects on
Preston's original letters in order that the two contestants, otherwise so evenly matched,
might be permitted a fair fight in writing.
River, with a thorough grounding in all the arts that Drinker prized.\textsuperscript{28} He arrived in his thirties without a wife or any apparent prospect of one as he moved from one remote location to another on behalf of Philadelphia merchants who employed him. But the quality that must have initially impressed Drinker the most was Preston's commitment to the written record, to field journals and letters that gave this older austere Quaker a feeling that he was there on the spot, sharing vicariously the challenge of the frontier as he calculated the profit that honest hard work would yield.

Preston's volubility in speech and in writing would soon weary Drinker, who found greater merit in restraint and occasionally in blessed silence. Disenchantment had set in at least as early as November 24, 1793, when Elizabeth Drinker recorded in her diary: "S. Preston lodges here. I can hear him amplifying below, as I sit alone up stairs."\textsuperscript{29} His voice, with its peculiar intonation and insistence, remains audible in the Drinker Collection, where, in fact, it can still be heard rising to the rafters—protesting injuries real and imaginary, arguing causes long since forgotten, and recreating a scene in the backwoods that, for all Preston's eccentricities, seems totally authentic.

Abel James, the senior partner in James & Drinker, first engaged Preston, who with unerring aim would occasionally hurl at Drinker a maxim of his deceased partner.\textsuperscript{30} For a little over a month in the early summer of 1787, Preston took to the trail for the firm of James & Drinker and inspected the area above Stroudsburg known as "Sheholy" where, in the process, he renewed his acquaintance with John

\textsuperscript{28} W. W. H. Davis, \textit{The History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania} (Doylestown, Pa., 1876), 270, 759-60.


\textsuperscript{30} As, for example, in Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 23, 1805: "Abel James used to say that a younger man could never reprove an older to advantage. Perhaps he was right, or I think my former advices to thee would have had some effect." Drinker was circumspect in his comments about his former partner (1726-1790) who seems to have experienced financial difficulties that may have affected his peace of mind, if not his mental balance. Drinker confided to Preston in 1787 that "Our old friend A.J. . . . is a good deal unhinged or removed from that solidarity, stability and solid cool estate which is always safer and best for him and others." December 7, 1787, L.B. (1786-1790), 223. See also \textit{Journal of Elizabeth Drinker}, 152, for evidence that the partnership was under strain as early as 1784.
Hilborn, a man he unhesitatingly recommended to his employers. Toward the end of this trip, Preston linked up with Abel James, who appears to have been in the wilderness at the same time reconnoitering the lands in which he had an interest. That journey of Preston's to northeastern Pennsylvania was inserted in the midst of three separate expeditions that he made during 1787 to the state of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland to pursue debt collection work for various Philadelphia merchants. The following year he toured Chester County and points west, going as far as Carlisle and Huntingdon; on that occasion, he reported directly to Henry Drinker. And no sooner did he get back from this last trip than strong circumstantial evidence indicates that he set off again for northeastern Pennsylvania—this time very likely in the company of Drinker himself, who went that autumn to his lands near Nine Partners and Great Bend.

These assignments as well as some agitation on his home turf persuaded Preston that he should move from Bucks County to Philadelphia. The application for a certificate which he submitted in 1788 to the Buckingham Monthly Meeting did not, however, slide through smoothly: Preston had fallen under the scrutiny of the Meeting for having resorted to the law courts in a dispute against a Friend. Although the issue was finally resolved through more congenial arbitration, scars were left, enough to cause the certificate to issue with less than enthusiastic endorsement: "One of the Friends appointed to prepare a Certificate for Samuel Preston Reported, they had made inquiry and most of them were of the mind that no sufficient obstruction appeared to them. . . . "

31 "Extracts From the Journal of Samuel Preston, Surveyor, 1787," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 22 (1898): 350-65; "Minutes of a Journal to Delaware State and Eastern Shore of Maryland for Negociate Business for John Field and John Thompson" (May, 1789), "Minutes of a Second Tour through Delaware State and the Eastern Shore of Maryland for John Field and John Thompson" (October, 1787), "Minutes of a Third Tour to Eastern Shore of Maryland for John Field and Mordecai Lewis" (November, 1787), Drinker Collection, HSP.

32 "Minutes of a Journal on Business for H. Drinker" (August-September, 1788), Drinker Collection, HSP. Drinker was on his excursion for five weeks during October and November, 1788, an experience which he described as "altogether new and singular." Letter to unidentified relatives in England, November 15, 1788, L.B. (1786-1790), 317. Preston recorded on July 27, 1791, that it would be "but 3 years the 3d day of next November since I first saw this place [Stockport]". Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, Compilation, 28.

33 Minutes of the Buckingham Monthly Meeting, 4 and 20 Eighth Month 1788. See
Henry Drinker would have insisted on that certificate in 1789—of that we may be certain, for it was in that year that he decided to rely on Samuel Preston not only as an agent but also as a partner in the acquisition and development of land on the upper Delaware in what was then Northampton but would shortly become Wayne County, Pennsylvania, “particularly at a place call’d Stockport and at Equinunk Manor otherwise call’d Safe Harbour,” and across the state line “at a place call’d the Cook House in the state of New York.” There would be much controversy afterwards about the rights and obligations of the two of them and about their performance, but none about their technical status as partners, “jointly and equally concerned.”

Arrangements thus concluded with Drinker, Preston returned in 1789 to the northeastern corner of the state, making his base of operations the outpost of Harmony established by the Hilborn brothers.

Of that first summer in country that was to become Preston’s home for more than forty years, only a fragmentary record survives. He and the Hilborns cut a road from Harmony southwards which it was thought “would soon call in a large number of settlers”—just as three years later they would cut a portage road between Harmony on the Susquehanna River and Stockport on the Delaware to test the grand theory that countless commercial benefits would flow from joining, near their headwaters, these sleepy, unnavigable streams.

ibid., 4 Second Month 1788, 7 Fourth Month 1788, 5 Fifth Month 1788, 7 Seventh Month 1788.

34 Articles of Agreement [March 13, 1807], between Henry Drinker and Samuel Preston concerning submission and settlement of partnership accounts, bearing an endorsement dated July 27, 1807, extending the date for compliance, Drinker Collection, HSP. Though Preston remained Drinker’s agent in many other areas and concerns, his elevation to partner in the ownership of the Stockport Estate should not be glossed over for it represented, at least potentially, a marked change in status. Nevertheless, as those who have observed the phenomenon up close may testify, there are partners and partners, and henceforth in this article we shall be measuring Preston’s passage from the subservient role of junior partner (in effect, agent) to that of a co-venturer demanding that his vote be counted.

35 To locate the area that Drinker and Preston sought to open up and develop, one should pivot on the map at the intersection of the northern boundary of Pennsylvania with the Delaware River: Cook House (now Deposit) lies five miles to the northwest; Harmony (now Lanesboro) is ten miles to the west and south; and Stockport, Equinunk, and the Union Farm (in that descending order) are found over a stretch of about sixteen miles to the south and east on the Pennsylvania side of the river.
Preston met during that same summer of 1789 a soon-to-become legendary backwoods figure, William Cooper, the founder of Cooperstown (and the father of James Fenimore Cooper), who held a commission from Drinker to sell “about Eight thousand Acres of Land . . . in the County of Luzerne, on the west and nearly adjoining the Tunkhannock Creek,” or well within hailing distance of Harmony and Stockport.\(^{36}\) We also know that Preston was miserable with an adult case of the measles and that he looked forward to his return to Philadelphia for “winter quarters” as he concluded that “my constitution for bearing cold & hardship I find to be to much impaired by the meazles.”\(^{37}\) He fell victim of an accident, however, that not only delayed his trip home to Philadelphia but also, in a measure, crippled him for the rest of his life.

On the second of November, just as he was packing up, the message arrived that a team of oxen would be needed to bring critical supplies stranded at Shaffer's farm that last lap northward through the woods to Harmony. The team was collected, and Preston and his companions set out the next day. A snowstorm descended on them, forcing them to take refuge in a “bark cabin we had built when cutting the road about 7 miles from Harmony.” Toward ten o'clock at night, he would later write Drinker, “there came a hard gale of wind & blew down a large dead hemlock tree on the cabbin (of which I have little or no remembrance).” Scarcely realizing what was occurring as the tree started to break apart above them, the men in the cabin stumbled blindly in the dark. It was Preston’s particular misfortune to run directly under the main segment of the falling tree.

He was knocked unconscious and “very much hurt,” with his shoulder blade broken and “all my ribs down to the hip.” For two weeks he had to stay put, exposed and in pain, “by the log, without hopes of recovery,” before it became tolerable to move him by litter to Harmony.\(^{38}\) As the years passed and he enlarged on his physical complaints to an increasingly unsympathetic Henry Drinker, Preston

\(^{36}\) Receipt and memorandum dated as of March 28, 1789 (signed by Cooper only), Drinker Collection, HSP. Concerning the roads, see Whaley, *History of the Township of Mount Pleasant*, 10-12; and Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, June 8, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 182 (“Harmony and Stockport must ever be intimately connected”).


\(^{38}\) Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, November 24, 1789, *Compilation*, 1-2.
would attribute many of his problems to this "old hurt from the tree." Though he recovered, his strong frame was bent by the accident. In spite of Drinker's chiding in subsequent years that Preston was "chicken-hearted under affliction and sickness," the arthritic twinges and palsied hand that Samuel Preston had to contend with were genuine reminders of that terrifying night.

Preston limped back to Philadelphia. In his absence John Hilborn took up residence for a time at Stockport to launch Drinker's initial effort to produce sugar in quantity from maple trees. Two letters that Hilborn sent from Stockport in early 1790 refer to the larger scheme of development that was planned for these fertile flats along the Delaware. While waiting for the sap to run, Hilborn laid in stores that Preston, he anticipated, would need as he began that spring the "Intended Improvements at this place." Hilborn lamented (in a refrain that Preston would later take up) the lack of skilled hands both to proceed with the sugaring and to get started on such other necessary work as clearing the land and erecting a grist mill. "Every man here is Employed in the various Branches of the Lumber Trade—however, our hands which are here are Good and faithfull [and] we Shall Do for the best until others may come."

When Preston returned to Stockport—probably toward the end of April in 1790—he returned for good. Not that he never left again, for he traveled to Bucks County as long as his parents were alive, to Philadelphia to report to Drinker in person (a chore that he abandoned as the years passed), to Lancaster as the state capital where land business was transacted, and even to New York City. It was always, though, with a sense of relief that he came back to Stockport, and when age and infirmities confined him there, he did not protest his

39 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, June 27, 1805.
40 Drinker's barb is in his letter to Preston dated November 11, 1797, L.B. (1796-1800), 150.
41 John Hilborn to Henry Drinker, February 15 and March 5, 1790, Drinker Collection, HSP. Stockport had been the site of a "fair-sized Indian settlement" that was more or less stationary and given to cultivation. Max Schrabisch, Archaeology of Delaware River Valley Between Hancock and Dingman's Ferry in Wayne and Pike Counties (Harrisburg, Pa., 1930), 9-10.
isolation; in fact, writing to a friend, he described himself as comfortably holed up in Stockport like an old bear in his den.\footnote{Samuel Preston to Jonathan Smith, January 19, 1822, Coryell Papers, HSP, vol. 1, 81.}

As soon as Preston arrived and took charge in 1790, work commenced in earnest. Operating out of a sturdy log cabin built during the previous year,\footnote{Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, October 30, 1789, Compilation, 23. This structure (measuring twenty-six by twenty feet) was dismissed by a foreign visitor who stayed there in the summer of 1791 as "a miserable log home," but one about to be replaced by "a good house" whose foundations had just been dug. John Lincklaen, Travels in the Years 1791 and 1792 in Pennsylvania, New York and Vermont, ed. and trans. Helen Lincklaen Fairchild (New York, 1897), 50-51.} he immediately set about constructing a grist mill that had an overshot wheel fourteen feet high and was single-gearred. Preston had no doubt that the grist mill was "the most important thing in this country" which would produce more custom than he could manage and go a long way toward defraying the heavy expenses that were piling up in Drinker's ledger. Then, over the space of a little less than three years, he built three saw mills. All of these mills were dependent on the same source of water—a relatively small stream called Tockpollock Creek that emptied into the Delaware at Stockport. It was Preston's expectation that the grist and saw mills would operate the year around because of a reservoir of water—some 100 acres—that he had created by fortifying a beaver dam upstream.\footnote{Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, June 28, July 13, August 20, 1790, Compilation, 23-24.}

In that judgment he was soon proved wrong as the mills stood idle during prolonged dry spells in the summers of 1791 and 1792. Given favorable conditions, on the other hand, the saw mills produced timber in abundance that was floated down in rafts to the Philadelphia market. With only the first saw mill in service, Preston wrote Drinker in July, 1791, that his crew had "sawed one day between sun rise and sun set 2,265 feet and we conclude that we have now ready on the bank about 30,000 feet of boards which with what is in the 3 rafts at Homan's eddy will be 100,000. . . . ",\footnote{Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, July 27, 1791, Compilation, 27.}

Over Drinker's objection that it ill served his own plans "of reducing rather than increasing my entanglements," Preston argued for construction of a store: in selling to his neighbors, he had already
established credit "for selling cheaper than . . . any store on the river." Thus, the carpenters working on the mills completed in the fall of 1791 "a good convenient store with a compting and lodging room."46

But the major work—the building of Preston’s castle—was deferred until 1792. Drinker hardly could resist the plea for bigger and more suitable quarters. All going well at Stockport, with lumber pouring out of the saw mills and crops being harvested, the crew Preston had assembled, or the "family" as he sometimes referred to them, could scarcely fit under one roof. Moreover, until there were more satisfactory living arrangements, no respectable woman would take up residence as a cook for this population of males that had grown heartily tired of batching for themselves.47

Preston urged his partner to travel north in the summer of 1791 to help him select the location for the new house: "I wish to see thee here as soon as thee can this summer, I would wish to have thy opinion on the spot relating to the building [of] a house. . . . " To this message Drinker replied: "My leaving home on a visit to Stockport in the present year is a matter of much uncertainty, therefore exercise thy best Judgment respecting the scite [sic] of the proposed Dwelling House."48

That was all the authorization Preston needed. On April 28, 1792, he wrote that "we are about sawing scantling, weatherboards etc, etc for the house, which is no small undertaking." To finish the house that year would, he acknowledged, require a sufficient supply of water to keep the saw mills running. The plan was ambitious in scale: Preston’s house would be fifty-two feet long and thirty-eight feet wide, two stories high, "with sash and window shutters for upwards of 500 lights of glass."49 The cellar was walled in May, the house half-framed "in a fair way" in June, and on July 10 "we finished raising the house complete and well without any accident, accomplishing the whole in less than two days quietly within ourselves,

46 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, July 12, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 245; Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 25 and October 27, 1791, Compilation, 30, 31.
47 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, April 4, 1791, Compilation, 25.
48 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 19, 1791, Compilation, 26; Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, June 8, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 181-82.
49 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, April 28, 1792, Compilation, 37.
except 3 hands from Harmony." In the view of its owner (or, to be precise, its co-owner), "it is the largest best frame I have ever seen, and went together in a manner as to do George Krouskopt [the master carpenter who also designed and built the mills] great credit as a workman."\(^{50}\) Unfortunately, the combined absence of lime and a mason prevented occupancy in 1792 as "we shall have no chimneys this winter in the house." While the house was going up, the carpenters were at work as well on a barn and a carpenter's shop, which, when completed, put the Stockport settlement solidly on the map.\(^{51}\)

By the middle of the following year, the castle had its two chimneys, thanks to an anonymous mason who was also employed by John Kinsey at the Union Farm.\(^{52}\) Preston was delighted with the result. "If Henry Drinker, George Roberts and others should pay a visit to Stockport this summer, they may be accommodated with as good and neat a room as they have at home, but the furniture is yet wanting."\(^{53}\)

As far as we can tell, Henry Drinker never saw Stockport—as least not as a developed settlement. His impressions of it were drawn from correspondence, from the accounts and deportment of those who came to Philadelphia, and from the flow of money and goods that he perceived was constantly going upstream. What he did learn about the raftsmen who rode the spring and fall freshets down from Stockport, bringing to Philadelphia the harvest of lumber, caused him to despair concerning the general moral tone of this frontier community:

Every piece of information relative to a reformation of manners amongst the people your way I shall be pleased to hear—a more contemptible set of Beings are hardly to be found than any of those who make their appearance in Spring and Fall with Boats and Rafts from your parts. If they can be brought off from their habits of Drunkenness and Profanity it will be a good work, to which I wish much success. Some books shall be thought of.\(^{54}\)

\(^{50}\) Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, May 20, June 19, and July 11, 1792, *Compilation*, 41, 43, and 44.
\(^{52}\) Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, April 15, 1793, *Compilation*, 55.
\(^{54}\) Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, May 9, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 313.
That edifying tracts might lead these rough-hewn types back to temperate, Christian conduct was a characteristic Drinker piety. Preston, too, was capable of preaching morality to his men, but frequently he had trouble in finding a congregation in sufficient number to listen to the sermon.

Kinsey at the Union Farm and Preston at Stockport were to feel in the summer of 1794 the competition of the extravagant wages that Judge Wilson’s agents were prepared to pay at Wilsonville. On the same day, both of them took up pen to write Drinker that Wilson was siphoning off laborers who were essential to the success of these separate enterprises subsidized by Drinker. By Kinsey’s account, Preston’s blacksmith was lured away by the salary of six pounds a month although it was difficult for Kinsey to tell whether the money or the daily ration of half a pint of rum allotted to every man employed at the factory was the more powerful inducement. In any event, both were agreed that Wilson was on a financially ruinous course, “unless he is backed,” Kinsey wrote, “by some almost inexhaustible fund, or his own purse is very deep, the expense is so enormously great.”

Preston, as always, was even more emphatic: “Thee may let James Wilson know that I am very clear and well assured from a number of years experience in the Country that they might quite as readily have hired as many and as good hands for half the wages they are giving and if they rise to twice as much as they now give, they will receive no advantage.”

About James Wilson and his downfall, Henry Drinker’s agents were truer prophets than he himself turned out to be. Drinker acknowledged Wilson as a member of the Philadelphia establishment, a legal scholar and jurist held in high regard, a founding shareholder of the Union Farm, and a voracious land speculator. If Drinker had reservations about Wilson, it was not his financial capacity that he suspected, but rather his integrity, for the good judge had entered “a swinging Caveat” on technical grounds against property which Drinker and another partner of his had purchased from the Commonwealth in Huntingdon County. On that occasion, Drinker wrote Wilson “querying with him how it would appear for a person in his

55 John Kinsey to Henry Drinker, September 24, 1794, Drinker Collection, HSP.
56 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 24, 1794.
exalted station, appointed to promote and distribute equal justice through the land, to come into the land office a long time after and search for some informality or supposed deficiency in the descriptive part of our Locations." But in answer to Preston, Drinker advanced the peculiar theory that "notwithstanding J. Wilson’s imprudent management and the extravagance of his Agents in the Wages they pay, it appears to me he had made such large acquisitions of late in the Land way that there will be safety in trusting to his sufficiency in any engagements made clearly by his directions."

Another Preston complaint in the early days of settlement related to the women who had finally arrived in the backcountry. He lectured Drinker that, if a married man were sent up from Philadelphia, "I wish strict inquiry may be made as to the disposition of his wife before he is engaged. Difficult and disagreeable women have been a trouble to our Concerns." He cited a particular example: a man had been recruited who showed some promise but turned out to be a liability because "his wife who is much smarter and active than himself is about the wickedest dispositioned Woman in the world—fully bent on mischief." So disturbing was this woman that Preston found himself unable to sleep at night "for fear of her firing some of the Buildings."

Given these pointed and repeated observations about women, wholly consistent with Preston’s bachelor status, Drinker could hardly have been prepared for the communication he received in October, 1795: "The Contents of this Letter," Preston confessed, "may perhaps appear a little Surprising, yet as facts of notoriety will be reported I may inform that I am actually married to Marcia Jenkins." Marcia Jenkins had taken up residence as Preston’s housekeeper in early June and soon made an impression: "She appears to have a capacity and disposition to manage and govern the difficulties of this Place superior to my expectations of any Woman. A single life ever has and perhaps will be her choice."

57 Henry Drinker to John Canan, Esquire, May 26, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 167-68, in which Drinker quotes the message he sent to Wilson that is not, however, entered in his letterbook.
58 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, November 1 [continued on November 4], 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 243.
59 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, August 6, 1795.
60 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, October 11, 1795.
61 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, July 7, 1795.
In telling Drinker about his marriage, Preston had to face a sensitive issue—the ceremony, such as it was, uniting him with Marcia Jenkins had taken place in the house at Stockport “in a sober orderly manner before a number of witnesses without either Priest, Minister or Magistrate.” The long and involved explanation he offered for ignoring Quaker prescripts concerning marriage betrayed the sharp anxiety that Preston felt as he approached someone who he knew was unyielding in such matters. To disguise the probable truth that he and his bride had placed convenience above conviction, he would have had Drinker believe that the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting had already disowned him and that Marcia Jenkins, also originally of Quaker allegiance, had been much hurt by the Society’s treatment of her destitute father as he decamped to escape his creditors. By way of additional distraction, Preston entered into the details of the case in disownment brought against his father-in-law, Valentine Jenkins, by relentless persecutors—one a schoolmaster who later “had to fly his Country privately to escape the Law for indecencies with little girls at School,” and another a “young preacher at their Meeting . . . obliged to marry a Woman with whom he had been too familiar when visiting of Meetings in that service.”

Drinker’s reply to this letter was remarkably subdued. “Thy Letter respecting thy situation as a Member if it requires an Answer it is not immediately necessary [to provide it].” And Drinker had the further good grace to conclude “with love to thy Wife.” In a few months, however, the inevitable occurred: the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting minuted that “Samuel Preston has been married not conformably to the order of our religious discipline,” and there followed in due course the declaration of Preston’s disunion—a result that, if

62 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, October 11, 1795. Less than a year later, Molly Drinker, Henry Drinker’s youngest daughter, up and married Samuel Rhoads without her parents’ consent, the marriage being conducted by a magistrate “according to friendly order” (which was bad enough, although it would have been worse had a priest officiated). James Pemberton attempted to intervene with the outraged father on behalf of the young couple, saying that those who had heard of the matter had made light of it. “So do not I,” Drinker retorted. Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, 289-91.

63 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, January 4, 1796, L.B. (1793-1796), 399.
he had come close to it before, he achieved only as a consequence of the irregularity that attended his marriage.\textsuperscript{64}

In fairness, Samuel Preston should not be dismissed so quickly as a Friend, maverick though he may have been from an early date. Had a dream he cherished come true, Preston and Marcia Jenkins might have married in full conformity with the discipline of the Society and at no inconvenience to themselves. For the greatest disappointment that Drinker and Preston shared as partners arose from the unfulfilled but frequently renewed promise of David Sands to lead a band of dedicated Quakers to the Stockport area and to establish a meeting for worship there. Such was the hope that this curious convert to Quakerism engendered—beginning in the latter part of 1792 when he visited Preston in Stockport and then Drinker in Philadelphia.

To the defense of Quaker orthodoxy, David Sands brought the preaching zeal of the Presbyterianism into which he had been born. "He was a man of unusual native powers," Rufus Jones wrote of him, "emphatically of the prophetic type, swept by sudden incursions, possessed of inspirational openings, and enabled in some mysterious way to reveal the states and conditions of mind of persons in his audience unknown to him."\textsuperscript{65} Nor could anyone, it seems, remain neutral about him: he either drew impassioned adherents or provoked equally impassioned opponents. It was part of Sand's mission and temperament that, never lingering for long, he sought new audiences—often in remote places and isolated from mainstream Quakerism—on whom he proceeded to practice his special gifts of persuasion.\textsuperscript{66} Now, as a supplement to the record of his wanderings at home and abroad, we may trace his association with Drinker and Preston. The former inclined toward the message of orthodoxy that Sands proclaimed, but hesitated to embrace the man himself, while the latter was captivated by the force of Sands's personality, a thralldom in which he would remain even when the evidence was over-

\textsuperscript{64} Minutes of Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, Fourth Month, 1796, 27 First Month (adjourned to 2 Second Month) 1797.
\textsuperscript{65} Rufus M. Jones, The Later Periods of Quakerism (London, 1921), I, 282.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 283.
whelming that, at least in business concerns, Sands could not be counted on.

The proposal that in September, 1792, Samuel Preston enthusiastically laid before his senior partner in Philadelphia was that Sands and his companions be permitted to purchase 3,000 acres near Stockport on extremely favorable terms. Drinker conceded that "the introduction of that class of people may be of such advantage to the Country" that he and Preston should strain to make the sale. As for the role of David Sands at the head of this endeavor, he counseled caution:

The propriety of his going to reside on and improve those new Lands I have not seen in the clearness. His constitutional abilities don't by any means fit him for such services and how a family is to be maintained I know not—his outward circumstances are very low, nothing to spare.  

Time dragged on while Sands feinted this way and that, avoiding any real commitment until 1794 when, all at once, he struck a bargain with Preston, took possession of land near Stockport, built a house, planted ten apple trees, sold off part of the tract he acquired, and then announced to an astonished Preston that he had decided to sail for Europe to continue his ministry there—with the absolute determination, he protested, to return "in about 18 months or two years . . . and lay his bones at this place." It was therefore a sheepish Preston who conferred by letter with Drinker. He still defended Sands as "a very smart Active Man that understands Business" and one "of so much weight and Influence amongst all the Friends to the Eastward that I think the report of his Improvements will do the business we want to be done in regard to establishing a good Settlement." 

Sands left for Europe in 1795. When Drinker confirmed to Preston the report that Sands had safely landed in Liverpool, he predicted that "it may be a long time before he returns to us." As a matter

67 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, September 17, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 407.
68 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, April 22, 1794. Drinker protested that, until this letter from Preston, "the bargain thou made with David Sands was in part and a material part too" concealed from Drinker. "This should not have been—however I mean to say no more about it." Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, May 11, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 160.
69 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, November 11, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 372.
of fact, it was ten years—ten tempestuous years both for David Sands and for the partnership of Drinker and Preston.

In that decade, the great land speculators would be severely punished, though their fate was only dimly perceived at first. The forced abandonment of the Union Farm as a costly failure gave Henry Drinker, its leading supporter, early warning that the likelihood of losing money in the wilderness far exceeded the possibility of making it. He found himself asking whether those populous settlements whose existence his imagination had conjured up would even begin to materialize during the time he had left on earth. The fragility of life was much on his mind as he engaged in what practitioners of the art now refer to as estate-planning; and, try as he might for the benefit of his heirs, every calculation he put down on paper was distorted by the large investment he had in land that could be sold, if at all, only at distress prices.70

Drinker seems to have emerged in the opening days of 1796 from a gloomy year-end assessment of this character to take Samuel Preston to task for "keeping such an extensive stock of cattle to eat up all the Hay." Instead, he admonished Preston that "it is high time something should be pursued beyond sound and shew. The name of a great Stock and large costly buildings will do little towards making the pot boil."71 Yet, a month later, practically echoing the optimistic words of Robert Morris in his own correspondence, Drinker instructed Preston "to decline for sometime any Contracts for parts of our Lands [as] it appears to me they will ere long rise in price."72

Rise land prices did not. Europe, engulfed in war, would no longer supply speculative capital for American land barons. What is more, the value of American real estate had been thoroughly discredited in the eyes of foreigners by fraud and puffery. Thus observed the Duc

70 On the abandonment of the Union Farm, see Maxey, "The Union Farm," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 107 (1983): 628. Henry Drinker pleaded "my advanced time of life and increasing infirmities" for not traveling to Stockport in spite of Preston's entreaties to do so. Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, September 1, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 354.
de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt as he commented that “each [pro-
spective investor] in Europe today should be warned that, before
buying land in America, he must at least see it himself or rely on
the inspection of trusted friends.”

Morris, Wilson, Nicholson—all went under, and, in going under, pulled many others down with
them. Drinker, however, survived: in part because his holdings were
not as vast but critically because they were free of the weight of
cumbering debt. His agents, for the most part, also helped him to
avert calamity by continuing to work the farms they lived on and,
in Samuel Preston’s case, to mill lumber for delivery to the Phila-
delphia market. After property taxes and wages were paid, Drinker’s
books stood practically in balance.

But Drinker was not appeased, and in these last years of his life,
PRESTON would be the focused object of his wrath. The letters that
passed between them are unpleasant documents to read, strident in
tone and filled with backbiting. If together they believed that a
neighbor of Preston’s was an unmitigated scoundrel and that Timothy
Pickering, about to leave Philadelphia in 1800 for his backwoods
exile, was martyred for this conservative political faith, there would
be little else that they did agree upon.

Drinker kept meticulous account in a ledger book that was opened in October, 1789,
under the title “SAMUEL PRESTON and HENRY DRINKER, Owners of Stockport
and Lands in its vicinity,” Drinker Collection, HSP. For all the outlays recorded in it which
caused Henry Drinker to chide Preston for his extravagance (thus, for example: “[P]ray in
all thy Schemes and Plans, strive to extend mercy to my exhausted purse”; July 15, 1795,
L.B. [1793-1796], 342), the final balance struck at Drinker’s death some twenty years later
shows the venture in the black. Drinker would have argued—and did—that he was denied
interest on his investment, but Preston’s reply as a partner was more telling: “Neither do
I see the equity of charging interest on money paid the work hands 16 or 18 years ago for
getting out and taking down rafts that were sold at that time. What particular benefit had
I therein to entitle me to pay interest?” Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, January 7, 1809,
Compilation, 530.

Neither of them could tolerate Samuel Stanton, the founder of a settlement roughly
twenty miles to the west of Stockport, for whom Drinker reserved vivid invective—“smooth
and plausible, but unprincipled and upon the whole a designing bad man.” Henry Drinker
to Samuel Preston, May 27, 1800, L.B. (1800-1802), 26. Drinker confirmed his admiration
of Timothy Pickering when he wrote Preston of his dismissal. Henry Drinker to Samuel
Preston, June 16, 1800, L.B. (1800-1802), 36-37. Pickering and Preston met each other
again during Pickering’s retreat to the backwoods. Pickering and Upham, The Life of Timothy
Preston was proud to the point of vulnerability that, upon the formation of Wayne County in 1798, Governor Mifflin had appointed him associate judge, one of four lay judges and first in order of precedence. For the grand jury called to consider the meager business of indictable offenses that this sparsely settled region could have produced, Preston composed and delivered at length to a captive audience a dissertation on the recently enacted federal Sedition Law and on the “artful intrigues” of the insidious French “to ensnare and undermine our government.” He secured the publication in Easton—we must assume at his own expense—of his grand jury charge, running to some twenty-two pages, which he then distributed to all his acquaintances.76

Henry Drinker and his wife were not impressed. They thought that the title “Judge” had gone to Preston’s head, and that he might better occupy his time tending the store as it were than taking on exaggerated judicial duties. “Humility goes before Honour,” Drinker reminded in his best scriptural style, “if we become great we must first become little. Don’t my friend let thy appointment to a Judge’s seat, or any other motive, exalt or lift up thy mind.”77 Elizabeth Drinker has left this tart journal entry apropos of Preston and his airs:

June 11 [1800]. H. D. read to us last night a charge delivered to the Grand Jury of Wayne County, by Saml Preston, Esq., First Associate Judge of said County. Had it been shorter, and less aiming at popularity, I should have liked it better, but I am no Judge.78

Nor did Drinker relent. In one of his letters, he adopted the salutation “Samuel Preston, Esq., alias Judge Preston,” and signed off: “With

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76 A Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury of Wayne County (Easton, Pa., Samuel Longcope, 1800). The first session of court at which Preston delivered his charge took place in Milford (in what is now Pike County) on September 10, 1798, in the cramped quarters of George Buchanan’s house. Phineas G. Goodrich, History of Wayne County (Honesdale, Pa., 1880), 108-09.

77 Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, April 16, 1800, L.B. (1796-1800), 537.

78 Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, 362.
all due deference and respect for the Great Man I am now addressing, I conclude his humble Friend."

Against such attacks, Preston retaliated in kind. Not without reason, he protested that Drinker collected stories from "Designing People that are Scheming to create mischief and injure him who at thy instance and persuasion forsook all his Friends to serve thee with fidelity." That Drinker had ceased, as tutelary presence and partner, to intimidate Preston may be seen in the following sample of the latter's growing self-assurance bordering on contempt:

There are several other parts of thy Letters which I omit at this time to Answer, as they appear to my understanding to be very exceptionable indeed. The stile and expressions seem rather to bespeak a disposition or wish to provoke a reply than to answer any good purpose. I consider them as part of the Errata of human nature.

In these circumstances of open warfare, with Drinker and Preston each demanding of the other a statement of account as the necessary prelude to the dissolution of the partnership and the division of partnership property, David Sands reappeared. He, too, had been immersed in controversy during these years he had spent in Europe. At not the most propitious time, he had joined William Savery and other dedicated souls from America in an attempt to summon Quakers back to old values in England, Germany, France, and Ireland, countries riven by war or dissension where the Quaker message of forbearance was not easily preached or absorbed. Indeed, the peaceable kingdom would never seem a more distant prospect than it did in Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century. Their pacifist principles may have shielded Irish Quakers from the insurrection of 1798, but religious impulses pulled them toward bloodletting of a different kind, toward sniping over the virgin birth and the literal truth of the Bible. On such issues as these did David Sands, the strict constructionist, clash fiercely with Hannah Barnard, his countrywoman who had followed him from New York to Ireland, preaching in a fashion

80 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, January 31, 1802.
81 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, August 30, 1802.
82 See Francis R. Taylor, Life of William Savery of Philadelphia (New York, 1925), which is based on Savery's journal.
as compelling as his the purest commitment against war—yea, even when Jehovah himself had sounded the trumpet to battle. In this engagement, Hannah Barnard lost, and was persecuted and suppressed as a heretic. Among Friends in America and abroad, however, there was a lasting residue of bitterness over this "pitiful controversy" as Rufus Jones would later put it.\(^8^3\)

Left in the extended interval of Sands's absence to speculate on his whereabouts and plans for the Stockport community, Samuel Preston managed to convince himself that Sands was actively rounding up in Europe credentialed Quakers as future settlers. The description of this recruitment effort as envisioned by Preston did not produce "many pleasing sensations" for Drinker, not when he was forced to recall that

in the aboundings of gospel love he [Sands] had, with the concurrence of his brethren, passed into and thro' different parts of Europe with the glad tidings of peace and salvation for which work the Church believed him fitted, prepared, and called into, and therefore he embarked under its sanction, but should it appear that he had as it were mixed Heaven and earth together in the course of his present embassy, it would, no doubt, subject him to much censure.\(^8^4\)

The truth was that David Sands had departed for Europe without paying anything on account of the purchase price for the Stockport property. Because of his failure to perform, Drinker and Preston were on the verge of cancelling the bargain when Sands turned up for the first session of court called at Bethany in September, 1805.\(^8^5\) The

\(^8^3\) Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, I, 299-305; Taylor, *Life of William Savery*, 293-95. Samuel Preston was that rare bird who could warmly defend both Sands and Hannah Barnard. After her expulsion from England by the London Yearly Meeting, he welcomed at Stockport Sister Hannah (who, a Jenkins before her marriage, may have been a relative of Preston's wife). The advice he gave to her was to avoid entirely "any thing respecting the Trinity" but to hold fast in her testimony against war—in particular because he saw her condemnation as the work of those "Friends in London loaning money to the Government for the purpose of carrying on the war." Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, January 18, 1805.

\(^8^4\) Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, April 28, 1804, L.B. (1802-1806), 319-20.

\(^8^5\) Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, June 13 (P.S. of June 21), 1805. Drinker had reached this conclusion much earlier: "In the very outset of this affair it was a poor business for the owners of Stockport, and the total fracture on David's part in introducing a valuable settlement of Friends leading to the establishment of a Meeting, School, &c. renders the bargain a bad one indeed." Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, October 29, 1796, L.B. (1793-1796), 516.
crowd that had assembled proved an irresistible attraction for this itinerant preacher who had just returned to the United States. While in Bethany, he could spare no time to discuss business with Preston, as he was "so closely occupied in his Line of Service." The two meetings he held in the courthouse elicited "great Satisfaction," Preston wrote Drinker, but Sands had changed remarkably: "He is grown Corpulent, his voice much altered and appears in my Opinion much worn out indeed." Preston also noted that Sands now spoke in a "broad Yorkshire Diallect." 86

Preston prevailed on Sands to accompany him to Stockport, but even there his guest would not be pinned down on contract obligations. Sands took to bed with a heavy cold that he attributed to his recent exertions on the circuit he had made in northeastern Pennsylvania. In response to Preston’s gentle probing, he said that he had every intention of paying for the land but that it would involve collecting on a Bill of Exchange in England, and with that disclosure, Preston was stymied since, as he admitted to Drinker, "I am not well versed in Bills of Exchange." 87

Sands remained an elusive quarry. Subject to a variety of ailments, sometimes pleading the complexity of his financial arrangements abroad, he more often than not simply dropped out of sight. During one such period, Preston, who could never resist giving credence to the scandalous, conveyed to his partner in Philadelphia the report received "through a Channel worthy of full Credit" that "a woman with several small children arrived in New York from England saying that she was [David Sands’s] wife whom he married there and they were his children—that she went up the North River [the Hudson]...

86 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 12, 1805. Samuel Meredith and his son were also in Bethany for the opening of court as we know from this communication and a letter of the same date that Thomas Meredith sent to his brother-in-law John Read (Wyoming Historical & Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.). Especially for these frontier communities Sands’s meetings qualified as both religious instruction and entertainment; whether he profited on either count, Samuel Meredith could not have failed to be in attendance. In his youth he had been disowned as a Quaker because of "an inclination in his Conduct and Conversation" that brought him to frequent "the place of worship of another Society"—a delicate way of indicating that, like many other Quakers of his time, he had succumbed to the allure of Christ Church in Philadelphia. Minutes of the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, 28 Second Month 1766, 6 Sixth Month 1766.

87 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 23, 1805.
inquiring for him and that the Friends in New York sent up a Committee to Cornwall on the occasion.”

Had Sands the money, he would have been hard pressed to know how to make payment, for Drinker and Preston had each directed him not to pay the other. The hostility between the two partners had, moreover, become a matter of general knowledge. In fact, Preston believed that Drinker composed his letters with a view to their first being read by Preston’s enemies who were given the opportunity to intercept them by Drinker’s choice of other than a secure route for their delivery. Thus, Preston’s furor erupted:

I know of no Man that uses such rude abusive Expressions in his Letters as H. Drinker, witness his to me for several years past—and also to other People. They are in general very different indeed from his former character. I have heard several that were formerly his true Friends latterly observe that his late Letters neither bespeak the Gentleman or Christian, and most of his Letters to me have been intercepted and well promulged before they came to my hands.

“These things,” Preston concluded in this his harshest diatribe, “I mention for thy good and hope they may be taken accordingly, for I am certainly invulnerable to any fretful Dashes of thy feeble Pen.”

In December, 1806, Henry Drinker executed a deed to David Sands for slightly more than 2500 acres located on the headwaters of Tockpollock and Equinunk Creeks in Buckingham Township, Wayne County. Robert Bowne, a New York merchant whom Drinker, Preston, and Sands all trusted, had been drafted to mediate the differences that had developed, and his suggestion to Drinker that the transaction proceed by placing the deed in escrow until Sands could pay the recited consideration (of “955 pounds and seven pence half penny, lawful money of Pennsylvania”) may well have been acted upon since the deed was not recorded until almost five years later.

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88 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 10, 1806.
89 Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, September 23, 1805.
90 Henry Drinker et ux. to David Sands, deed dated December 13, 1806, and recorded in Wayne County on September 12, 1811, in Deed Book vol. 3, at 264; Robert Bowne to Henry Drinker, December 9 and 12, 1806, Drinker Collection, HSP, and Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker (from New York as well), December 11, 1806. David Sands did nothing
In order to clear potential title objections relating to this transfer, Drinker and Preston had met briefly in Lancaster in October, 1806.\(^91\) They met again in Philadelphia in March of the following year to sign two agreements that contemplated the prompt submission and reconciliation of their respective accounts as partners and the division of all partnership property, real and personal, with final discretion being conferred on named arbitrators and referees to reach a decision if the parties themselves could not.\(^92\) None of this would happen, however, before Drinker's death on June 26, 1809. Right up until the end, the correspondence flowed back and forth between Stockport and Philadelphia. Samuel Preston's final letter to Henry Drinker, requesting him to send up his son or son-in-law with Preston's "book of statements left with thee for arrangement, so that I may continue it as leisure offers," was dated July 10, 1809.\(^93\)

\(^91\) Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, and Henry Drinker to Robert Bowne, both letters dated December 13, 1806, L.B. (1806-1809), 97, 98. Drinker was incensed at Preston's "base & dishonest . . . conduct" in that Preston had "loitered" in Lancaster after Drinker's departure and entered a fresh caveat which impeded the conveyance to Sands. While denying the charge, Preston took immediate corrective action. Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, December 15, 1806.

\(^92\) Articles of Agreement [March 13, 1807], between Henry Drinker and Samuel Preston concerning submission and settlement of partnership accounts, bearing an endorsement dated July 27, 1807, extending the date for compliance, and Memorandum of an Agreement dated March 13, 1807, concerning valuation of jointly owned property by named referees, Drinker Collection, HSP. The final settlement of accounts, whether between principal and agent or between partners, must be recognized as a fundamental legal requirement. See William Paley, *A Treatise on the Law of Principal and Agent* (London, 1812), 40-45. In *Ozeas v. Johnson*, 1 Binney (Pa.) 191 (1806), the jury actually found for one partner against the other in an action for money had and received, but the Chief Justice, before whom the suit had been tried at nisi prius, set aside the verdict because the action would not lie, he held, until there had been a settlement of accounts (the proper remedy being to institute an action of *account render*).

\(^93\) Samuel Preston to Henry Drinker, *Compilation*, 531-32. Drinker remained active in all his pursuits until just shortly before his death. Benjamin Rush, who greatly admired Drinker, reassures us that his friend's "life was peaceable and his death equally so." *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels through Life" together with his Commonplace Book for 1789-1813*, ed. George W. Corner (Princeton, 1948), 316. Drinker's last letter to Preston was free of criticism: "It has been a time of close engagement during our Yearly Meeting, so that I cannot collect my thoughts. . . ." April 18, 1809, L.B. (1806-1809), 336.
And if these two combatants were separated as death terminated agency and partnership, the battle was far from over. In 1810, Preston renounced the selection of Daniel Stroud as one of five neighbors who might undertake the valuation of the Stockport Estate because, based on some recent experience, he found him "so destitute of moral honesty or principle of what I had reason to expect from a child of my former honest friend Jacob Stroud." William Drinker, as one of the executors under his father’s will, wrote to John Hilborn, "Cans’t thou not think of some other suitable person who will be more acceptable to Preston?" Enforcement of the 1807 agreements required in the end a court proceeding, the outcome of which was a determination by arbitrators that, in the settlement of the partnership accounts, Preston stood indebted to Drinker’s estate in the amount of $480.86. At the same time, the arbitrators adopted and confirmed the detailed valuation of the "Stockport concern" which the originally named group of neighbors (less the offending Stroud) had completed. The real estate, consisting of some 16,000 acres together with buildings at Stockport, was appraised at $22,699, while the personal property, consisting of cattle, swine, farming utensils, crops (both harvested and growing at the time of inspection), and household articles ranging from frying pans and tea kettles to feather beds and cherry desks, was given a value of $2,922.90. The four referees declined to make a division of the property between Preston and the estate because they were uncertain that the 1807 agreement gave them express authority to do so.

The partitioning of the lands was more readily achieved than the division of the personal property at Stockport. Preston understandably

94 William Drinker to John Hilborn, October 26, 1810 [copy in William Drinker’s hand], Drinker Collection, HSP.
95 Samuel Preston v. William Drinker and others, Executors of Henry Drinker, Dec’d, Supreme Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, December Term, 1811, No. 201. While some trace of this proceeding may be found in the Drinker Collection, the complete record, including the twelve-page valuation of the Stockport Estate as of September 15, 1812, is in the Bureau of Archives and History, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (Harrisburg, Pa.). The deeds exchanged in settlement were all dated March 3, 1814; those from Preston to Henry Drinker’s four executors were recorded in Wayne County on April 5, 1814, beginning in Deed Book vol. 4, at 7, and those from the executors to Preston were recorded on November 28 through December 4, 1815, beginning in Deed Book vol. 4, at 237.
stalled in an attempt to avoid breaking up his household and farming possessions, and the long-suffering John Hilborn was asked by William Drinker to try once more to bring Preston around. But the trip he made to Stockport after harvest in 1814 was a total waste of time, for “S. P. discover'd no disposition to assist in the Division.” When Hilborn inquired why Preston would not adhere to formal articles of agreement signed in full and final settlement, “his answer was that there was no penalty mentioned in the Instrument.” Hilborn begged to be excused from making any further attempt at persuasion. “I am now in my Seventy fourth year,” he told William Drinker, “near the age that thy Honorable father's active and useful life was drawn to a period. I hope that some person [may] be found that can succeed better with the Strange man than I have been able to do.”

Today, driving north from Equinunk, one must keep a sharp lookout if Stockport is not to be missed entirely. A sign points to a cemetery which, lying well back from the road near the edge of the Delaware River, provides the only monuments left to mark this thriving settlement of more than a century ago. Samuel Preston’s castle burned to the ground in 1903—its site now identified by the foundations and by the two chimneys, the last elements to be put in place, which stretch heavenward, at precarious angle, like a supplicant’s arms. Samuel Preston rests in the far corner of the graveyard beneath a stone erected by his family some years after his death. It bears the still decipherable inscription: “Mr. Preston was one of the pioneers of the wilderness in Wayne County and was a man of rare intelligence and great eccentricity.”

The Quaker in Henry Drinker would have condemned the tombstone as idolatrous and a surrender to vainglory. Yet would not this revealing lapidary inscription (to borrow from Dr. Johnson) have struck him, on second thought, as fair summation for his agent and partner, the “Strange man” with whose contentious nature so many had to struggle? Before the darkest storm clouds had gathered, Drinker

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96 John Hilborn to William Drinker, October 7 [misdated September 7], 1814, Drinker Collection, HSP.
had passed judgment of a similar sort. "That thou art endowed with talents and qualifications of no mean rank, I will readily allow," he wrote Preston in 1800, "and if they were combined with prudence and a cool Christian temper of mind, how useful might thou be amongst thy neighbors and others."97

Henry Drinker to Samuel Preston, October 28, 1800, L.B. (1800-1802), 128. Preston's monument fails to comport, however, with Dr. Johnson's dictum, "In lapidary inscriptions a man is not upon oath." James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D. (London, 1791), I, 514. One reason for the Quaker rejection of "outward monuments" was the "deviation from the truth" in the "extravagant encomiums upon the dead" which they frequently bore. Thomas Clarkson, A Portrait of Quakerism (London, 1807), II, 36.