ALCOHOL, AN IMPORTANT PART of the diet of colonial Americans, also played a central role in their social activities. Historians James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender have shown that for seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Americans, "high alcohol consumption was a normal part of personal and community habits." Indeed, a wide range of occasions were normally "wet." Martin and Lender argue that as the eighteenth century advanced, a variety of factors undercut the ability of the community to enforce social norms that once had acted to limit excessive drinking. Both the increased use of rum and the loosening of institutional controls over personal morality led some observers to fear for the stability of the social order.¹ Even after the patriotic calls for personal austerity, vigilance, and private morality during the American Revolution, Americans continued to drink alcohol in prodigious quantities—so much so that historian W.J. Rorabaugh has characterized the young American republic as being in the grip of a national alcoholic binge.²

Despite broad cultural differences in eighteenth-century America, a common cultural prescription encouraged the use of alcohol by men of all social stations. Men could make statements regarding their social positions through the manner in which they drank. Such statements appeared most clearly in the rituals which governed the consumption of alcohol within the core group of genteel society. In Philadelphia, the core group consisted of the two hundred or so clubmen, civic leaders, and merchant princes who considered them-

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selves to be at the top of Philadelphia’s social ladder. How these men drank reveals much about their self-perceptions and social relations with one another.

Drinking was crucial to the process by which a gentleman adopted the forms of “gentility” and demonstrated his gentility to his peers and to society at large. Gentlemen pointed to their drinking rituals as evidence that they were of the “better sort.” In turn, the belief that they constituted the “better sort” encouraged gentlemen to attempt to exercise a stewardship over the rest of society by preserving it from the “licentiousness” of the “lower orders.” Genteel drinking rituals served both to symbolize the actual exclusion of the great bulk of the population from the city’s most exalted social milieu and to provide an intense feeling of inclusion for a small, self-selected portion of the city’s total population. Yet, “genteel” drinking rituals also occasioned conflict within gentlemanly circles, a conflict that eventually helped bring about a revision of the concept of gentility.

With a clear conscience eighteenth-century “proper” Philadelphians prescribed alcohol in a wide variety of social situations. They even celebrated drinking in song and verse. An anonymous versifier maintained that:

There’s but one good reason I can think  
Why people ever cease to drink  
Sobriety the cause is not  
Nor fear of being deem’d a Sot,  
But if liquor can’t be got.  

Philadelphia’s emergence as an entrepot ensured that liquor could easily be “got.” The most popular beverages were beer, rum (whether

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4 Quoted in Joseph J. Kelley, Jr., Life and Times in Colonial Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1973), 163.
distilled from New England molasses or imported from the West Indies), and cider. The city's trade connections further allowed wealthy drinkers to indulge themselves in the contemporary English passion for madeiras, ports, and clarets.⁵

Punch and wine, beer and rum were the adjuncts of sociability among men of every social station in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. On several occasions, Jacob Hiltzheimer, a minor government functionary, was walking down the street when called into exalted company to share a bottle of wine or two. In his diary Hiltzheimer took scrupulous note of the company. On March 15, 1789, for example, he wrote:

On my way home from church this afternoon George Clymer called me to come in, where I found the following gentlemen seated around the table with wine before them: James Wilson, General P. Dickinson, Dr. Jones, Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, Mr. Clymer's two sons and General Dickinson's son.⁶

Hiltzheimer, in his turn, offered a variety of entertainments to those who treated him. One of his particular prides was animal husbandry. The killing of his big steer "Roger" was, for Hiltzheimer, one of the highlights of 1774. He invited a great number of gentlemen to see the beast dressed and weighed. Subsequently, he invited his friends to drink and dine on Roger's steaks at Mullen's tavern.⁷ In Hiltz-

⁵ Wine or punch were the preferred tipples of leisured gentlemen, although available tavern records show that these beverages were sometimes drunk by the butcher, the baker, and the tallowchandler. The same records show that gentlemen were known to drink beverages associated with the "lower orders" —namely neat rum, cider, and beer. See the account book of Joseph Ogden, keeper of the One Tun Tavern on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia: Joseph Ogden Innkeeper's Account Book (Historical Society of Pennsylvania) (hereafter, HSP). Punch was drunk in Robert Moulder's tavern in the small country town of Upper Chichester: see Chester County, Account Book of Robert and Lydia Moulder (HSP).

⁶ Jacob Cox Parsons, ed., Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer, 1765-1798 (Philadelphia, 1893), 151, 225, and 192.

⁷ Hiltzheimer recorded the names of the guests who attended the weighing. Some of Philadelphia's most prominent citizens were witnesses: Timothy Matlack, Joseph Fox, Andrew Allen, James Allen, Samuel Mifflin, William Parr, Samuel Hudson, Josiah Hewes, Tench Tilghman, Samuel Massey, Reynold Keen, Andrew Hamilton, James Wharton, and William Sheaff. Thomas Mifflin and "a sleigh full of gentlemen" dined with Hiltzheimer on Roger's steaks at a dinner held at the Tun. See ibid., 28-29.
heimer's view, such socializing was a species of gardening, wherein one cultivated social contacts. Drinking was an ever-present feature of the social world Hiltzheimer's diary described. He had little doubt that the manner in which men of his world drank was "genteel."8

Richard Bushman has isolated three features of gentility in eighteenth-century America: a concern with personal refinement, contact between refined persons in which "genteel" manners were displayed, and the preparation of environments fitting for such persons and their gatherings. The rituals which governed the drinking of Philadelphia's social elite were informed by all three of these concerns.9

The hallmarks of gentility can be found in the material culture of gentlemanly drinking. During the eighteenth century, America's port cities were flooded with an unprecedented variety of consumer goods, whose low price threatened to overturn time-honored sumptuary distinctions.10 As china and silver wares and fine liquor became more diffused, so their "proper" use became more narrowly defined. A recipe printed in Poor Richard's Almanack described the correct preparation of punch:

Boy, bring a bowl of China here
Fill it with water cool and clear:
Decanter with Jamaica right,
And spoon of silver, clean and bright,
Sugar twice-fin'd in pieces cut,
Knive, sieve, and glass in order put,
Bring forth the fragant fruit and then
We're happy till the clock strikes ten.  \textsuperscript{11}

Punch was to be stirred with a silver spoon, not a common porringer, and in a china bowl purchased especially (and employed solely) for that purpose. A true gentleman had his servant prepare punch using sugar refined not once but twice.

Gentlemen consciously made the act of consuming alcohol into an activity to display refined manners. Through their drinking rituals, gentlemen subjected the behavior of the individual to the scrutiny and approval of the group. When, for example, a gentleman proposed or responded to a toast, his deportment and speech were scrutinized by his peers and the multitudinous attributes of gentility (refinement, polish, breeding, grace, civility, and urbanity) accordingly assessed. Genteel drinking rituals were undertaken by men self-consciously seeking to act like gentlemen. Their drinking was not an act of release but of definition.

“Gentility” was an inherently judgmental and exclusive value. For its possessors, gentility reflected pride in wealth, upbringing, and family lineage. Gentlemen did not wish to see the rest of society achieve the refinement displayed in genteel circles, for the charm of such refinement diminished in the extent to which it was easily displayed. The best circles were of small circumference.

The elites’ conception of gentility justified, in their minds, a series of legislative measures designed to define and root out behavior which they thought threateningly licentious. Confident in the “virtue” of their own drinking practices, Philadelphia’s elites sought to regulate the drinking practices of other social groups. They legislated against the carousing and “gadding about” of Philadelphia’s blacks. They held anxious deliberations about the improprieties of drunken sailors, fairgoers, apprentices, market people, theatre-goers, patrons of auctions, and carousing fishermen. They made taverns, sporting events, and even the waters of the Schuylkill the subject of stringent ordinances. \textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{12} Carousing blacks, servants, apprentices, and “wild boys” were a constant subject of
At the same time, Philadelphia’s gentlemen took steps to ensure that they alone could perform the rituals of “proper” drinking. Gentlemen gathered to drink in private homes or in secluded rooms in public houses. They proposed legislation which banned toasting in taverns—by which they tried to reserve unto themselves the use of the ritual. Furthermore, on important civic or state occasions, when celebratory drinks were prescribed by custom, the gentry kept the “lower orders” at arm’s length. For example, when news of the repeal of the Stamp Act reached Philadelphia, huge bowls of punch were left outside the Old London Coffeehouse for the city’s “commoners,” while the city’s “society” enjoyed a splendid banquet in the state house. The completion of the state house itself was marked by “treats” of liquor for the workmen, but the city’s gentlemen and “strangers of note” celebrated by drinking fine wines at a separate, dazzling dinner. The way in which a gentleman drank was not only an


The prohibition on toasting in taverns was a feature of Penn’s first tavern regulations:
important part of the definition of his station in life but also a jealously
guarded prerogative of privilege.

Some gentlemen expressed ambivalence about this prerogative. In
Philadelphia a Quaker constituency within the city’s social elite threat-
ened to undermine the claims made by gentlemen in behalf of their
drinking rituals. Quaker grandees initially were not markedly more
abstemious than other members of Philadelphia’s elite. Over the course
of the eighteenth century, however, devout Quaker gentlemen came
to resist the notion—accepted by other gentlemen—that heavy drink-
ing was “genteel.” The city’s Quaker community devoted much
energy to counselling and reclaiming alcohol abusers, promoting an
awareness of the dangers of excessive drinking, and, eventually, ex-
horting the group to have as little to do with alcohol as possible. The
Friends produced some of America’s first temperance tracts, and they
provided an audience for non-Quaker writers and publishers who
challenged the prevailing assumptions about the properties of alcohol
and the propriety of heavy drinking. By the the second half of the
eighteenth century, Quakers were the most abstemious group in Phil-
adelphia. Ambivalence towards the rituals of gentlemanly drinking
created a tension within genteel circles because these rituals de-
manded—even as they sought to promote—unity and consensus.

see Jean Soderlund, ed., William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680-1684: A
Documentary History (Philadelphia, 1983), 206; an act prohibiting the drinking of healths
to promote drunkenness was one of “Fifty Laws Relating to Morals” passed in 1705,
Provincial Council, 2:239-40. The celebrations surrounding the repeal of the Stamp Act are
described in the Pennsylvania Gazette, May 22, 1766; the opening of the statehouse was the
occasion of a private party thrown by Mayor William Allen and reported in ibid., Sept. 23,
1736.

14 See Brobeck, “Revolutionary Change,” passim; Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and
15 Jack D. Marietta, The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783 (Philadelphia,
1984), 19-23, 105-10. Throughout the course of the eighteenth century, Philadelphia’s
newspapers, particularly the Pennsylvania Gazette and the American Weekly Mercury, printed
articles disputing the gentility of heavy drinking. For early examples, see “A Drinker’s
Dictionary,” American Weekly Mercury, Jan. 6, 1737; and “A Rhapsody on Rum,” Pennsyl-
vania Gazette, Oct. 26, 1749. For examples of early temperance literature, see Anthony
Benezet, The Mighty Destroyer Displayed . . . (Philadelphia, 1774); Benjamin Rush, Ser-
mons to Gentlemen Upon Temperance and Exercise (Philadelphia, 1772); and Rush, An Enquiry
into the Effects of Ardent Spirits Upon the Human Body and Mind . . . (Philadelphia, 1784).
The organization underlying the rituals of gentlemanly drinking was nurtured in the practices of gentlemanly clubs. The tone of gentlemanly drinking in a club was recalled by Alexander Graydon: "Though without the slightest addiction to liquor nothing was more delightful to me than to find myself a member of a large bottle association set in for serious drinking." Serious drinking required some consideration of organization. Gentlemen did not aimlessly "drink"—at least not while they were capable of drinking according to a plan. Graydon recalled that serious drinking was accompanied by the appointment of "table officers" and other "necessary dispositions" of such "engagements."16 The clearest formal expression of this view of sociability can be found in the activities of clubs founded in Philadelphia in the 1720s and 1730s.

On July 3, 1729, the American Weekly Mercury printed a letter, written by one "Amy Prudent," which described Philadelphia's Meridional Club. "Sir," Prudent wrote:

I must inform you that we are wives to a certain set of men, that stile themselves the Meridional Club, which they think intitules [sic] them to leave their business in the midst, not caring which end goes foremost so that . . . twenty or more of them can get together over a flowing bowl of fresh limes, which makes them of more fluency by far than we are over a dish of tea; . . . when our rooms are set in a decent order to dine in, we are immediately discommoded with a numerous body of twelve o'clock punch drinkers which beloved liquor they pretend is to whet their appetites. This being ended, (the president they call him) makes a long harangue, whose house and family they shall next disoblige, and so departs 'til the next long wish'd for hour . . . but would they forbear to persist in so vile a practice, we their unfortunate spouses might be made happy.17

The Meridional Club was one of a number of social clubs and societies—including the St. George's or English Society, the Ancient

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17 American Weekly Mercury, July 3, 1729.
Britons, the Beefsteak Club, and the Governor's Club—founded in Philadelphia during this period.\textsuperscript{18}

The members of these clubs justified themselves by stressing the gentility of club behavior. The Meridional Club, for example, was the subject of a reply to "Amy Prudent" written by "Amicus Curiae" and printed in the next issue of the *Mercury*:

> Upon reading your last record, I find a scurrilous complaint lodged against a society that meets alternately at each other’s houses once a day, to regale themselves for about half an hour over a bowl of punch and thereby to preserve an agreeable unity among themselves, a profitable correspondence in regard to business and a happy decorum in mixt affairs, such as characters, controversies etc.\textsuperscript{19}

In this rebuttal, "Amicus Curiae" positioned the Meridional Club within the realm of genteel manners. The club's purpose, he argued, was not drinking but the fostering and celebration of "unity," "correspondence," and "decorum."

Inherent in the organization of a club was a restriction on membership which helped promote "unity" among club members. The hierarchical aspects of clubs, their presidents and officers, helped promote "decorum" by subjecting the behavior of a member to the judgment of the membership. "Correspondence" was ensured when members were recruited from different sectors of the city’s elites. Members of the Meridional Club further fostered "correspondence" by hosting meetings in turn.

Gentlemen were drawn yet closer together by the consumption of alcohol and, in particular, the ritual of toasting. The practice, as understood by genteel Philadelphians, took its style from a group of rituals by which aristocratic English associations (e.g., the Knights of the Toast and the Kit Cat Club) sought to distance themselves from


\textsuperscript{19} American Weekly Mercury, July 17, 1729.
the social structure and create, temporarily, a liminal masquerade.\textsuperscript{20} The Knights of the Toast gathered to compose poetastic paeans to aristocratic beauties such as the Duchess of Cambridge. In the Knights' parlance, the lady was the "toast" and the drinking that surrounded her celebration in poetry was "toasting." The Knights vied with each other to produce the most witty and learned praises of their toast. Such was the status that was awarded, by the group, to the man who displayed the most refinement in toasting that members went to the lengths of commissioning suitable sentiments.

The influence of the world of the private association or club on toasting was reflected in two particular conventions. One did not refuse to drink a toast; nor did he refuse the obligations of toasting. This meant that the practice's strongest hold was on those Toasters who were already known to one another or who had some bond in common. The Knights of the Toast, for example, were all Whigs. In addition, one did not propose a toast the sentiments of which might tempt a man to refuse to drink, or to decline the obligations of toasting.

Philadelphia's social clubs emphasized verbal deportment. On his visit to Philadelphia in 1744, Dr. Alexander Hamilton was introduced into the city's Governor's Club by Phineas Bond, where Hamilton found the conversation "agreeable and instructing." The gentlemen conversed on such topics as "English poets and some of the foreign writers, particularly Cervantes, whom we loaded with the eulogiums due his character." Later in the week, at the club, he discussed trade and an impending military expedition to Cartagena.\textsuperscript{21} Hamilton de-

\textsuperscript{20} The Knights cloaked themselves in anonymity, exacted a high degree of group loyalty, and developed a symbolized material culture. See R.J. Allen, \textit{The Clubs of Augustan London} (Cambridge, 1933), 36-41. Allen makes clear that, notwithstanding subsequent imitation of their rituals, these groups were regarded with some distaste by their peers and were in some ways akin to aristocratic hooligans like the Mohocks or the later Mad Monks of Medmenham. The phrase "liminal masquerade" is employed by Victor Turner in describing the striving for "communitas" to be found in the "need to doff the masks, cloaks, apparel and insignia of status from time to time." Turner, "Passages, Margins and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas," in Victor Turner, \textit{Drama, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society} (Ithaca, 1974), 231-71. See also Turner, "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors," \textit{ibid.}, 23-59.

\textsuperscript{21} In his native Annapolis, Hamilton was a force behind the "Ancient and Honorable Tuesday Club." Bridenbaugh, ed., \textit{Gentleman's Progress}, 21, 26. In 1744 William Black
cried the occasional "gross, smutty expressions" he heard introduced into conversation at the club, yet he saved his criticism for his journal. A gentleman did not simply walk away from a conversation which displeased him. Neither did a gentleman refuse to drink a toast with a fellow clubman. Toasting was conceived of as an opportunity to display breeding, knowledge, and wit in praise of what gentlemen considered relatively neutral, non-controversial subjects. Hamilton drank toasts at the Governor’s Club which "celebrated the female sex." The practice punctuated perfectly the type of mannered discourse advocated by Lord Chesterfield.22

This discourse was widely admired. During the period in which the first genteel clubs were founded in Philadelphia, the editors of the Pennsylvania Gazette and, particularly, the American Weekly Mercury reprinted or commissioned numerous articles adumbrating the principles of correct, Chesterfieldian, conversation.23 Such discourse was not easily achieved. In 1744, for example, William Black found himself in company at a private home drinking lemon punch. "We described the Governor's Club as "a select number of gentlemen that meet every night at a certain tavern where they pass away a few hours in the pleasures of conversation and a cheerful glass." Black was impressed by the quality and selection of liquor and by the fact that the "glass went briskly round." Black, "Journal," I:246.

22 Bridenbaugh, ed., Gentleman's Progress, 26. The appeal of this conversational style owes much to gentlemanly dissatisfaction with public debate. Alexander Hamilton's contempt for the volubility and assertiveness of the "lower orders" is a constant theme of his Itinerarium. When his barber witnessed him leaving Mass, Hamilton decided it was time to leave Philadelphia and resume his journey. "In the morning my barber came to shave me and almost made me sick with his Irish brogue and his stinking breath. He told me that he was very glad to see that I was being of the right religion . . . then he ran out a blundering encomium concerning the Catholics and their principles." See ibid., 192. Hamilton was present in Philadelphia when the governor of Pennsylvania read out the declaration of war with France. The reading took place on the statehouse steps and the governor was flanked by massed gentry, soldiers, and flags. The governor appealed for volunteers to bear arms, and immediately a "bold, stentorian fellow" in the crowd called out that since the people had neither money nor credit they could hardly be expected to purchase arms. Ibid., 26. On the Chesterfieldian ideal of manners, see R.K. Root, ed., Lord Chesterfield: Letters to His Son and Others (London, 1984).

23 See, for example, an article on the place of learning in conversation, illustrated by the character of "Lord Plausible," in American Weekly Mercury, May 24, 1722; and the "Busybody" series which began ibid., Jan. 28, 1729, especially "Busybody #2" on the place of ridicule in polite conversation, ibid., Feb. 4, 1729; see also ibid., July 24, 1729, July 23, 1730, Nov. 29, 1730; and "Good Nature: A Character Often Usurped," Pennsylvania Gazette, Dec. 18, 1744.
all got soon very well acquainted,” he wrote, “and as one thing begets another of its species, so one bowl finished, another supply was directly got, ’til we was very jovial.” This joviality did not prevent Black from quarrelling with a man whose “whole discourse turned on the indiscretion of some one or other of his acquaintances, which he would express great sorrow for, but in my opinion, only affected to pity them, for an excuse to fix people’s minds on their faults and to make the company see his own imagined superiority.”24 The appeal of toasting can be traced to the extent to which it celebrated, in ritualized form, a conversational style widely admired and sought after.

The popularity of toasting is demonstrated by its use in a variety of settings. Toasting was, for example, a feature of ceremonial banquets. Such banquets were common in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. A well-documented example of the use of toasting in this setting concerns a subscription dinner, held at the Golden Fleece Tavern in 1769, in honor of Pascal Paoli and the Corsican patriots. In case word of mouth did not repeat, or repeated inaccurately, the sentiments of the diners, a list of the forty-eight toasts drunk that night was subsequently printed in the Pennsylvania Gazette.25 The cumulative effect of this ceremony was the composition of a kind of verbal broadside by the diners. The toasts ran the gamut of contemporary rhetorical devices—being by turns formal, provocative, learned, repetitious, and digressive. The diners began by formally toasting the King and “the Queen and Royal Family.” Paoli was then praised, followed by individual toasts to five “Friends of Liberty”—namely, Lords Chatham, Camden, and Shelburne, Colonel Barre, and Edmund Burke. The diners then addressed the business at hand, wishing that Corsican “virtue” should triumph over French policy and toasting the friends of Corsica and America in Great Britain. The company

24 Black took the trouble later to ask a “native of this place” whether such discourse was considered genteel in Philadelphia: “Journal,” 2:46, 48. He also found fault with two men whose entire conversation was a debate in which one of them stressed the negative aspects of any person or topic mentioned and the other stressed the positive: ibid., 1:410. See also Bridenbaugh, ed., Gentleman’s Progress, 174.

drank to the hope that Britain would always be just and America always free. It urged that the spirit of Paoli inhabit every American. At this point, digressions of unequal merit were admitted. The company expressed the desire that Paoli should "meet with an equal renown but a happier fate than the younger Brutus." Another toast proposed: "May the attempts of France upon Corsica meet with the same fate as those of Persia upon Greece—repulsed with shame." The company drank to the hope that the spirit of Wallace would inhabit the breast of every Scotsman. As the evening wore on the toasts grew shorter until, at the very end of the evening, the company drank to "John Adams."

Here we can see something of the process by which toasting promoted consensus and refinement, the hallmarks of gentility. The potentially contentious issue of Corsican independence was addressed in a spirit of unity. A large number of the diners, regardless of their wit, were able to contribute to the evening's proceedings. The company drank with the Scot who invoked the spirit of Wallace just as it drank with those sages who invoked Brutus and the wars between Greece and Persia. Substantive discussion of the significance of the Corsican struggle or aid to Paoli was avoided. The toasts aimed to reflect agreed ideas about the issue, not bring about an advance in opinion.

Where opinion-makers met, their toasts were very carefully considered. In 1774 John Adams attended a private dinner party at the home of George Mifflin. Among the guests was Robert Treat Paine. Toward the end of the evening, Richard Henry Lee and Benjamin Harrison from Virginia arrived "very high." As Adams recalled:

Lee had dined with Mr. Dickenson, and drank Burgundy the whole afternoon. Harrison gave us for a [toast] "a constitutional Death to the Lords Bute, Mansfield and North." Paine gave us "May the Collision of British Flint and American Steel, produce that Spark of Liberty which shall illumine the latest Posterity."

The company drank toasts until eleven o'clock. Among those which Adams remembered were "Wisdom to Britain and Firmness to the Colonies," "May Britain be wise and America free," "May the result of the Congress, answer the Expectations of the People," and "Union of Britain and the Colonies, on a Constitutional Foundation."26 The

impact of this social activity on the toasters' political attitudes and positions cannot have been negligible.

Throughout the eighteenth century, business and governmental dealings were mediated by ceremonial drinks. Such meetings were held within the territory of gentlel manners—if not always between genteel persons—and ceremonial drinks were used to help find common ground. Most of the government business Jacob Hiltzheimer describes in his diary was preceded, accompanied, or concluded by drinks in a tavern. Alexander Graydon remembered his service in the city's "Silk Stocking" militia company under John Cadwalader. The officers met once a day:

The place of rendezvous [was] the house of the Captain, where capacious demi-johns of Madeira were constantly set out in the yard where we formed for our refreshments before marching out to exercise. The ample fortune of Mr. Cadwalader had enabled him to fill his cellars with the choicest liquors; and it must be admitted that he doled them out with the most gentlemanly liberality.

The officers of the "Silk Stocking" company regarded themselves as being of equal social rank. Such drinking mitigated the impact of their necessarily unequal military ranks by celebrating their common status as officers and gentlemen. Their social feathers unruffled, the officers of the "Silk Stocking" company could march out from Cadwalader's yard and devote their attentions to keeping the "other ranks" away from liquor.

Genteel drinking could disguise as well as promote a social trans-action, such as the adjustment of status or the granting of a favor. Benjamin Franklin was a member of the delegation sent to request artillery from Governor George Clinton in New York. Franklin noted that, at first, Clinton "peremptorily refused" the delegation's request. Later, "at dinner with his council, where there was a great drinking

27 Hiltzheimer presented land claims at the Indian Queen: Parsons, ed., Extracts from the Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer, 57. He and his fellow street commissioners met at the Indian Queen and at the White Horse: ibid., 64, 77, and 130. He and several other gentlemen drew up a petition regarding the market in Funk's tavern: ibid., 69. He met the city magistrates at the Indian Queen: ibid., 79; and the city commissioners at Paris's Tavern: ibid., 88.

28 Graydon, Memoirs, 119.
of Madeira wine... he softened by degrees and said he would lend us six. After a few more bumpers he advanced to ten; and finally, very good-naturedly conceded eighteen.” Clinton was a noted “topper,” and there is a suggestion of manipulation in Franklin’s account of the meeting. Baron von Closein, the liaison between the French and American armies in 1782, made explicit the potential for manipulation inherent in gentlemanly drinking. He complained of the difficulty of effecting a speedy passage through Philadelphia. Robert Morris was one of a number of gentlemen who pressed von Closein to lengthy and lavish dinners featuring allusive toasts such as “When Lilies Flourish, Roses vanish.” “I took pains,” wrote the baron,

to tell all these fine people that the safety of America depended on the unimpeded progress of myself and my dispatches. I often had to invent some tales... to compel these gentlemen (who were not all equally hot Whigs) not to stop me for long.

As politics threatened to divide the city’s social elite, gentlemen elaborated the rituals of toasting to the point of inconvenience. When the Marquis de Chastellux visited Philadelphia in the 1780s, he found it “an absurd and truly barbarous practice, the first time you drink and at the beginning of dinner, to call out successively to each individual to let him know that you drink his health.” “The actor in this ridiculous comedy,” he wrote,

is sometimes ready to die with thirst, whilst he is obliged to inquire the names, or catch the eye of five and twenty... persons, and the unhappy persons to whom he addresses himself [wait] with impatience;... [these] general and partial attacks terminate in downright duels. They call to you from end of the table. “Sir, will you permit me to drink a glass of wine with you?” This proposal is always accepted, and does not admit the excuse... “one does not drink without being acquainted.” The bottle is then passed to you, and you must look your enemy in the face... you wait till he likewise has poured out his wine, and taken his glass; you then drink mournfully with him as a recruit imitates the corporal in his exercises.”

The burden of Chastellux's complaint—that such toasting forced one to drink with total strangers—is revealing. Toasting originated as a means of fostering a heightened sense of communion between firm friends or prior acquaintances. Amid the divisions and leveling tendencies of the American Revolutionary age inclusive fellowship extended even to meetings between strangers of a similar rank.

Writing of this period, Mathew Carey recalled the "savage and barbarous custom . . . worthy of Creeks or Cherokees" of "bumper toasts." Every man had to fill his glass and drain it for a "bumper." "If he attempted to flinch," Carey recalled:

however weak his head might be, and however unable to bear much wine, his deliquency was pointed out, and a clamor raised to force him to finish his glass. Sometimes the doors of the dining room were locked, to prevent the escape of the guests.32

Yet, like Chastellux, Carey swallowed his reservations along with his wine.

The lengths to which gentlemen went in their search for harmony and unity testify to the importance they placed on these values, values all the more prized during the social and political upheavals of the late eighteenth century. Gentlemen drinkers were supposed to be able to rise above politics. Alexander Graydon recalled that, on the eve of independence, "Mr. John Ross, who loved ease and Madeira much better than liberty and strife, declared for neutrality, saying, that, let who would be king, he well knew that he should be subject."33

Graydon remembered this *mot* precisely because it expressed a rare sentiment. In fact, politics did divide the city's elite. In 1776 John Adams noted with approval that "politics" had made a "schism" in Philadelphia's St. George's Society. One group met at the City Tavern, another at the Bunch of Grapes, and a third out of town. These arrangements corresponded with a split between "staunch Ameri-

32 Mathew Carey, "Reminiscences on the Subject of Intemperance," in Carey, *Miscellaneou Essays* (Philadelphia, 1830), 318. Carey described a gradual softening of convention. First a man was allowed to fill his glass when he pleased, though he still had to drink as he filled. Later a man could both fill his glass and drink when he pleased.

33 Graydon, *Memoirs*, 115. London's Royal Society Club, which met at the Mitre Tavern, was much admired by Franklin because it "was of all parties" but "party" was not a part of the club. See Verner W. Crane, "The Club of Honest Whigs: Friends of Science and Liberty," *WMQ* 23 (1966), 210-33 (p. 211 quotation).
cans,” “staunch Britons,” and “half-way men.” Schisms of this kind grew as the eighteenth century drew to a close.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the desire to associate with people of one's own political views joined the equally powerful but opposing impulse to submerge political differences, to create a powerful stimulant to socializing. This period was something of a golden age of ceremonial banqueting in Philadelphia. Considering that the republic was at war and was increasingly idealized in lean and vital terms, there was censure in Richard Henry Lee's description of genteel society in Philadelphia in the winter of 1776 as presenting an “attractive scene of debauch and amusement.” Nathanael Greene, writing in 1779, concurred, adding, “luxury and dissipation are very prevalent.”

On occasion, grand dinners and ceremonial banquets passed from opulence to decadence. In 1781 a dinner, held at the City Tavern in honor of the Pennsylvania Militia, ended in tragedy when a Colonel Craig fatally stabbed a tardy wine waiter. Accounts of other banquets are less sensational but no less revealing. On December 1, 1778, the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania and the State Assembly threw themselves a dinner that cost over £2,000. Two-hundred-seventy gentlemen diners drank 522 bottles of Madeira, 116 large bowls of punch, 9 of toddy, 6 of “Sangaree,” and 24 bottles of port. Some indication of how the evening ended is provided by the bill for damages, which accounted for a shade under £100. The diners destroyed 96 wine glasses, 5 decanters, and 1 “large inkstand.”

Such excess tested gentlemen's loyalty to the accustomed rituals of genteel drinking. The ease with which these rituals could produce riotous drunkenness led some gentlemen to adopt an ambivalent

36 The incident was hushed up by the other diners, and it does not appear that Craig was brought to trial. Benjamin and Mary Boggs, “Inns and Taverns of Old Philadelphia,” p. 88, manuscript in Boggs Collection (HSP); Platt, City Tavern, 179-80; and the “Diary of George Nelson, 1780-1781, 1790-1792,” Feb. 5, 1781 (HSP). Platt, City Tavern, 155.
attitude toward them. In 1781, for example, Enos Reeves attended a civic dinner where the "greatest variety of wines of the best brands" were "plied close." He noted that, after three hours of toasting, the company grew "noisy." Not all members of the company stayed to demonstrate their amity. Reeves observed that "numbers had left" before the company turned "noisy."

Alexander Graydon thought that the American Revolution "brought temperance into fashion." If there was a new fashion for temperance, it was not displayed at the dining tables of Philadelphia's elites. The ambivalence recorded by Reeves, Lee, Greene, and Chastellux toward the rituals of genteel drinking stemmed precisely from the success of those rituals in rendering dinner guests "noisy."

Ambivalence towards the accustomed rituals of genteel drinking troubled gentlemen. They wished to believe that their drinking demonstrated that they were the "better sort." Any reluctance to drink was regarded by gentlemen drinkers as a slight. When outright criticism of gentlemanly drinking rituals was expressed, it provoked a furious response. The Mercury's correspondent "Amicus Curiae," in a great blast of misogyny, denounced "Amy Prudent" as a "virulent incendiary," a "virago" who ought to be at the head of a company of Grenadier Guards, for Prudent's temerity in suggesting that the men of the Meridional Club were overly fond of punch. As a young man, Alexander Graydon had witnessed a certain Captain Wallace bellow at a Quaker who had questioned Wallace's drinking: "What do you think I'm a hog only to drink when dry?" Yet gentlemen drinkers were reluctant to characterize those of their circle who expressed ambivalence toward heavy drinking as men of an "inferior" sort, because the accusation was easily reversed. The host who locked his dining room to prevent his guests from ducking out of heavy drinking sought complicity, in place of approval, as a means of defusing the moral conflict among his guests.

37 John B. Reeves, ed., "Extracts from the Letter Books of Lieutenant Enos Reeves," *PMHB* 21 (1897), 82 (Letter #153). In 1778 Massachusetts congressional delegate Samuel Holton refused an invitation to a lavish ball thrown by a "society of French gentlemen," saying, "I think it is not the proper time to attend balls when our country is in such distress." See Platt, *City Tavern*, 150.


The insecurities and anxieties inherent in genteel drinking practices were exacerbated, not created, by the dissipation and excess of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. They are as much a part of the meaning of genteel drinking as the large claims gentlemen made on behalf of the "friendly glass."

As early as 1736, James Logan neatly encapsulated some of these anxieties and insecurities. The occasion was a speech Logan delivered at a conference in Philadelphia between representatives of the provincial government and leaders of several Indian nations. Prior to the conference a drunken Indian had scalped a settler. As the parties convened in Philadelphia, Logan, Secretary of the Provincial Council, heard reports that "divers" Indians had been seen drunkenly wandering the streets of Philadelphia with liquor obtained from "low tippling houses" in the city. What exercised Logan was not that the Indians imbibed; rather, it was that the Indians did so in what he regarded as a disordered, and therefore debauched, fashion. On "getting" rum, Logan claimed, the Indians broke open the casks and drank it off in "great quantities." Logan contrasted their behavior with that which obtained in the city's genteel circles:

All of us here and all you see of any credit in the place, can every day have as much rum of their own to drink as they please and yet scarce one of us will take a dram, at least not one man will on any account be drunk; no, not if he were hired to it with great sums of money. Logan did not immediately scurry for quill and parchment to legislate against Indians' drinking. The Indians were not to be prevented from imbibing; rather, they were to be encouraged to drink in what was, for Logan, the "proper" fashion. Puzzled by his guests' drinking practices, Logan poignantly asked: "Why are they not so wise? They show very good sense in other things; . . . why cannot they act like us?" For Logan, diplomacy was a transaction conducted between gentlemen. Like other diplomatic meetings, this conference closed with a "friendly glass."

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40 Provincial Council, 4:86.
41 Ibid., 4:91-92.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 4:95. In 1741, at a similar conference, "the governor put an end to the conference,
The bewilderment in Logan’s question—"why cannot they act like us?"—is an immensely revealing statement of his outlook. The minutes of meetings between Philadelphia’s gentlemen and Indian leaders faithfully record the speech, gestures, and actions of the “savages.” The men of Logan’s circle were not insensitive to the manners and customs of the Indian leaders. They viewed the Indian leaders as men of a station comparable to their own. However, Philadelphia’s gentlemen wanted to believe that they held the essential conception of gentility and that the Indian leaders would share their conception of gentility if they were brought into it by participation—and, therefore, that the Indian leaders ought to drink like gentlemen. To suggest that gentlemen ought to act like Indians—or that drinking be removed from diplomacy—was to show disrespect to all those gentlemen who believed that the “friendly glass,” and only the “friendly glass,” was an integral part of the genteel conduct of business.

Logan’s claim, in his speech to the Indians—that one couldn’t hire a gentleman to get drunk—was cherished by gentleman drinkers. Journals, diaries, letters, and memoirs written by gentlemen rarely mention drunkenness within their own circle. In fact, there was a tension within genteel society with regard to drunkenness. All gentlemen deplored drunkenness in other social groups. Some gentlemen,

and calling for wine and other liquor, according to the Indian custom, after a decent and cheerful entertainment, the Indians withdrew.” See ibid., 4:563. Subsequently, Pennsylvania’s government passed legislation which limited any Indian in the colony to a quarter gill of rum per day. However, this legislation specifically exempted times of treaty-making from its provisions. Mr. Edmonds, one of William Denny’s agents, informed the governor that chiefs like Teedyuscung demanded rum at times of treaty-making: ibid., 8:11.

The various meetings described in Provincial Council usually contain a transcription of the Indian leaders’ speeches and note, for example, at what point in a speech a belt of wampum was offered or how a day’s session was concluded. See also “The Process of Negotiation,” in John Demos, ed., Remarkable Providences, 1600-1760 (New York, 1972), 277-83.

The inconsistencies of this position were pointed out to Isaac Norris at the Albany Conference in 1754. An Indian leader told Norris: “The Indians think it is no harm to get drunk whenever they can, but you white men say it is a sin and get drunk notwithstanding.” William T. Parsons, “Isaac Norris II: The Speaker” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1955), 119.

William Black’s journal is unusually candid. Black had a friend in Philadelphia who was as free with his wine “as an Apple-tree [is] of its fruit on a windy day.” After a visit with his friend, Black “groped” his way home, butting “against some posts on the side of the pavement which kept me in my road.” Black, “Journal,” 1:249.
like Jacob Hiltzheimer who could conceive of “decent drunkenness,” were prepared to blink at what they saw as “occasional” instances of gentlemanly intemperance. Others, particularly in the late eighteenth century, regarded drunkenness as the inevitable and inexcusable product of existing drinking rituals.

The formation of this latter attitude was stimulated by prominent displays of drunkenness. By common consent, the hardest drinking gentlemen in colonial Philadelphia were members of the British military establishment. British officers acted as though any amount of drunkenness was acceptable in a gentleman and that no true gentleman abstained from drink. These officers cared little for the opinion of Philadelphia society. Their antics dragged “gentlemanly” drunkenness into public view and forced genteel Philadelphians to consider whether they wished to imitate British ways.

Graydon recalled that the Old London Coffeehouse on Front and High Streets was, on numerous occasions, enlivened by the presence of a drunken Captain Ogle. The Old London Coffeehouse was the primary site for those discussions and negotiations about ships, cargo, and credit, vital features of the Philadelphia merchants’ world. One afternoon in the late colonial period, Captain Ogle, in full regimentals—booted, spurred, and drunk—reeled into the coffeehouse. Ogle had formed the impression that all Philadelphians were Quakers and set out to make sport of the Quakers’ brotherly love. On entering the coffeehouse, he threw his arms round the first man he encountered, one Joshua Fisher. Saying, “Ah, My Dear Broadbrim, give me a kiss,” Ogle began to “slaver” Fisher “most lovingly.” A friend of Graydon’s, the apothecary Will Richards, was present and intervened.

47 For the contempt in which British officers held the opinion of Philadelphians, see “Philadelphia Society before the Revolution: Extracts from the Letters of Alexander Mackraby to Sir Phillip Francis,” *PMHB* 11 (1887), 276-87, 491-97, especially 283, 286, 493.

48 The Old London Coffeehouse was founded in 1754 by William Bradford. Bradford collected subscriptions of 30 shillings from 234 individuals in order to finance the construction of an “elegant” coffeehouse. His imperious application for a liquor license set the tone of the establishment: “having been advised to keep a coffeehouse for the benefit of merchants and traders, and as some people may at times be desirous to be furnished with other liquors besides coffee your petitioner apprehends it is necessary to have the Governor’s license.” Boggs, “Inns and Taverns,” 189.

Ogle challenged Richards, saying “Hah! my jolly fellow, give me a smack of your fat chops.” Richards responded with a prolonged kiss which “sobered” the officer considerably. Richards and Ogle fell into conversation. Ogle, discovering that Richards was not a Quaker, treated him with a new respect. For his part, Richards concluded that “however [Ogle] might be disguised by intoxication, he well knew what belonged to the character of a gentleman.”

That Ogle was a gentleman was by no means the conclusion drawn by the other patrons of the coffeehouse. During a subsequent drunken disturbance there, two alderman who were present began committal proceedings against Ogle. With Ogle hanging over his shoulder, one wrote up a warrant. Eventually, the captain said:

Aye, my father was a Justice of the Peace too, but he did not spell that word as you do. I remember perfectly well, that, instead of an “s” he always used to spell circumstance with a “c.”

This “sarcastic thrust at the scribe,” Graydon recalled, “disarmed the patrons of their resentment,” and “turned the tide in favour of the rioters.”

These vignettes dramatize a conflict between gentlemen which centered around drinking. The issues were clear-cut. Did the drunken gentleman, by his irrational behavior, lose his claim to gentility or did the sober gentleman, by his overweaning rationality, lose his?

Graydon’s recollection of these incidents is that the form of Ogle’s behavior, in particular the wit he displayed in snubbing the alderman, was more important than its content. Graydon himself professed an antipathy to the values of thrift and industry promoted most prominently by Benjamin Franklin. He thought commerce and trade were not entirely “gentlemanly” pursuits. Recalling that even as a child he could not bring himself to view the game of marbles as a game of gain, Graydon wrote, “a scramble was ever my aversion.” “Though I had no dislike to money,” he added, “it never impressed me as a

50 Graydon, Memoirs, 44-45.
51 Graydon wrote of this second incident: “I know not what particular acts they had been guilty of, but they were very drunk, and their conduct so extremely disquieting and insulting to the peaceable citizens there assembled, that, being no longer able to endure them, it was judged expeditious to commit them.” Ibid., 45-46.
primary good.” 52 Given these views, it is not altogether surprising that Graydon cast Ogle as a gentlemanly drunkard and the “scramblers” in the coffeehouse as a men who could not take a joke. In later years, when Graydon witnessed a group of drunken militia officers making fools of themselves in front of enlisted men, he declined to intervene. He maintained: “I am sensible that it is against the laws of good-fellowship for a sober man to make reflections upon a mellow company into which he may chance to be introduced.” 53

A case for a “rational” participation in the rituals of genteel drinking was ably made by Edward Shippen of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In March 1754 he wrote a firm letter to his twenty-five-year-old son. “Avoid what the world calls pleasure,” he admonished. “Pleasure is only for crowned heads and other great men who have their incomes sleeping and waking.” He painted an alarming picture of genteel pleasures:

It is too common a thing for young men when they first appear upon the stage of action to aim at grandeur and politeness: they delight to see their friends (often falsely so called) frequently at their houses to entertain them in a genteel manner; they are pleased with this and the acquaintance to dine with them then afterwards to sit at table two or three hours tipling of wine or punch, which rendering the company unfit for any business, a walk to the bowling green or billiard table is proposed and consented to.

This, cautioned Shippen, led to further drinking. The result was that a young man became so “stupid” he did not know what to do except go on from the billiard table to the tavern to while away the hours until midnight. “Can any rational creature,” he asked, “answer such a behavior to God, his wife [and] family or even to himself?” 54 Shippen’s advice to his son was to take pleasure in temperance and moderation. His concern was as much with the financial implications of “gentlemanly” indulgence as with drunkenness. He closed his letter with the following calculation:

Remember, if a man should spend three shillings in liquor necessarily or otherwise in his own house every day, and three shillings and sixpence

52 Ibid., 48-49.
53 Ibid., 330.
at club every night and three pounds a year at the Assembly, and four pounds per annum for the concert it requires £125 12s 6d to support such proceedings. And remember that if a man rises at ten and sits at tea table til eleven, dines at one and sits at table til three, goes to the coffeehouse, where he ought by all means go til four, which ends the day; I say, if a man makes use of this practice, then he will only have three hours a day to do his business.\textsuperscript{55}

Shippen pointed out that the wise man would save extra hours for business by retiring early, rising early, avoiding drink, and not tarrying over luncheon or dinner tables. Such a man would beg his companions the favor of being excused from heavy drinking.

The very fact that Shippen calculated the cost of socializing against the benefits it might bring separated him from the “unthrifty,” hard-drinking world which Graydon so relished.\textsuperscript{56} Time, for the men of Graydon’s circle, was not money. Indeed, they punctuated their daily lives with ceremonial drinks in order to demonstrate this fact to themselves and to their peers. The Norrises, Logans, Dickinsons, Allens, Hamiltons, and Tilghmans who feature so prominently in the social life which Jacob Hiltzheimer recorded have been characterized by Thomas Doerflinger as men who were born rich and placed their wealth in safe investments rather than in trade. George Clymer, who called Hiltzheimer in from the street for a bowl of wine, sought to keep his sons from entering commerce and was described by a contemporary as “disliking” the “peculiar precariousness” of trade. John Cadwalader, whose “gentlemanly liberality” with wine was recalled by Alexander Graydon, “grew tired of ledgers and manifests rather quickly” and supported himself in grand style on the proceeds of a felicitous marriage.\textsuperscript{57} These men were free from the concerns of “industry” which Shippen outlined, and they were proud of it.

The city’s prominent merchants followed the lead of leisured gentlemen in building fine houses, dressing well, and presiding over glittering dinners and genteel gatherings. In the matter of drinking,

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Graydon “chiefly played for pastime,” disdaining the pursuit of an inheritance which might have been his, and he “affected the man of pleasure and dissipation.” Graydon, Memoirs, 48, 107.
\textsuperscript{57} Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise, 43-45.
however, the difference in outlook within genteel society between the leisured gentlemen and the "narrow and materialistic" wealthy merchant was revealed.\(^{58}\)

For much of the eighteenth century, gentlemen associated drinking with other indicators of gentility, most notably mannered, Chesterfieldian social intercourse. The proffering, no less than the acceptance, of the "friendly glass" bespoke a gentleman. Philadelphia’s social elite employed drinking as a means of bolstering its claim to represent the "better sort." In turn, the social elite’s belief that it constituted the "better sort" justified, in its eyes, the paternalism which manifested itself in legislation governing the behavior of the vast majority of the city’s population. But the whole house of cards rested on the general acceptance by genteel society of a particular style of behavior. Paradoxically, drinking—the very means by which Philadelphia gentlemen celebrated and promoted their harmony, decorous unity, and unquestionable superiority—engendered conflict within their ranks. By the end of the century, "civilized" gentlemen were dismissing as absurd and "truly barbarous" what had once been the agreed celebration of civility.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., 20-69.  
\(^{59}\) Rhys Isaac has argued that the historical ethnographer ought to view actions as statements. Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 324; see also Chastellux, *Travels*, 92-93.