

# *Working "A Gold Mine": Scholars of Early America and the Manuscript Collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*

**I**N THE FALL OF 1968, AN APPRENTICE HISTORIAN working on a doctoral dissertation on poverty in eighteenth-century Philadelphia walked into the manuscript room of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for the first time. He clutched a well-thumbed copy of the 1940 guide to HSP's manuscript holdings. Although woefully out of date, the guide, which the staff had graciously supplied in response to an inquiry, still provided a useful introduction to some of the manuscript holdings housed at HSP.<sup>1</sup> After digging into several manuscript collections and marking others for future exploration, the researcher, almost giddy with

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<sup>1</sup> The editions of the *Guide to the Manuscript Collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, all of which were published in Philadelphia, appeared in 1940, 1949, and 1991 (hereafter referred to as *Guide* with the year of publication). It is important to mention that not all manuscripts at HSP are owned by the society. Under a reciprocal arrangement with the Library Company of Philadelphia (located next door), LCP's manuscripts (such as the letters of Benjamin Rush) are on deposit at HSP and available for perusal, while HSP's rare book collection—pre-1821 titles—is on deposit at LCP. Some manuscript collections at HSP were purchased by the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, and may be so labeled, but they are actually owned by HSP. The ownership of manuscripts is less important to scholars than the fact that these sources have been preserved and are available. So, while the focus will be on the use of HSP manuscript collections, if a cited author made extensive use of LCP manuscripts housed at HSP, that fact will be noted. Also, the task is to discuss published works based on the manuscripts one encounters in the HSP library. Accordingly, many important works that do not fall into that category—for example the Bridenbaugh volume listed in n. 15 below—will not be discussed in the text.

delight, told an advisor: "I'm sitting on top of a gold mine."<sup>2</sup>

Scholars who focus on late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America, and on Pennsylvania in particular, often describe the HSP manuscript collections as a treasure trove.<sup>3</sup> James T. Lemon mentioned finding "gems" in the miscellaneous collections, and Jerome Wood called HSP's manuscript collections a "treasury" that yielded "unsuspected gems."<sup>4</sup> Philip Mead, an undergraduate at Brown University, made a similar discovery in the summer of 1996. Soon after launching a study of soldiers in the American Revolution, he unearthed the manuscript journal of John Harper Hawkins, a sergeant in the Continental Army. The journal seemed so "incredible," so rich, that like a miner overcome with gold fever Mead could not stop himself from returning to Philadelphia to continue digging. In the summer of 1997, he took an evening job at a bookstore so he could be at HSP during the days. And as he worked, he regularly saw researchers display "The Eureka Look"—the joyous smile that accompanies the sudden and perhaps unexpected discovery of incredibly valuable evidence.<sup>5</sup>

The scholars of early America who prospect in the rich HSP manuscript collections have also routinely marveled at their immense size. A century ago, William R. Shepherd expressed the belief that the "enormous" Penn Manuscripts collection could, in time, allow for a truly "exhaustive" analysis of colonial Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> Writing in the 1960s, Gary B. Nash stopped well short of that sweeping judgment, but he did aver that "the magnificent

<sup>2</sup> Author to Richard Wade, fall 1968. In assessing how scholars have expanded our knowledge through HSP manuscripts, I shall typically cite books. Of course, in most instances some of the scholars' research in those volumes would have appeared earlier in journals or other publications. See, for example, n. 84 below.

<sup>3</sup> Scholars have, of course, used other terms in discussing the extent of their reliance on HSP manuscript collections. HSP manuscript collections have formed "the backbone," "the solid backbone," or the "archival backbone" of their work. See Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (Princeton, 1968), 345; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, 1986), vii; E-mail Terri Premo to author, Feb. 16, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1972), 280, and Jerome H. Wood Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania 1730–1790* (Harrisburg, 1979), 287.

<sup>5</sup> Quotations from Philip Mead to author, Feb. 5, 1999, and from the author's notes of a telephone conversation with Mead, Feb. 8, 1999. The allusions to gold fever and to mining are the author's.

<sup>6</sup> William R. Shepherd, *History of the Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1896), 577–79, quotation from 578. Compare Shepherd's list of the individual parts of the collection with 1991 *Guide*, no. 485A.



collection of Penn Papers" could "illumine every aspect of colonial society."<sup>7</sup> David Hawke proclaimed HSP's "huge collection of colonial manuscripts" essential to producing any history of revolutionary Pennsylvania and punctuated that point humorously by observing that "The Historical Society of Pennsylvania does not have *all* the manuscripts dealing with Pennsylvania in 1776."<sup>8</sup> After studying prerevolutionary politics, William S. Hanna voiced a similar thought by playfully remarking that "[o]ne may begin, and be tempted to remain, in the manifold collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania."<sup>9</sup> His study of Philadelphia merchants and economic development published in 1986 led Thomas M. Doerflinger to exclaim that "the spectacularly rich manuscript collections" of HSP made it "one of the finest libraries in the world for the study of the Atlantic community in the eighteenth century."<sup>10</sup>

The researchers who labor in the massive and rich HSP manuscript collections have, over the decades, also attested to the invaluable aid provided by the skilled staff. The experiences of another graduate student, working on a dissertation in the early 1980s, illustrates the pattern. On her first day in the manuscript room, the staff members "were helpful but not intrusive." By the third day, sensing the researcher's need for some direction, Peter Parker initiated what became a series of wide-ranging conversations which covered secondary materials as well as manuscript sources. Recalling those discussions, the researcher recently observed that Parker's "thorough, scholarly approach combined with a careful sense of timing added immensely to the success of that and future research visits."<sup>11</sup> Another apprentice historian who began exploring HSP manuscript collections in 1996 was yet more emphatic. He remarked that his study would not have been possible without the assistance of the "generous staff (particularly Laura Beardsley and Daniel Rolph)."<sup>12</sup> The staff members of the 1980s and 1990s were continuing a long tradition. Touching on the importance of the manuscript collections and the staff, Harry M. Tinkcom noted in 1950 that "[m]y path

<sup>7</sup> Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 345.

<sup>8</sup> David Hawke, *In the Midst of A Revolution: The Politics of Confrontation in Colonial America* (Philadelphia, 1961), 203–5, quotations from 203, 205.

<sup>9</sup> William S. Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* (Stanford, 1964), 225.

<sup>10</sup> Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit*, vii.

<sup>11</sup> Terri Premo to author, Feb. 16, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Mead to author, Feb. 6, 1999.

to the riches" in HSP "was often straightened and smoothed by those ever-cooperative staff members who assisted my research with knowledge, wisdom and kindness."<sup>13</sup>

Aided by the HSP staff, scholars have long utilized the manuscript collections to expand our understanding of early America, and one of the lasting contributions comes from publishing HSP manuscripts and thus making them more accessible. Although HSP started the process in the 1820s, the printing of HSP manuscripts became more regularized once the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB) came into being in 1877, shortly after HSP acquired the massive Penn Manuscripts collection.<sup>14</sup> Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh praised this development when they observed that PMHB held "a vast historical treasure of letters, diaries, journals, and other remains of colonial Philadelphia."<sup>15</sup> David Hawke concurred; he observed that a virtue of PMHB, and especially its early volumes, was "the extensive samplings from the HSP's huge collection of colonial manuscripts." Hawke underscored the point by offering a sage warning: "[a] student who fails first to make a close check of the *Magazine's* contents invariably finds—as this one did—he has laboriously copied material from a manuscript already in print."<sup>16</sup>

In addition to printing HSP documents in PMHB, scholars of early

<sup>13</sup> Harry M. Tinkcom, *The Republicans and Federalists in Pennsylvania 1790–1801: A Study in National Stimulus and Local Response* (Harrisburg, 1950), vii–viii. The long-standing nature of this tradition is illustrated by Shepherd's 1896 comment in *History of the Proprietary Government*, 578, praising "the kindness and courtesy" of the HSP staff. See also n. 89 below.

<sup>14</sup> The first volume of *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1826), 199–228, provided published versions of some manuscript letters of William Penn. But it was the combination of the arrival of the massive Penn Manuscripts collection in the early 1870s and the founding of PMHB shortly thereafter that led to extensive publication of HSP manuscripts. See Shepherd, *History of the Proprietary Government*, 577–79, and nn. 15, 16, below.

<sup>15</sup> Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York, 1942), 374. And PMHB has continued the program. For example, HSP quickly printed newly acquired tax documents that illustrated the workings of the January 1705/6 poor law, see Peter J. Parker, "Rich and Poor in Philadelphia, 1709," PMHB 99 (1975), 3–19.

<sup>16</sup> Hawke, *In the Midst of a Revolution*, 203. Hawke added, and others readily concur, that the "superb" cumulative index to the first seventy-five years of PMHB "makes the vast amount of material they contain incomparably accessible." This magnificent index merits reprinting since it is often not available even in university libraries. For example, of the forty-three university libraries in Ohio that are part of a book-sharing program, only one is listed as owning the volume. For the index, see Eugene E. Doll, ed., *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography: Index Volumes 1–75 (1877–1951)* (Philadelphia, 1954). A cumulative index for volumes 76–123 (1952–99) is scheduled for publication later this year (2000).



America have recently completed two major publishing projects rooted in HSP manuscripts. In 1968 a Committee on the Papers of William Penn began rectifying a "sad situation": the vast majority of Penn's personal correspondence and business papers was unavailable in print. Since HSP held the largest single cache of Penn papers, it was logical for the project to be based there. The committee staff assembled a master file of Penn documents which HSP then issued in a fourteen-reel microfilm edition in 1975. A "select" letterpress printing, containing about a quarter of the material in the microfilm edition, appeared in the 1980s under the editorship of Mary M. Dunn and Richard S. Dunn.<sup>17</sup>

The second project culminated in the publication of the journal of a remarkable Philadelphian, Elizabeth Drinker. Parts of her diary, printed in 1889, had long been a staple for scholars.<sup>18</sup> But the 1889 edition provided only a tantalizing introduction to the wealth of material contained in the full journal, which runs to thirty-three manuscript volumes covering the period from the fall of 1758 into late 1807. This massive chronicle provides information on many topics including, among others, politics, medicine, religious views, the status of persons, and family life. The complete diary, skillfully edited by Elaine Forman Crane, appeared in 1991.<sup>19</sup>

Once one moves beyond laudations and the publishing of HSP manuscripts, the task of elucidating how scholars have used HSP manuscripts to expand our knowledge of early America is complicated by the fact that scholarly fashions change and new methodologies emerge. The problem is compounded because the HSP manuscript holdings have yielded

<sup>17</sup> Mary M. Dunn and Richard S. Dunn, eds., *The Papers of William Penn* (5 vols., Philadelphia 1981-87), 1:3-14, quotations from 4, 8. The project also made possible the publication of Jean R. Soderlund, ed., *William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania, 1680-1684: A Documentary History* (Philadelphia, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> Henry D. Biddle, ed., *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, from 1759 to 1801, A.D.* (Philadelphia, 1889). Excerpts from this edition appeared in a recent volume of documents intended for student use because, as the author noted, the Crane edition was not available when making the selections. See Catherine Goetz, "A Woman of the 'Better Sort': The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker," in Billy G. Smith, ed., *Life in Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods* (University Park, 1995), 131-54, especially 132, n. 1, and n. 19 below.

<sup>19</sup> Elaine Forman Crane, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* (3 vols., Boston, 1991). On the nature of the impressively indexed *Diary*, to which Crane added a helpful "Biographical Dictionary," see *Diary*, 1:x, and 1991 *Guide*, no. 1760. The manuscript diary was not deposited at HSP until 1955.

a plethora of rich and varied scholarly studies.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, any attempt to categorize researchers to show scholarly patterns is fraught with difficulties. Still, one can get a sense of major developments by observing how the nature of scholarship itself has developed over the last century. For, even as scholarly fashions have altered and methodologies have evolved, the HSP treasure trove has continued to pour out riches.

Members of the first generation of professionally trained scholars who investigated Pennsylvania topics routinely mined the manuscripts at HSP. In fact, they recognized that their studies, which began appearing in the late 1800s, could not have been done without HSP manuscripts. William Shepherd's *History of Proprietary Government in Pennsylvania*, a Ph.D. dissertation published in 1896, provides a classic example both of the importance of HSP manuscripts and of the nature of first-generation studies. Expressing a goal of the new professional scholarship, Shepherd proclaimed that his study was "based almost wholly upon original authorities." He added that HSP's Penn Manuscripts were "by far the most important" of his primary sources. Drawing heavily upon this collection, Shepherd explained how Pennsylvania achieved its final boundaries as well as how land was acquired and transferred. In the process, Shepherd, who routinely represented Pennsylvania's stance as right, outlined boundary disputes Penn officials had with Maryland, Connecticut, Virginia, and New York. He also sketched negotiations and conflicts over the Native Americans' title to land. And despite his own use of the term "savages," Shepherd acknowledged that many whites, and not just "frontier ruffians," practiced "fraud and deceit" when dealing with Indians. Shepherd's institutional history is hardly a page turner, but it is still useful. And it could not have been fashioned without the huge Penn Manuscript collection.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> It merits reemphasizing that this essay focuses on some examples of scholarship that draw heavily on the manuscript collections at HSP. Some important works that rely principally on primary sources elsewhere are not discussed in the text.

<sup>21</sup> Shepherd's dependence on HSP manuscripts is especially evident in his section on "Land." The second and longer part of the work, the section on "Government," is less rooted in the HSP manuscript material in part because some important document collections, including the Penn-Logan papers, had already been published. For the quotations, see Shepherd, *History of the Proprietary Government*, 107, 109, 577, and for the regular use of "savages," see 107-9 *passim*. For testimonials to the volume's continued value, see Frederick B. Tolles, *James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America* (Boston, 1957), 218; Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin*, 226; Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 350. On the development of professional scholarship, see John Higham "The Construction of American History," in John Higham, ed., *The Reconstruction of American History* (New York, 1962), 9-24.



In addition to the Penn Manuscripts Shepherd so appreciated, Winfred T. Root tapped manuscript customs house records for his *Relations of Pennsylvania with the British Government, 1696-1765* (1912).<sup>22</sup> Root advanced an interpretation that quickly gained popularity and that still resonates: the colonists moved inexorably toward "[s]elf-control" and "self-reliance" and that evolutionary process bred a continuing "antagonism" between them and the mother country. For Root, "the conflict between the interests and purposes of the imperial government and the colonists" constituted the "central fact" of the imperial relationship. Although Root too easily depicted colonial Pennsylvania as a "democracy," his monograph made a lasting contribution.<sup>23</sup>

First-generation authors also produced biographies of prominent men and, in the process, often expanded our understanding of crucial developments such as the colonists' movement westward. Albert T. Volwiler did that in his 1926 study of *George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741-1782*. Although he praised Croghan as "a typical American frontiersman," Volwiler demonstrated that Croghan was anything but typical. Starting in the 1740s, he gained prominence as a trader and negotiator with Native Americans in part because he learned Indian languages and because, as Volwiler put it, "he regarded the Indian, not as a dog, but as a human being." Croghan was hardly typical also because, while land speculation was common, he did it on a grander scale than most dared try. Although he too readily praised Croghan as part of a glorious "westward movement of Anglo-Saxon civilization," Volwiler honestly assessed Croghan's quest for economic power. In telling that story, Volwiler provided a narrative of some negotiations with Native Americans and explored the often bizarre world of early American land speculation. Volwiler's biography,

<sup>22</sup> Winfred T. Root, *The Relations of Pennsylvania with the British Government, 1696-1765* (Philadelphia, 1912). Given his primary goal of illustrating colonial Pennsylvania's relationship with the home government and the colony's place in the system of imperial commerce, Root naturally put special reliance on manuscript records from the Board of Trade and Plantations. He was able to work with copies of the original manuscripts which had been made for HSP. So while these were technically not HSP manuscripts, having copies of the manuscripts was a great help to Root. For his assessment of the HSP manuscript collections he used, see *ibid.*, 397-98.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 378-79, quotations *passim*. For the incorporation of Root's general interpretation into the literature of the day, see for example Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Background of the American Revolution* (New Haven, 1924, rev. ed., 1931). For testimonials to the volume's continued value, see Tolles, *James Logan*, 218, and Nash, *Quakers and Politics*, 350.

which relied heavily on Ohio Company papers, is another example of a study that could not have been completed without HSP manuscripts.<sup>24</sup>

As the work of Cheesman A. Herrick reveals, first-generation researchers could show some interest in the less powerful members of early American society. Herrick's study of bound labor, an expanded version of an 1899 thesis, was also published in 1926. Herrick offered extensive coverage of the economic and legal system of indentured and redemption labor in early Pennsylvania. And although he overstated Pennsylvania's opposition to it, he also discussed slavery.<sup>25</sup> Utilizing HSP manuscripts ranging from ship's registers and account books, to passenger and arrival lists, to registries of indentures and redemptioners, to county court records, Herrick explored how the system of unfree labor developed and, in the aftermath of the American Revolution, withered away. He effectively demonstrated that bound labor "profoundly affected Pennsylvania's political, industrial, and social life."<sup>26</sup> He also presented some examples of servants seeking better treatment or even freedom by constructing written pleas or taking the more drastic action of running away. Still, Herrick suggested that, more often than not, Pennsylvania gave white servants "buoyant hope and future prosperity."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Albert T. Volwiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741-1782* (Cleveland, 1926), quotations from 23, 45, 54, 354, and on the theme of the advancement of the glorious Anglo-Saxon civilization, see especially 13, 20, 23, 334-35.

<sup>25</sup> Cheesman A. Herrick, *White Servitude in Pennsylvania: Indentured and Redemption Labor in Colony and Commonwealth* (Philadelphia, 1926). Herrick noted (v-vi) that he had delayed publication, in part because important studies covering similar groups appeared shortly after he finished his thesis. The work's significance for the study of slavery is indicated by the fact that it was reprinted in 1969 by the Negro University Press of New York. On Herrick's questionable analysis of anti-slavery views, see, 86, 96-99, and compare the work of Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund cited below at n. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Herrick, *White Servitude*, 26. Although Herrick's analysis was less dependent on HSP manuscripts than other works of the first generation already cited, the HSP manuscripts were vital. (See his listing of these sources in *ibid.*, 310, 316.) The continuing value of Herrick's work is shown by the fact that it is one of the studies of a separate colony that Abbot Smith found especially useful when he produced yet another kind of foundation study—a study of unfree white labor in the colonies as a whole. And Smith himself also mined HSP manuscript sources Herrick had explored. See Abbot Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, 1947), 404, 414-415, 416. The building-block nature of scholarship can be seen by noting that Smith made extensive use of the Herrick volume, and Sharon Salinger, who studied a similar topic with a more modern and sophisticated approach in the 1980s, often cited Smith to draw comparisons with other colonies. On Salinger's work, see below at n. 74.

<sup>27</sup> On his overall assessment of white servants as individuals, see Herrick, *White Servitude*, 284-85, quotation from 284.



The writings of the four first-generation scholars discussed here exhibited similar weaknesses. Each author was too inclined to don rose-colored glasses when viewing the colony and its prominent leaders. Of course, that celebratory tone did not always go unchallenged. For example, in 1901, Charles H. Lincoln, who did not rely heavily on HSP manuscript collections, painted an unflattering picture of sectional and class conflict in Pennsylvania before the American Revolution.<sup>28</sup> It is also true that Shepherd, Root, Volwiler, and Herrick focused on the activities of prominent figures, on major events, and on institutional history. However, that criticism could be leveled at most first-generation scholars. Moreover, one needs foundation studies as building blocks, which these works were. Later scholars have often testified to the lasting contributions made by most of these first-generation authors.<sup>29</sup>

There is no clear date of demarcation between the work of the first generation and the scholars who followed them. Still, by about 1940 and continuing into the early 1960s, what might be called the second wave of scholarship drawing upon the manuscripts of HSP appeared in print. These authors, like their predecessors, showed a marked tendency to focus on the powerful members of society and on political or institutional analysis. And they continued to view the world through a Pennsylvania lens. But the second-wave scholars usually had a sharper focus and were, as a group, more willing to examine the internal squabbles as well as the achievements of early America.

Second-wave scholars expanded knowledge, in part by crafting detailed political narratives. Between 1942 and 1953, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission published three monographs that, taken together, narrated Pennsylvania political history from 1740 through 1801. Each author found Pennsylvania marked by sharp, often vicious political conflict. Theodore Thayer, assessing politics from 1740 to 1776, depicted a "long struggle" between the Pennsylvania Assembly and the colony's proprietors. By 1764 the assembly had, said Thayer, "broken the power of the Penns" but was itself under attack. Some colonists disliked the legislators' conservatism; westerners, who were flagrantly underrepresented, charged the assembly

<sup>28</sup> Charles H. Lincoln, *The Revolutionary Movement in Pennsylvania, 1760-1776* (Philadelphia, 1901). Lincoln made some use of HSP manuscript collections but emphasized (288-90) that he relied most heavily on newspapers and pamphlet literature.

<sup>29</sup> See nn. 13, 21, 22, 23, 26.

with ignoring their needs. When the dispute with Britain "opened the door to democracy," "Radicals" seized the opportunity and fashioned "the most liberal and democratic constitution adopted in America during the Revolutionary period."<sup>30</sup> Robert L. Brunhouse depicted 1776–90 as an era of "political warfare" in which a haughty "social and commercial aristocracy" fought to crush the wildly democratic 1776 state constitution that Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were particularly determined to protect. From 1779 through 1790, the Republicans and the Constitutionals, two decidedly antagonistic political parties, duked it out until the conservative Republicans staged a "counter-revolution" by instituting a less democratic constitution in 1790.<sup>31</sup> Harry Tinkcom maintained that a fundamental shift occurred during the Federalist era. The political parties that battled over the state constitution melted away by 1790, but "partisan organizations" built on "vital national issues" rather than state-based concerns soon reappeared.<sup>32</sup>

Thayer, Brunhouse, and Tinkcom focused, as the first generation had, on prominent personages or on general group politics. These scholars often explored the geographical roots of conflict, but they did not closely analyze the backgrounds of the men in the various political blocs.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, their works remain valuable because, at a minimum, they provide detailed narratives of major political developments.<sup>34</sup> These volumes were also important because they stood as a challenge to the many scholars of the 1950s who tried to wring conflict out of the story of the American past.<sup>35</sup> HSP manuscripts—principally journals, diaries, and the official

<sup>30</sup> Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740–1776* (Harrisburg, 1953), iii, iv, 191. While Thayer's claim about the Pennsylvania of 1776 is correct for the original colonies that revolted, Vermont's 1777 constitution, which was often based literally on the 1776 Pennsylvania document, was more liberal and democratic in the voting requirements it established and in its outlawing of slavery. See 211–27, and cf. Willi Paul Adams, *The First American Constitutions: Republican Ideology and the Making of the State Constitutions in the Revolutionary Era* (Chapel Hill, 1973), 6, 93–94, 158, 196.

<sup>31</sup> Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776–1790* (Harrisburg, 1942), 16, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Tinkcom, *The Republicans*, vii, 211.

<sup>33</sup> While Brunhouse emphasized religion, he typically linked that issue with place of residence and his general breakdowns were geographic. See, e.g., Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution*, 321–25. For Tinkcom's pattern of stressing geographical location, see *The Republicans*, 199–213.

<sup>34</sup> On the special and continuing value of the Brunhouse volume into the 1990s, see Owen S. Ireland, *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics: Ratifying the Constitution in Pennsylvania* (University Park, 1995), 7, n. 10.

<sup>35</sup> On the general 1950s approach, see John Higham, "Beyond Consensus: The Historian as Moral Critic," *American Historical Review* 57 (1962), 609–25.



correspondence produced by notables—proved essential to all three authors. Tinkcom, who praised “the riches” one could find at HSP, mined twenty-eight manuscript collections; Brunhouse extracted material from more than thirty HSP collections. Thayer announced that “the great mass” of the manuscript material he used came from HSP.<sup>36</sup>

The second-wave scholarship of Frederick B. Tolles, found in three books that appeared from 1948 through 1957, merits consideration on two counts. He sounded very much like a first-generation scholar when, discussing his 1948 study of Philadelphia Quaker merchants, he stressed that the work was “based largely upon original sources,” and that “[i]ts foundations were quarried in the first instance from the magnificent manuscript collections of the HSP.” And what he said of that volume applied equally to the two biographies he published in the 1950s.<sup>37</sup> Tolles’s three volumes are also noteworthy because they foreshadowed major scholarly developments. His influential study highlighting “leading Quaker mercantile families” of colonial Philadelphia certainly addressed issues that received great attention from later scholars. By examining the interplay of religious, political, and economic influences, Tolles accentuated “the interaction of religion and life among the colonial Quakers.” Having developed the theme that Quakers set the tone for Philadelphia society to at least 1750, he depicted a fundamental shift taking place in the 1750s when the Quaker focus on politics gave way to “a new spiritual sensitivity” that in time produced an emphasis on philanthropic good works.<sup>38</sup>

In a 1953 biography, Tolles carefully assessed George Logan’s political activities, including his penchant for conducting unauthorized personal diplomacy. But Tolles was more concerned with understanding Logan’s ideological bent, an approach that soon became popular among scholars of early America. Tolles maintained that, although born to wealth and educated as a physician, Logan exhibited a “doctrinaire” devotion to “his agrarian ideal.” He labored passionately to transform the family estate into

<sup>36</sup> Tinkcom, *The Republicans*, quotation, vii, for manuscripts used, see 329–30; Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution*, 301–2; Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics*, quotation on v, on the nature of the manuscripts he used, see 199.

<sup>37</sup> Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682–1763* (Chapel Hill, 1948), 255. The two Logan biographies discussed in the text were also “quarried” above all at the HSP because the great bulk of the Logan family papers are in HSP. On the Logan papers generally, see 1991 *Guide*, nos. 378–82.

<sup>38</sup> Tolles, *Meeting House*, ix, 236.

a model scientific farm. And Tolles proclaimed that, although not an original thinker, Logan became in the 1790s "a theorist of agrarian democracy." Espousing ideals of "republican simplicity," Logan championed the vision of America as "a nation of free farmers living in equality and brotherhood."<sup>39</sup>

Tolles went on to explore the issue of the American character in a 1957 biography of James Logan, who was born in England and who was George's grandfather. While searching for the American character had special appeal for scholars in the 1950s, Tolles's linking of that issue with questions of family motivation and the development of American culture again foreshadowed approaches that became more pronounced over time. Tolles believed the "humiliation" of twice being rejected as a suitor because of his limited wealth propelled Logan on a quest for "the main chance." Having shrewdly gained wealth and land, Logan's third try at finding a spouse proved successful. Soon he found himself singing the praises of Pennsylvania to his "fellow provincials." As Tolles portrayed it, "[f]amily and estate, the strong ties of blood and property, had made James Logan a Pennsylvanian, an American." Tolles did not flinch from recounting Logan's decidedly aristocratic disdain for the lower orders and his "intellectual arrogance." At the same time, Tolles categorized Logan as a true scholar who gloried in "the world of the mind" and who strove to help make Philadelphia "the seat of a genuine intellectual culture."<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps because his Logan volumes offered avenues for analyzing general issues—the role of ideology and the shaping of an American culture—Tolles not did consider his biographies a means of preventing important personages from being lost to history. But that motive did inspire biographers of the

<sup>39</sup> Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia* (New York, 1953), quotations from xii, 108, 109, 111. On the popularity of ideological analysis, which typically emphasized printed rather than manuscript sources, see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *Journal of American History* 79 (1992), 11–38. For a valuable ideological study that does draw on the HSP manuscript collections and that also discusses the developments of the analysis to its date of publication, see Michael Vinson, "The Society for Political Inquiries: The Limits of Republican Discourse in Philadelphia on the Eve of the Constitutional Convention," *PMHB* 108 (1989), 185–205.

<sup>40</sup> Frederick B. Tolles, *James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America* (Boston, 1957), quotations on 78, 85, 87, 99, 135, 212. For the 1950s emphasis on the shaping of the American character, see Oscar Handlin, "Editor's Preface," *Ibid.*, ix–x, and David M. Potter, "The Quest for the National Character," in Higham, ed., *The Reconstruction*, 197–220, 234–35.



second wave—and beyond—who relied on HSP manuscripts.<sup>41</sup> For example, in 1955, C. Page Smith said he produced a biography of James Wilson to rescue him from an undeserved historical oblivion. Stressing that Wilson was an architect of the United States Constitution, an important legal educator, and a charter member of the original Supreme Court, Smith hailed Wilson as “one of the principal architects of our nation.” Given Wilson’s prominence, it is surprising that Smith’s was the first full scholarly biography of Wilson. And once again HSP manuscripts proved essential; Smith recounted doing the “major part” of his research at the HSP.<sup>42</sup>

While Smith wrote a traditional biography of Wilson, William Hanna’s *Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania Politics* exemplifies the kind of sharper focus that second-wave scholars often adopted. Rather than undertaking a full-life biography of Franklin, Hanna employed him as a touchstone for assessing political practices and what motivated leading politicians. He sketched a decidedly unflattering picture of early Pennsylvanians. Quakers formed a political party “[t]o preserve their privileged position in Pennsylvania”; Franklin had the “social attitude . . . of an aristocrat” and exhibited anti-German prejudice. Franklin’s celebrated attack on proprietorship sprang from “a personal quarrel” with Thomas Penn, not from principle. In sum, Franklin and the other political leaders of Pennsylvania in the quarter century before the American Revolution “were much alike” and moved by personal concerns.<sup>43</sup> While he rode this debunking thesis rather hard, Hanna’s work illustrates how second-wave

<sup>41</sup> For example, Benjamin H. Newcomb wrote *Franklin and Galloway: A Political Partnership* (New Haven, 1972) in part to try to force some recognition of the importance of Galloway who, according to Newcomb, had largely faded from historical memory, in part, because “Clio loveth not a loser” (*ibid.*, 1). It is worth noting that while the vast majority of Franklin papers are not at HSP, Newcomb observed that HSP held some “important Franklin manuscripts” and that for political matters generally he had consulted “many manuscript collections of prominent colonial Pennsylvanians” housed at HSP (*ibid.*, 299, 301). As the title of his biography suggests, and as he said explicitly, John M. Coleman wrote *Thomas McKean: Forgotten Leader of the Revolution* (Rockaway, 1975) in part to rescue “one of the most important of our Revolutionary leaders” from a form of historical oblivion (*ibid.*, xi–xv, quotation on xii); on his use of HSP manuscript collections, 299. Jacob E. Cooke did not have to rescue Tench Coxe, but he did have to deal with the problems of working in a massive manuscript collection in the process of being organized. See Cooke’s *Tench Coxe and the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill, 1978).

<sup>42</sup> C. Page Smith, *James Wilson: Founding Father, 1742–1798* (Chapel Hill, 1955), quotations on x, xi; for Smith’s need to rely on manuscripts at the HSP, see 1991 *Guide*, nos. 293, 721, and 935.

<sup>43</sup> Hanna, *Benjamin Franklin*; quotations from ix, 10, 28–29, 73. Speaking of Pennsylvania politicians generally, Hanna backed away from his unflattering picture slightly when he posited “that personal grievances and misunderstandings contributed fully as much as conflicting political principles” (*ibid.*, 83).

scholars often brought a more critical and sophisticated eye to biographical analysis.

By the early 1960s, second-wave scholars who had mined HSP manuscripts had significantly expanded our knowledge of early America. As a group, they had written detailed narratives suggesting that political conflict was endemic to the Pennsylvania of 1740–1801. An overriding theme of this second-wave scholarship was that the desire to get ahead, especially to benefit materially, motivated the politically involved of early Pennsylvania. Yet, as Tolles's work on Quakers and Brunhouse's on politics suggested, religious concerns and ideological considerations could exert real influence. One of the general weaknesses of this second-wave scholarship was that, even when considering issues like the nature of the American character, the focus was almost always on the more prominent, more powerful members of society.

In some ways, Gary Nash's *Quakers and Politics: Pennsylvania, 1681–1726* (1968), fits snugly within the later second-wave scholarship. He solidly narrated leading political developments, analyzed the political process, and found Pennsylvania marked by political conflicts in which material considerations, not abstract principles, typically motivated political elites. Yet Nash's study was also a transition work that reflected changes taking place in scholarly analysis. He valued HSP manuscripts that could cast light on all of colonial society and addressed "the sociology of politics" of Quakers. To do that, Nash observed, one must analyze "social structure" and "social outlook." The political battles he examined were, he stressed, waged by "two social groups" rooted in socioeconomic differences. Pennsylvania's "growing pluralism" also generated friction, especially between Quakers and Anglicans. And while he portrayed elites manipulating "politically inert individuals" from the bottom rungs of society, Nash also suggested that, in time, the people would not willingly settle for merely being led.<sup>44</sup>

Nash's emphasis on social structure and social issues and on paying attention to less powerful members of society was part of a major transformation occurring in scholarship. One vital change stemmed from an insistence on investigating groups—such as the poor, racial minorities, and women—that scholars had typically neglected. Moreover, when studying

<sup>44</sup> Nash, *Quakers and Politics*; quotations from vii, 111, 237, 322, 345. A useful illustration of Nash's approach and of the importance of HSP manuscript collections can be seen in the chart on 26–27 and the accompanying n. 42.



the "inarticulate," one should be concerned with *their* views, *their* motivations. The objective, in a phrase Jesse Lemisch made a rallying cry, was to do "history from the bottom up."<sup>45</sup> The existing scholarship was also challenged by persons who argued that using a variety of scholarly methodologies, disciplines, or theories could bring a much needed scientific rigor to the study of early America. The extraordinary use some scholars made of quantification techniques led to the coinage of a new term—cliometrics.<sup>46</sup> By the 1970s a scholar touted as a practitioner of the "new social history" might well utilize "approaches from sociology, historical demography, economic history, and historical geography" in a single study "to provide deeper access into the processes of social change." Book titles and subtitles spotlighted "social structure" and featured topics such as "population" and "family structure."<sup>47</sup> Although they tended to speak of "society" rather than "culture," the "new" social historians often explored issues of culture and even cultural transmission.<sup>48</sup> Since the 1980s, scholars have increasingly been inclined to proclaim they are examining culture or social *and* cultural issues. As Gordon Wood, a historian noted for his work on political ideology, accurately observed in 1993: "cultural history of one sort or another has seized the day during the past generation."<sup>49</sup> A good illustration of this phenomenon can be seen in a 1994 collection of essays on *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750–1800*, which offered more than a dozen essays on a range of topics and shows how

<sup>45</sup> See Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Seen from the Bottom Up," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Towards A New Past* (1968), 3–34; Jesse Lemisch and John K. Alexander, "The White Oaks, Jack Tar, and the Concept of the 'Inarticulate,'" *William & Mary Quarterly* (hereafter *W&MQ*) 29 (1972), 109–34. On some of the forces that helped produce this sea change, including analysis of who was writing the history, see Joyce Appleby, "A Different Kind of Independence: The Postwar Restructuring of the Historical Study of Early America," *W&MQ* 50 (1993), 245–67.

<sup>46</sup> Laurence Veysey, "The 'New Social History,'" *Reviews in American History* 7 (1979), 1–12. For the drive for precision in the consideration of language itself, see Rodgers, "Republicanism," and Vincent, "Society for Political Inquiries."

<sup>47</sup> The touting is from the dust jacket of Lemon's *Best Poor Man's Country* and other such forms of internal advertising can also be helpful in showing what is considered important. For examples of specific titles and subtitles, see Alan Tully, *William Penn's Legacy: Politics and Social Structure in Provincial Pennsylvania, 1726–1755* (Baltimore, 1977); Stephanie Wolf, *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683–1800* (Princeton, 1986); n. 55 below.

<sup>48</sup> For an example of this, see n. 56 below.

<sup>49</sup> Gordon Wood, "Author's Postscript" to the reprinting of "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution" in *In Search of Early America* (Richmond, 1993), 76–77, quotation from 77.

analyzing culture has itself become a multifaceted quest.<sup>50</sup>

As even this brief summary suggests, the literature on early America has become extraordinarily diverse in the years since the late 1960s. Indeed some scholars hold that because the old frameworks have been shattered, in part by an emphasis on methodology, what we now have is a glorious disarray.<sup>51</sup> Although there is truth in that judgment, as works grounded in HSP manuscripts reveal, the transforming developments in scholarship from the late 1960s to the present are united in fundamental ways. They are unified by the desire to write a more inclusive history, to come closer to picturing society as a whole, and to doing that with more rigor. In sum, despite their many differences, scholars agree that the study of early America—of any area in any era—must become more holistic.

The growing concern for producing a more inclusive history can be seen in recent efforts to publish HSP documents. When the first volume of the *Papers of William Penn* appeared in 1982, the editors, Mary and Richard Dunn, remarked that they were printing Penn's "correspondence with a cross-section of persons" including "people of the 'lower sort' as well as historically important figures."<sup>52</sup> Elizabeth Drinker's complete diary was printed in part because it opens windows to the study of gender.<sup>53</sup> In the 1970s, the HSP staff also actively endeavored to help broaden our historical horizons. Having reorganized the Pennsylvania Abolition Society papers, HSP had them microfilmed in 1976 and made them available through interlibrary loan. This project was particularly significant because the collection sheds considerable light on African Americans in early America

<sup>50</sup> Catherine E. Hutchins, ed., *Shaping a National Culture: The Philadelphia Experience, 1750–1800* (Winterthur, Del., Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1994). The essays range over many topics covering religion, philanthropy, issues of class, economic development, the black family, and even more. For examples of the multiplicity even in what is called material culture, note that essays on "Household Furnishings and Cultural Aspirations in Philadelphia" bump up against "The Philadelphia Windsor Chair," and part of "An Identity Crisis" comes from "Philadelphia and Baltimore Furniture Styles" (*ibid.*, vi, vii).

<sup>51</sup> Veysey, "The 'New Social History,'" and Jack P. Greene, "Interpretive Frameworks: The Quest for Intellectual Order in Early American History," *W&MQ* 48 (1991), 515–30.

<sup>52</sup> Dunn and Dunn, *Papers of William Penn*, 1:9.

<sup>53</sup> For example, in Sharon Salinger's discussion of household life in her study of indentured servants (see n. 74), she draws heavily on this diary which at the time was available only on microfilm.



generally, not just in Pennsylvania.<sup>54</sup>

The sea change taking place in the 1960s in scholarship on early America was perhaps first readily apparent in the popularity of community studies. While most focused on limited geographical areas, they nevertheless utilized a range of social science methods and typically accented quantification. Community studies forcefully burst on the scene in 1970 when four influential studies of New England areas appeared in print.<sup>55</sup> Soon thereafter, between 1972 and 1979, scholars drawing on HSP manuscripts produced three methodologically and interpretively important community studies of Pennsylvania locales. The titles of two works, in particular, reveal the mix of methodological approaches and the emphasis on social structure so typical of community studies. In 1972, the historical geographer James Lemon published *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*. Stephanie Grauman Wolf gave her 1976 book a classic community study title: *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683–1800*. Jerome H. Wood Jr., the least quantitatively oriented of the three authors, selected a more general title for his 1979 study of *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1790*.<sup>56</sup> Lemon exemplified the new stress on quantifiable sources when he spoke of “comparisons among various sets of data” and offered 228 pages of text festooned with fifty-nine figures and thirty-four statistical tables. For her part, Wolf expressed a concern with uncovering “the documentary materials required for quantitative histories”

<sup>54</sup> See 1991 *Guide*, no. 490. Examples of the importance of this collection appear below. See also Dee E. Andrews, “Reconsidering the First Emancipation: Evidence from the Pennsylvania Abolition Society Correspondence, 1785–1810,” in *Pennsylvania History* 64 (supplemental issue, 1997), 230–49.

<sup>55</sup> The 1970 publications were: Philip J. Greven, Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, New York); John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town the First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York); Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York). The importance of the “fabled four” and of other community studies is thoughtfully assessed in Darrett B. Rutman, “Assessing the Little Communities of Early America,” *W&MQ* 43 (1986), 163–78, quotation from 163.

<sup>56</sup> As noted above, Lemon and Wood both spoke of finding “gems” among the HSP manuscript collections. In addition, Wood observed that HSP and the Chester County Historical Society “were the most important sources of manuscript material” with the HSP manuscripts being especially good on “land and the people”; see Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 280. In her *Urban Village*, Wolf was the least dependent on HSP manuscripts, but she stressed that HSP had the vital early government records as well as important church, burial, and school records. HSP manuscripts were especially helpful to her when she explored the extent and nature of acculturation. On these points, see 60–62, 139–147 passim, 344–46.

to help elucidate "the sociology of Germantown." Although less dedicated to quantification techniques, Wood also offered several statistical tables.<sup>57</sup>

All three authors underscored the importance of Pennsylvania's extraordinary diversity. Lemon talked of the "mélange of groups in pluralistic Pennsylvania"; Wolf observed that, although Germantown sprang from "a small group of men from Holland," it developed "a polyglot" population "made up of a bewildering array of nationalities and religions." Lancaster's population, Wood stressed, came from four ethnic groups and the people, if churched, followed any one of more than one-half dozen faiths.<sup>58</sup> Given their emphasis on diversity, each author was sensitive to the possible influence of ethnicity and religion. Lemon suggested that ethnic and religious differences might have exerted less influence than commonly assumed. Wolf, who presented several insightful findings on cultural exchange, claimed Germantowners had "an attitude of tolerance or, more probably, apathy" on ethnic and religious issues. Wood maintained that Lancastrians pursued the goal of achieving "harmony" and "community within heterogeneity" but failed to achieve that goal due to "religious animosity" and other factors. As a result, "Lancaster was still essentially two ethnic communities at the end of the eighteenth century." Nevertheless, according to Wood, some blurring of cultural divisions occurred and religious toleration increased in the years from 1730 to 1790.<sup>59</sup>

The authors traced the general live-and-let-live attitude to an overriding desire to prosper economically. Advancing a line of argument that has sparked considerable debate, Lemon asserted that whatever sense of community orientation existed quickly gave way to "liberal" ideals. As he phrased it, "the peasant values" of western Europe lost out to "the rise of individualism," to "the middle class faith in the right to seek success."<sup>60</sup> In

<sup>57</sup> Quotations from Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, 73, and Wolf, *Urban Village*, 334, 342.

<sup>58</sup> Quotations from Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, 222, and Wolf, *Urban Village*, 327. When Wood referred to four ethnic groups, he was counting "Negroes" as one of the four groups. See *Conestoga Crossroads*, vi.

<sup>59</sup> See Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, 70, 72, 73, 77, 85-85, 219-222; Wolf, *Urban Village*, quotation from 334 and n. 56 above; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, quotation from 254-55 and passim.

<sup>60</sup> Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, quotations from 13 and 108; for his fuller definition of "liberal" ideals, see xiii, xv. It would require a separate essay to discuss the ongoing controversy growing out of James A. Henretta's insistence that, contrary to what Lemon and friends claimed, the "lineal family remained predominant" in preindustrial America, rather than being supplanted by "the conjugal unit." For our consideration here, it should be noted that the detractors have typically not rested their case on their own Pennsylvania community studies. Indeed, as Henretta's footnotes indicated, the challenge to



a similar vein, Wolf emphatically held that Germantown exhibited "a pattern of individualism and pragmatism as opposed to one of community and tradition." She maintained that Germantowners had always been individualists, suggesting in turn that the attitudes of those who chose to emigrate may have been more important than the influences of the American environment. Wood agreed that a desire to get ahead was crucial, and he sided with Wolf's stress on continuity, not change. Lancastrians, he claimed, were always interested in "maximizing . . . private opportunity" so they could gain "personal advancement."<sup>61</sup> Given the people's supposedly overriding materialistic bent, the end results seemed problematic. All three authors suggested that real economic opportunity existed in early Pennsylvania; however, they also stressed that the locales they studied experienced growing inequality in wealth-holding patterns, and each author effectively used statistical tables to demonstrate the trend.

These authors, who reached similar conclusions on most points, all trumpeted the idea that community studies of Pennsylvania areas were more useful than those of New England. The central claim was: if one wants to find the roots of what America became—and even perhaps find hints of ways to correct modern problems—the place to look is pluralist Pennsylvania. Thus, for Lemon, "[e]arly Pennsylvania was, in many respects, the prototype of North American development." Wolf contrasted Pennsylvania's great diversity with New England's homogeneity and proclaimed Pennsylvania more typical of "[t]wentieth-century urban America with its polyglot population." She also suggested that studies of Pennsylvania communities might "isolate some colonial origins" of "today's problems." Also having remarked on the homogeneity of early New

the findings of the Pennsylvania community studies of Lemon, Wolf, and Wood were, in some ways, the counter-attack of those who emphasize the New England community studies approach. Still, Rodger C. Henderson, author of a lengthy and significant community study of demographic patterns and family structure in Lancaster County, comes down on the Henretta side of the debate when he concludes, based on his analysis, that "[s]everal discoveries . . . support the interpretation that familial and communal standards, rather than competitive individualism and market-oriented values, governed peoples' lives." At this point, the debate is very much alive. The one obvious point is: all encompassing generalizations on the issue are open to serious challenge. For Henretta's opening salvo, see his "Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America," *W&MQ* 35 (1978), 3–32, quotations from 32. Henderson's analysis, which contains an introduction to the debate as well as his findings, is available in "Demographic Patterns and Family Structure in Eighteenth-Century Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," *PMHB* 114 (1990), 349–83, quotation from 382.

<sup>61</sup> Wolf, *Urban Village*, 328–31, quotation from 329; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 254.

England, Wood pointedly observed that early Lancaster "reveals the problems of creating a sense of community out of ethnic, religious, and socio-economic diversity." And Lancaster's history "was in many respects, 'typically American,' an announcement of themes to be repeated in other American towns in later days."<sup>62</sup> As we shall see, many other scholars soon echoed the assertion that early Pennsylvania with its diversity and emphasis on socioeconomic success prefigured modern America.

Philadelphia's ever-increasing size made it a poor candidate for the kind of community studies that became so popular in the 1970s. But the wealth of materials on Philadelphia—and the HSP manuscript collections feature Philadelphia materials—made the city ideal for case studies.<sup>63</sup> Philadelphia certainly attracted scholars interested in producing more inclusive and more rigorous analysis by giving special attention to persons contemporaries called "the middling sort." Intriguingly, the scholars who adapted that approach often reinforced themes advanced by Lemon, Wolf, and Wood.

For a 1975 study of Philadelphia artisans, who were also called mechanics, Charles S. Olton utilized a wide range of HSP manuscript collections. He examined the developing political maturity of "the city's independent *master* craftsmen" in the period 1765–90. Olton pictured these "independent manufacturing entrepreneurs," who "*were* men of property," being motivated above all by a desire for profit and a longing "to join others at the helm of state." Olton showed how middle-class artisans increased their political activity significantly from the 1760s through the 1780s and did so especially to protect or fatten their "pocket books." Thus the artisans, whose political unity first became dramatically visible in 1770, essentially "combine[d] patriotism with profit." By focusing on middle-class manufacturers, Olton helped formulate a more inclusive depiction of Philadelphia. And in the process he illustrated that the desire to get ahead materially seemed as powerful in Philadelphia as in Germantown, Lancaster,

<sup>62</sup> Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, xiii, but see also 220; for a hint that studying early Pennsylvania might help with present problems, see 228; Wolf, *Urban Village*, 3–16, quotations from 7–8; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 255.

<sup>63</sup> Tully (*William Penn's Legacy*, 245) claims, with good reason, that the nature of the massive holdings of HSP help produce a "metropolitan bias" whereby Philadelphia society can become a substitute for Pennsylvania society.



and southeastern Pennsylvania generally.<sup>64</sup>

Richard A. Ryerson's 1978 study of radical committees in the Philadelphia of 1765–76, also reinforced basic arguments advanced in the community studies. Using a group biography approach to show how committees transformed the rhetoric of revolution into the real thing, Ryerson analyzed the makeup of the radical committees. While no "lower sort" types ever served, over time the membership of the committees became more economically, religiously, and ethnically diverse. Sounding a theme rather like Olton's, Ryerson posited that "politically ambitious young merchants and lawyers and aspiring young mechanics"—"the newly aggressive middles classes"—used opposition to Great Britain to seize control of local politics. Indeed, says Ryerson, from 1774 to 1776 aggressive middle-class elements staged "the revolution of the middle classes." He also supported the idea that Pennsylvania pointed the way to what America would become. Ryerson boldly, perhaps too boldly, asserted that between 1774 and 1776 the nation "witnessed a birth of modern American politics" as "Philadelphia's radical leaders created the prototype of a modern American urban party."<sup>65</sup>

Thomas Doerflinger, whose 1986 work on the Philadelphia merchant community of 1750–91 bristles with citations from HSP manuscript collections, was concerned with developing theory rather than producing inclusive history. Offering up ample helpings of quantifiable data such as tonnage figures, Doerflinger addressed the issue of why some nations at specific times "have achieved superior economic performance." Maintaining that economic development is in part "a cultural expression and a social process," Doerflinger advanced the theory that, at least in early America, superior economic performance stemmed from the combination of "social mobility" and "economic adversity." He asserted that one reason the Philadelphia merchant community was so vibrant and economically innovative was that it offered social mobility to the talented men "waiting like sharks" to snatch any opportunity that might make them wealthy.

<sup>64</sup> Charles S. Olton, *Artisans for Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution* (Syracuse, 1975), quotations from ix, 26, 40, 52, 89. The added emphasis is Olton's. For a listing and comments on the wide range of HSP manuscripts he utilized, see 149–52.

<sup>65</sup> Richard A. Ryerson, *The Revolution is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765–1777* (Philadelphia, 1978), quotations from 94, 177, 190, 206, 250. While printed sources were especially vital for Ryerson, he drew upon several HSP manuscript collections, especially for accounts of meetings. See 285, 287.

(Doerflinger proclaimed it relatively easy to join the merchant ranks "if one had contacts, capital, or experience"; but he set the start-up cost for a "small merchant" at £500—a prohibitively large amount for the vast majority of Philadelphia working people.) Economic adversity was vital because it spurred risk-taking and innovation. The difficulties merchants faced, he asserted, included the fact that America's mainland merchants of the colonial era were so dependent on outside capital that they were "the proletarians of the Atlantic business world." And, yes, the Revolution allowed some merchants to prosper, as Robert Morris and military staff officers illustrate. But the war so disrupted the merchants' economic system that many took risks to make money. Their actions led to economic innovation including, among other things, the opening of new trade areas, the creation of the Bank of North America, and the expansion of manufacturing activities. Showing his theoretical bent, Doerflinger maintained that "social mobility" and "economic adversity"—or the lack of those factors—can explain economic development in both the South and early-nineteenth-century New England.

Doerflinger's *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise* is intriguing, in part, for how well it meshed with earlier studies of Pennsylvania communities and politics. The work added the Philadelphia merchant community to the list of Pennsylvanians driven primarily by a quest for material prosperity. Doerflinger also touched on significant political issues by maintaining that Philadelphia's merchants were not very politically motivated in the colonial era, but that war produced "the political mobilization of the merchant community." He saw the merchants steadfastly opposing the radical 1776 constitution and, even more important, championing the formation of a strong national government. And they did so, said Doerflinger, because of the economic adversity—such as the horror of paper money and the failure to protect commerce—they had experienced during and immediately after the war. Thus, according to Doerflinger, the merchants did indeed support the creation of the United States Constitution for economic reasons. But they were reasons born of adversity.<sup>66</sup>

While Olton, Ryerson, and Doerflinger analyzed aggressive middle- and upper-class segments of Philadelphia, the city also attracted scholars interested in producing a more inclusive, more rigorous analysis by studying people who occupied the lower rungs on the socioeconomic ladder. Gary

<sup>66</sup> Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, quotations from 4, 57, 62, 126, 139, 275, 344, 356.



Nash's 1976 essay on poverty and poor relief in prerevolutionary Philadelphia provides a particularly useful example of this trend. Using manuscript records of a private relief campaign prompted by the harsh winter of 1762–63, Nash illustrated problems the poor faced and documented that large numbers of the city's needy did not receive government welfare assistance. Only HSP's continuing quest for new manuscript collections allowed Nash to offer this analysis: the materials he used were added to HSP's holdings just three years earlier.<sup>67</sup> Nash's 1976 essay formed a small part of the research he was conducting for *The Urban Crucible*, a comparative study of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, that appeared in 1979. While Lemon, Wolf, and Wood emphasized differences between Pennsylvania and other areas, Nash stressed similarities. By alternating chapters on the sociological and political situation in the three cities, Nash maintained that while the timing differed slightly, the three major northern port cities experienced similar developments from 1690 to the eve of the American Revolution. As with the community studies, Nash produced an impressive array of statistical information documenting the growing inequity of wealth holding that each city experienced. Striving to understand the attitudes and role of the less powerful members of society, he held that "new modes of thought based on horizontal rather than vertical divisions in society" slowly emerged. By 1740 the "plebeian sorts" exhibited "feelings of solidarity . . . based on occupation, economic position, and class standing." Soon urban elites recoiled in horror as they contemplated the potential power of the lower orders, and by the eve of revolution these port cities had become "places where men struggled against each other rather than working harmoniously for the mutual good of the whole society." As with many works cited in this essay, parts of Nash's interpretation are controversial. Nevertheless, *The Urban Crucible* is a prime example of how an emphasis on quantification combined with a focus on the needs and aspirations of more than the upper ranks of society can significantly expand our understanding of early America.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Gary B. Nash, "Poverty and Poor Relief in Pre-Revolutionary Philadelphia," *W&MQ* 33 (1976), 3–30, for the material discussed above, see 12–13.

<sup>68</sup> Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979), quotations from xi, 9, 384. Reflecting another growing trend, Nash's volume, like Doerflinger's, had the added value of offering his analysis in a comparative framework.

A 1980 monograph, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760–1800*, by John K. Alexander, illustrated the increasing desire to use case studies of Philadelphia to bring society's less powerful members into view. The author defined poverty in an eighteenth-century context and described what it meant to be poor. He analyzed wealth-holding and housing patterns, and compiled information from court records to test contemporary beliefs about who perpetrated crime. Exploring how the nonpoor perceived what one Philadelphian called "the other half," the author argued that public and private charity efforts as well as law enforcement were employed as instruments of social control, increasingly so as a result of the Revolution. An analysis of education for the poor in the postrevolutionary period reinforced the claim that affluent Philadelphians wanted the poor deferentially to accept their inferior place in society. In the process of researching this work, the author gleaned material from more than two dozen HSP manuscript collections.<sup>69</sup>

Billy G. Smith investigated a somewhat larger group, the "laboring people" of Philadelphia, over a slightly longer period, 1750–1800. His innovative work, which he said was "based on the hardest possible data," provides an instructive example of the turn to quantification in the quest for scholarly rigor. Smith "adopted a social scientific approach, attempting systematically to measure vital details of lower-class existence about which scholars have too often been forced to rely on inference and supposition." To reveal the "outward structure and experiential aspects" of the lives of the city's "lower sort," Smith used quantifiable sources to examine, among other things, birth and death patterns, residential segregation, occupational structure, and distribution of taxable wealth. He also pieced together brief biographies of some working people. In addition, by making extensive use of HSP manuscript material on wages and prices, he constructed a rough cost-of-living index for the city, an extraordinary achievement. The overall picture that emerged showed a "spartan" existence typically marked by "[t]ransience." Although he conceded that "a good many poor inhabitants" managed to prosper, he highlighted the "bleak findings" demonstrating that "for many laboring Philadelphians, life was nasty, short, and brutish." Smith's claims, as often happens with those built on quantification

<sup>69</sup> John K. Alexander, *Render Them Submissive: Responses to Poverty in Philadelphia, 1760–1800* (Amherst, Mass., 1980), quotation from 48.



techniques, have been challenged.<sup>70</sup> Still, the cardinal fact remains: Smith's innovative use of quantification techniques dramatically expanded our understanding of the nature and meaning of life for those near the bottom of the city's socioeconomic scale.

Steven Rosswurm's 1987 case study of Philadelphia militiamen, who came primarily from "the lower sort," illustrated a "from the bottom up" approach rooted in an array of manuscript sources, many from HSP. He was attuned to incorporating theory and a range of scholarly approaches as, for example, when he used small-group theory to explain an instance of "superb performance" in combat. Noting that he considered theory vital to the writing of history, Rosswurm aimed to provide "not merely social history, but rather a 'history of society'" by studying the militia in the Revolution. Believing "the lower sort could act on its own and had its own culture," he portrayed the militiamen fighting for a fuller measure of equality and economic justice at home as well as for American independence. The vicissitudes of war service and perceptions of economic and other abuses from "the better sort," Rosswurm contended, "often forced the militia to weigh patriotism against egalitarianism" and, when pushed, the militia chose egalitarianism. He depicted the militiamen, working with middle-class radicals, as reaching the height of their power in 1779 but failing to achieve lasting gains. Indeed, by the mid-1780s, for sundry reasons, including the fact that their egalitarian ideas "ran too much against the grain," "the laboring poor [had] slipped back into virtually their pre-1775 state of powerlessness."<sup>71</sup>

Despite the varied approaches, these scholars who focused on Philadelphia topics reinforced themes trumpeted by the authors of community studies. It seems that many in the middle class and in the merchant community, which was itself rather diverse, were determined to

<sup>70</sup> Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, 1990), quotations from 1, 2, 125, 173, 198, 199. For the issue of challenges which centers on the thrust of his analysis rather than on his published work, see Hermann Wellenreuther, "Labor In the Era of the American Revolution: A Discussion of Recent Concepts and Theories," *Labor History* 22 (1981), 573-600; Gary B. Nash, Billy G. Smith, and Dirk Hoerder, "Laboring Americans and the American Revolution," and Hermann Wellenreuther, "Rejoinder," *ibid.* 24 (1983), 414-54; Billy G. Smith, "Inequality in Late Colonial Philadelphia: A Note on Its Nature and Growth," *W&MQ* 41 (1984), 629-45.

<sup>71</sup> Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the "Lower Sort" during the American Revolution* (New Brunswick, 1987), quotations from xii, 60, 6, 132, 257, 256.

improve their material and perhaps social status. The members of Philadelphia's "lower sort" might have been driven more by need than greed, but not surprisingly they too, it appears, were often influenced by economic concerns, including a quest for economic justice. And where they offered quantified analysis, these scholars all agreed with the community study findings that the degree of wealth holding became increasingly unequal.

Scholars of early America who looked at Pennsylvania as a whole also emphasized writing a more inclusive history. And they did it through a variety of approaches. Allen Tully's 1977 study of "politics and social structure" in the Pennsylvania of 1726–55 reflected the newer emphasis on theory as well as on social history. He was, he stressed, especially interested in determining how conflict could be resolved or—better yet from his perspective of the situation in Pennsylvania—avoided. While he conceded that Pennsylvania had political divisions and had experienced occasional spasms of political conflict, Tully asserted that Thayer and others had gotten it wrong when they depicted Pennsylvania politics as an ongoing donnybrook. Tully argued that, since the Pennsylvania of 1726–55 experienced only brief periods of "contention," scholars should accentuate "the relative peacefulness of political relations." Pointing to the need to assess conditions in society that nurtured such stability, Tully posited "a broad consensus" on "acquisitive values" that dovetailed with Pennsylvania's easy economic prosperity for almost everyone, including immigrants. While his claims about political stability and near-unfettered economic opportunity raised challenges to standard views, Tully reinforced other scholars in two important ways. He agreed that political conflict was typically rooted more in personalities than principle. And he added his voice to the growing chorus of scholars who chanted that early Pennsylvania foreshadowed what America would become. Stressing that America has been one of the most stable political societies in the modern world, Tully claimed that "[w]hat Americans were to do again and again in the future, Pennsylvanians had accomplished in the mid-eighteenth century."<sup>72</sup>

Sally Schwartz offered support for Tully's emphasis on stability in her 1986 monograph *A Mixed Multitude: The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania*. Assessing how religious diversity and massive immigration

<sup>72</sup> Tully, *William Penn's Legacy*, quotations from xv, xvi, 53, 168. Tully used so many HSP manuscript collections that he noted: "[u]nless otherwise stated, all manuscripts are in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania" (209, n. 5).



affected William Penn's dream of fashioning a religiously tolerant society, Schwartz strongly embraced the idea of a more inclusive approach. Having promised to conduct a "comprehensive" investigation of Pennsylvania's growing religious and ethnic diversity, she did indeed cover a staggering range of religions—including "smaller religious groups"—and immigrant groups. In addition, Schwartz repeatedly noted she was examining cultural issues including cultural transference and the development of "a new culture" in Pennsylvania. Arguing that numbers reveal little about the "life or thought" of people, especially eighteenth-century immigrants, she questioned the value of quantifiable sources to the study of culture. Relying heavily on the kinds of literary sources so abundant in HSP manuscript collections, Schwartz concluded that religion mattered in early Pennsylvania. In fact, throughout Pennsylvania's first century, people typically identified others "in religious terms." Moreover, massive immigration caused "the colonial elite" occasionally to express "nativist fears." Still, Pennsylvania's many population groups "gradually" accepted diversity, and colonial Pennsylvania experienced "diminishing religious discord." By the mid-1760s, "[p]luralism was celebrated; no longer was it a cause for anxiety." The era of the Revolution reaffirmed and even strengthened Pennsylvania's commitment to tolerance. Schwartz traced this attitude to the influence of William Penn and to a pragmatic response to living in "a heterogeneous society." While claiming that Pennsylvania was "unique" in its blend of religious and ethnic groups and in its tolerance, she too saw the future in Pennsylvania. "In many ways," opined Schwartz, "colonial Pennsylvania prefigures the pluralistic American experience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."<sup>73</sup>

Sharon V. Salinger, whose book on labor and indentured servants in the Pennsylvania of 1682–1800 appeared in 1987, demonstrated that quantification techniques could reveal a good deal about the life of ordinary people, especially immigrants. Salinger aimed to provide "social history, from the 'bottom up.'" And reflecting the ideal that a more inclusive history must

<sup>73</sup> Sally Schwartz, *A Mixed Multitude: The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1987), quotations from 3, 4, 5, 36, 62, 66, 82, 257. Schwartz maintained that, since "[r]acism is a somewhat different question from ethnic or religious prejudice," she would consider "Native Americans and blacks . . . only insofar as they affected the relations among white settlers from various Western European cultures" (305, n. 2). And she did indeed follow that approach which means Native Americans and blacks are largely absent from her study.

delve into gender issues, Salinger made extensive use of Elizabeth Drinker's diary as she examined the household economic unit to provide glimpses of the domestic life of both male and female servants. Moreover, in contrast to the first-generation scholar Herrick who offered only a general sense of how bound laborers fared once they served their time, Salinger brought more rigor to the issue by doing mobility studies of sample groups. Based on numerous statistical charts and brief but often telling biographies of individual servants, Salinger demonstrated that, over time, the indentured labor system became "increasingly harsh and formal" and that "the most salient feature" of the former servants she traced was "their obscurity." Since many of the people she followed entered Pennsylvania as immigrants, Salinger's use of quantification techniques did help elucidate the life of less powerful members of society.<sup>74</sup>

The desire to bring greater rigor to the study of early America, especially through statistical analysis, was also evident in the rise of the "new" political history.<sup>75</sup> HSP manuscripts have proven valuable in this effort which emphasizes analysis of the personal background of politically active people, especially legislators. Jackson Turner Main's 1973 examination of political parties in Pennsylvania during the 1780s illustrates the trend—and the value of second-wave scholarship. Using Brunhouse's *Counter-Revolution* as a narrative foundation, Main studied personal information on leading members of the Constitutional and Republican parties to determine why they opposed each other so tenaciously. He determined that "various factors," including religion and ethnic concerns, help explain why individuals supported one or the other of the two parties. However, he asserted that place of residence, worldview (including educational attainments and attitudes toward commerce), and wealth exerted the most influence. In Main's terminology, the Republicans, who were wealthier and had a broader worldview than their opponents, were "Cosmopolitans"; the Constitutionlists were "Localists." Main supported his analysis with several statistical tables. He also added his voice to what soon became the growing chorus of scholars who emphasized Pennsylvania's modernity. Having

<sup>74</sup> Sharon V. Salinger, "To Serve Well and Faithfully": Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682–1800 (New York, 1987), quotations from 2, 46, 115. HSP manuscripts, especially lists of bound laborers and servants, were central to Salinger's arduous task of tracing servants over time.

<sup>75</sup> Benjamin N. Newcomb, *Political Partisanship in the American Middle Colonies, 1700–1776* (Baton Rouge, 1995), xv.



studied all of the American states, he concluded that Pennsylvania experienced "the formation of party organizations far in advance of those elsewhere and prophetic of the future."<sup>76</sup>

Owen S. Ireland, who both drew upon and praised Brunhouse's work, agreed with Main that one should apply quantifying techniques—especially analysis of roll calls—to determine what motivated political action. He also concurred that revolutionary Pennsylvania developed "two cohesive and antagonistic voting blocs." But in a series of essays published in the 1970s and 1980s, and in a 1995 book on Pennsylvania and the ratification of the Constitution, Ireland contends that Main had erred. "The crux of Pennsylvania politics" from 1778 through the ratification of the Constitution could, he argued, be attributed to religious and ethnic issues. "Partisan alignments," Ireland asserted, should be understood this way: "Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and their Calvinist allies in the Constitutionalist party stood arm in arm against the Republican coalition dominated by Anglicans, Quakers, and their Lutheran and sectarian allies." Reflecting the growing concern for addressing cultural issues, Ireland maintained that the differences he highlighted came from "a nascent consciousness-of-kind rooted in . . . cultural backgrounds, religious heritage, and historical experience." While his 1970s and 1980s work, like Main's, focused on legislators, in his 1995 book on ratifying the federal Constitution, Ireland exemplified the concern for a more inclusive approach. Here Ireland stressed that a solid majority of Pennsylvania voters—"the plebeians, or 'the many,' if you will)"—warmly supported the Constitution. The members of the state's two antagonistic parties generally split based on "preexisting political attachments" that were "rooted in the ethnic-religious political confrontations of the previous decade." While he challenged many of Main's conclusions, Ireland suggested their disagreements could perhaps be traced to differences in the periods they researched and to "how we made our comparisons." Sounding a modernization theme similar to Main's, Ireland maintained that "two relatively modern political parties" had emerged in the

<sup>76</sup> Jackson Turner Main, *Political Parties before the Constitution* (Chapel Hill, 1973) 174–211, quotations from 207, 21. For his general conclusions for the new nation as a whole, replete with numerous statistical tables, see 321–407.

state by 1778–79.<sup>77</sup>

Benjamin H. Newcomb shared Main's and Ireland's penchant for statistical analysis and addressed similar issues in his 1995 study of *Political Partisanship in the American Middle Colonies, 1700–1776*, a monograph that drew very heavily on HSP manuscript collections. Newcomb viewed his work as a part of "a new political history" that addresses "the attitudes and behavior of common human beings" as well as of "great men" and does it with "the prosaic rigor of quantitative analysis." Newcomb presented ample statistical material, but, unfortunately, equated common human beings with those who could vote even though the franchise rested on property qualifications. He gave close attention to assessing roll call votes and regularly offered precise measurements of voting bloc unity as well as cohesion indices for elections. He expressed dismay when, as was often the case with Pennsylvania, crucial quantifiable "data" such as legislative roll calls and occupational information either did not exist or could not be found. He also discussed the nitty-gritty of politics—from issuing propaganda to canvassing to getting out the vote—and showed disdain for those who did not learn how to use political "tools." He held that political partisanship existed throughout the colonial period in all the mid-Atlantic colonies. Political "factions," rather than parties, did battle into the mid-1730s. Soon thereafter, with Pennsylvania leading the way, actual political parties emerged in each colony. Examining the roots of partisanship, Newcomb held that economic issues exerted little influence. Into the 1760s, "cultural differences," especially religion, were the most important; "[r]egional residence," which he called "a somewhat arbitrary category," was reportedly the next most significant influence. As he explained it, ideological considerations were always present but assumed greater importance in the decade before the Revolution. While he pointedly challenged Tully on the supposed lack of political conflict, Newcomb seconded Olton and Ryerson by emphasizing how, at least in Philadelphia, middle-class elements pushed their way into politics in the 1770s. He also joined the Pennsylvania-as-modernizer ensemble by concluding that, while the mid-Atlantic region generally showed the way to what America became, "Pennsylvania before

<sup>77</sup> Ireland provides both a summary of his earlier work and specific citations to it in *Religion, Ethnicity, and Politics: Ratifying the Constitution in Pennsylvania* (University Park, 1995), xvi–xx. The quotations in the text are from his "The Crux of Politics: Religion and Party in Pennsylvania, 1778–1789," *W&MQ* 42 (1985), 454, n. 3, 455, 468–49, n. 28, and from *Religion*, xv, xvi.



and after 1776 led in developing party rivalry later characteristic of the nineteenth century."<sup>78</sup>

As Newcomb's lament about the dearth of information on legislators' occupations indicates, the "new" political history—like many other efforts to produce a more rigorous history—often depends on laboriously compiling biographical data on large numbers of people. Aware of that need, scholars and scholarly organizations, including HSP, have responded by sponsoring the production of *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary*. The two volumes published to date, which contain scholarly essays on the political system as well as biographical material on lawmakers, cover the period 1682–1756. This important series, which utilizes an extraordinary range of sources, including HSP manuscript collections, and is still in production, will make it easier in the future to continue expanding our understanding of Pennsylvania in the early period.<sup>79</sup>

While the "new" political history provides a prime example of using quantification to achieve greater rigor in scholarly analysis, the desire to produce a more inclusive history is especially evident in the growing emphasis on two major groups scholars had traditionally slighted: women and racial minorities. The effort to incorporate women into scholarly analysis has been a central element of the sea change in historical scholarship. Studies of women in early America, especially in New England, had appeared through the 1970s, but 1980 was the benchmark year because it witnessed the publication of two seminal works that, together, provided a cornerstone for integrating women into the story of early America.<sup>80</sup> While Linda K. Kerber and Mary Beth Norton adopted slightly different approaches, each found the HSP manuscript holdings particularly useful as they explored the late colonial period through about 1800 and tried to assess how the

<sup>78</sup> Newcomb, *Political Partisanship*, quotations from 1, 63, 65, 68, 160, 195. The heavy reliance on HSP manuscripts is shown, in part, by the fact that the Thomas Penn Papers were placed on the abbreviations list (xiv). For an example of Newcomb's disdain for those who failed to use the "tools" (160) of politics effectively, see 137–38.

<sup>79</sup> This series is published by the University of Pennsylvania Press. Craig W. Horle and Marianne S. Wokeck edited the first volume (1991), which covers 1682–1709; Craig W. Horle, Joseph S. Foster, and Jeffrey L. Scheib edited the second volume (1997) which covers 1710–56.

<sup>80</sup> See the works cited in Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," *AHR* 89 (1984), 593–619.

Revolution altered the status and lives of women.<sup>81</sup> Emphasizing "women's self-perceptions," Norton asserted that the Revolution had "an indelible effect" on women's "private lives." Kerber stressed how "conservative choices" curtailed the advancement of women's rights.<sup>82</sup> In the main, the two authors, whose sources overwhelmingly came from free, white women of at least middle-class standing, arrived at similar conclusions. Both maintained that the Revolution promoted the idea of education for women but did little to change women's legal position. Each emphasized the importance of the emerging idea of what Kerber called "the Republican Mother." Kerber put great store in the fact that women invented the concept that mothers had a special role in educating their children, especially their sons, to understand that virtue and patriotism were vital to the nation. Republican motherhood was a potentially liberating ideal, but, as both authors noted, it soon helped lock women even more firmly into what Norton called a "[w]oman's domestic and maternal role."<sup>83</sup>

Kerber's and Norton's 1980 publications became foundation studies that made it easier for scholars to explore more focused aspects of women's lives and of culture in early America. The growing interest in the subject was evidenced by the fact that *PMHB* published a "Women's History Issue" in 1983 with five of the six essays centered in the eighteenth-century. And in 1991, *PMHB* had a special issue on "Women in the Revolutionary Era."<sup>84</sup> The value of Kerber's and Norton's cornerstone studies, the importance of

<sup>81</sup> Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, 1980) and Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston, 1980). Each author, Kerber in 1986 and Norton in 1996, added brief new preface statements to paperback editions of their works, but the texts were not revised. No other single manuscript repository provided as many manuscript collections for Kerber's *Women of the Republic* (see 289-90) than HSP; discussing the various manuscript sources she used, Norton stressed the value of manuscript collections that, while belonging to LCP were housed at HSP. In addition, she noted that "[t]he holdings of HSP itself are of extraordinary importance" (*Liberty's Daughters*, 312).

<sup>82</sup> Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, xii, xv, although she does back away from this bold emphasis on transformation (298-99); Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 287, see also 11-12.

<sup>83</sup> On women inventing the concept and on the essence of "Republican Motherhood," see Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, 269, 283-84 and Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 297-99 (quotation, 298). As Carol Berkin notes, not all historians accept the view that women invented the concept. See her *First Generations: Women in Colonial America* (New York, 1996), 200-6.

<sup>84</sup> See *PMHB* 107 (1983), 3-112, and *PMHB* 115 (1991), 163-255. The 1983 "Women's History Issue" illustrates the truism that scholars present parts of their findings before they appear in book length studies. The 1983 issue contained articles by Sharon V. Salinger, Jean R. Soderlund, and Terri L. Premo. Books by each of these authors (co-authored in Soderlund's case) have been or will be discussed.



HSP manuscript collections, and the growing emphasis on culture as well as gender issues, can be seen in Terri L. Premo's 1990 study of *Winter Friends: Women Growing Old in the New Republic, 1785-1835*. Premo, who said the seventeen-volume manuscript diary of Deborah Norris Logan formed the "backbone" of her monograph, proclaimed that her study would reflect "what is often termed a 'women's culture approach.'" She aimed to examine "the history of old age" as seen by women themselves and placed her findings in the context of recent literature on "the psychological concepts of self and identity." She found that women "forged a strong sense of identity through a complex weaving of kinship ties, moral fortitude, and an increasing devotion to gender" and, moreover, "aged women maintained active and satisfying roles . . . in multigenerational settings within the new republic." She concurred with Kerber and Norton that the Revolution generated little legal or political change for women and that the increasing stress on their domestic role helped make the meaning of the Revolution ambiguous. But she found that "the enhanced domestic purview of women's sphere responded very closely to many of the needs and spiritual concerns of women facing old age."<sup>85</sup>

The fact that scholars investigating the lives and status of women in early America determined that a domestic purview actually became stronger in the wake of the Revolution illustrates one reason why the effort to formulate a more holistic history has led to research on the family.<sup>86</sup> Susan Hamson's ongoing investigation of cultural norms and spousal abuse in the late colonial period illustrates the truism that the HSP manuscript collections are a treasure trove that can yield "gems." Digging in the William Denny Papers, she unearthed the extraordinary case of Mary and William Denny, the colony's less-than-successful governor for a brief period in the early 1750s. The manuscript evidence reveals a dysfunctional family that might have been created by an overly imaginative soap opera writer. In brief outline, Mary was charged with committing adultery before leaving England to join her

<sup>85</sup> Terri L. Premo, *Winter Friends: Women Growing Old in the New Republic, 1785-1835* (Urbana, 1990), quotations from 1, 10, 17, 76, 105, 145, and Premo to author, Feb. 16, 1999. For a general description of the Deborah Norris Logan diary, see, 1991 *Guide*, no. 380.

<sup>86</sup> While significant general studies of the family in Pennsylvania have been published, intriguingly some authors rely less on HSP than on other manuscript repositories, in part because they emphasize analysis of the Quaker family. See J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America* (New York, 1973) and Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York, 1988).

husband in Pennsylvania; for his part, the physically abusive William openly kept a mistress—his wife's former traveling companion—in his house while turning Mary into a virtual prisoner in the same house for almost two years. Hamson maintained that this kind of detailed information on spousal abuse simply cannot be found in published sources such as newspapers. Thus, the kinds of manuscript collections held by HSP become crucial for assessing the nature and workings of cultural norms.<sup>87</sup>

The growing emphasis on writing inclusive history also sparked explorations into the life of racial minorities. Once again Gary B. Nash's work, which made extensive use of the HSP records of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society and other manuscript collections, provides a particularly important example. In *Forging Freedom: The Foundation of Philadelphia's Black Community 1720–1840* (1988), Nash advanced the dual themes of “tragedy and triumph.” The tragedy was that the revolutionary era's hopeful movement toward racial equality and harmony turned into Negrophobia by the 1820s. The triumph, which was Nash's main focus, was how black Philadelphians created and sustained their own complex and vibrant community. Often utilizing quantification techniques, he explored naming practices, housing patterns, church membership, distribution of wealth, and school attendance in Philadelphia's evolving black community. He illustrated that African cultural influences declined in the postrevolutionary period and that, starting in 1787, independent black institutions and organizations, especially churches, played a central role in the development of the black community. Nash effectively showed that by the 1820s blacks had forged “a diverse and multileveled” society in which leaders did not necessarily determine what the black community did.<sup>88</sup>

In 1991, Nash joined with Jean R. Soderlund to consider a larger area of early Pennsylvania. In *Freedom By Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath*, which gave especially close attention to Philadelphia and Chester County, they described slavery as becoming more rural after 1750,

<sup>87</sup> These points are based on a draft of “‘This House is a Hell Upon Earth’: Narratives of Spousal Abuse in Colonial Philadelphia, 1742–1761,” kindly supplied to the author by Susan Hamson. For extended analysis on problems within marriage, see Merrill D. Smith, *Breaking the Bonds: Marital Discord in Pennsylvania, 1730–1830* (New York, 1991).

<sup>88</sup> Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, 1988), quotations from 6, 213. Julie Winch strikes similar themes in her *Philadelphia's Black Elite: Activism, Accommodation, and the Struggle for Autonomy, 1787–1848* (Philadelphia, 1988), but she devotes most of her attention to the nineteenth century.



a phenomenon that reached "its peak" in 1780. Showing a concern for producing "history from the bottom up," Nash and Soderlund lamented that our knowledge of blacks in the prerevolutionary period "comes through the eyes and pens of whites." While offering extensive statistical material on several topics, the authors devoted special attention to demographics of slave life and to aspects of manumission. They stressed that "slaves themselves were far more involved" in the death of slavery in Pennsylvania than had been realized. Indeed, by running away and through other acts of resistance, blacks helped sabotage the slave system. Based on bits of information from a staggering number of sources, they discussed aspects of the lives of real human beings and supported their theme that even after slavery was destroyed African Americans still "found that the freedom to achieve to the limits of one's abilities remained elusive."<sup>89</sup>

The effort to produce a more inclusive history also led to a deepening interest in Native Americans. The belief that Native Americans themselves must be studied as well as the ever-growing penchant for cultural analysis helped spark yet another approach to early American history. This is evident in James H. Merrell's *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (1999), a work much indebted to HSP manuscript collections, including the Penn Manuscripts. Merrell's purview necessarily extends past Pennsylvania to include other areas, especially the Ohio region. He explores what has recently become a popular topic, what he calls "the collision of cultures" that occurred "on the borderlands." Merrell centered his coverage on the "go-betweens," those men who functioned as translators and diplomats when Indians and colonists conducted "public business." (The emphasis on inclusion can be seen in Merrell's assessment of why women did not become go-betweens.) His cultural approach is evident in a range of terms including, for example, "treaty culture," "cultural terrain," "travel culture," "culture reach," "legal culture," and, one of his favorites, "cross-cultural conversation" or its equivalent. Showing the light-years distance from Volwiler's first-generation disinterest in how Indians lived, Merrell investigates Indians as much as colonists. In doing so, he

<sup>89</sup> Gary B. Nash and Jean R. Soderlund, *Freedom by Degrees: Emancipation in Pennsylvania and Its Aftermath* (New York, 1991), quotations from xv, 38, 39, 77. They give a wonderful sense of the importance of HSP manuscripts and the HSP staff to their work through what is, in some ways, an author's most precious gift: the dedication page. The authors dedicated the book to "the staff members of the Manuscripts Department and the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania."

impressively compares numerous activities, from how Indians and colonists traveled, to what they ate, to aspects of "discourse" including extended analysis of wampum, the spoken word, writing, and even gestures.

Merrell depicts William Penn as something of a colonial hero because Penn believed in honest dealings and peaceful cohabitation with the Indians, goals the local Indians of the 1680s shared. Penn's vision and the skill of the go-betweens—Indians as well as colonists became go-betweens—helped give Pennsylvania a long peace with Indians that stretched from the 1680s into the early 1750s. But the hope for peaceful coexistence was ultimately doomed by the great "cultural divide," a term Merrell employs so often it becomes a unifying theme. And the cultural divide rested, literally, on conflicting perceptions of the "woods." Native Americans might differ on many things, but "Indians could not imagine, and did not want, a world without woods." For their part, colonists also differed on many things, but they wanted the woods *and* the Indians to disappear. That fundamental difference, Merrell insists, could not be bridged, and he repeatedly underscores the point by saying the go-betweens—those "[a]rchitects of accommodation"—could not themselves cross the cultural divide but "personified" and "perpetuated" it.<sup>90</sup>

The quest for a more inclusive history as well as the pervasive desire to investigate cultural issues are also evident in, as yet, unpublished scholarship on early America. Philip Mead's recent exploration of the Revolutionary War journal of John Harper Hawkins offers a telling illustration of the ever-increasing appeal of cultural analysis, the effort to produce a more inclusive history, and the fact that HSP manuscript collections can yield "gems." Mead uses Hawkins's lengthy and very detailed journal to explore "aspects of Continental Army culture" and to assess their impact on American society. One discovers that Hawkins, a "common man" who rose to the rank of sergeant and who served in the Continental Army for virtually the whole war, drew "intimate connections . . . between patriotic service and genteel respectability," and those connections extended to his sense of

<sup>90</sup> James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), quotations from 27, 28, 31, 33, 53, 69, 76, 137, 174, 289, 294; for "cultural divide," passim but especially 102 which has the term twice and also its close relation "cultural chasm." On the growing popularity of this approach, note, for example, that in 1994 the Institute of Early American History and Culture cosponsored a conference on, as the program indicated, "Crucibles of Culture: North American Frontiers, 1750-1820."



culture, including material culture. Hawkins judged people and even places as genteel and respectable based on their backing—or lack of it—for what Hawkins called the revolutionary “Cause” in support of “the Common Rights of Mankind.” Mead maintains that, through service, Hawkins and other common men “gained a sense of their own personal honor,” and that sense elevated them, in their own minds, to “a level of distinction.” Hawkins was so concerned with having his war service endow him with a claim to personal honor and respectability that he exercised “editorial license” with his journal by crossing out sections that might “reflect dishonor on him.” Mead posits that the altered attitudes of men like Hawkins illustrate “the radical impact of Revolutionary War military service.” Because Hawkins had come “to believe himself deserving of attention and respect,” he was dismayed when he discovered that his own officers did not share his view.<sup>91</sup>

Carla Gerona’s ongoing research on Quaker “dreaming” during the American Revolution provides yet another example of the rich deposits in HSP’s manuscript holdings and the emphasis on doing, as she put it, “social and cultural history . . . that goes beyond the study of elite historical actors.” Making extensive use of HSP manuscripts, Gerona assesses how Quakers used dreams and visions, a “form of cultural capital,” “to redefine values and community membership.” She shows that “dreams helped people choose” their position in the war and were also employed in attempts to “influence” other Quakers. In the process, she effectively illustrates how the use of dreams and visions “enabled women to exert their influence on political events.” Gerona stressed that she “could not do this project without the manuscript sources,” in part because some of the most useful materials, commonplace books, rarely got published. In fact, if researchers relied on the printed primary sources, they might erroneously conclude that Quakers rarely dreamed. It takes “a close reading of the manuscripts and piecing together many odds and ends” to allow us to understand how “Quaker dreaming worked to maintain a sense of community and vision.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Quotations, with the kind permission of Philip Mead, from “The Story of Continental Army Sergeant John Harper Hawkins: A Respectable Soldier and the Radicalism of the American Revolutionary War,” Brown University seminar paper of Feb. 2, 1999, 3, 6, 10, 16, 20, 22.

<sup>92</sup> Quotations, with the kind permission of Carla Gerona, from her “War and Peace: Quaker Dreaming during the American Revolution” presented at the Ohio Early American History Seminar, Feb. 5, 1999, 3, 4, 7, 10, 12, 22, 23, 26, and Gerona to author, Feb. 10, 1999.

As the writings of Merrell, Mead, Gerona, and other recent scholarship cited here shows, another trend is evident. It is the desire to convey something of the feel and the texture of individual lives in day-to-day settings. And one of the results of that sensibility has been the rise of public history—the effort to make the findings of scholars more accessible to the public, to take history to the people, or to bring people to history through imaginative exhibitions. Here too scholars of early America have drawn upon HSP manuscript collections. And, as the scholarship of Erik Brogger, a professor of creative writing and a playwright, illustrates, the goals of public history are not limited to historians; moreover, manuscripts housed at HSP can be employed in many ways to expand our understanding of early America. Brogger used numerous manuscripts from HSP to help him create *Stranger's Ground* (1996), a play set in Philadelphia during the horrific yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Brogger, whose ten-member cast includes three blacks and two women, found HSP “a beautiful place in which to do research. It conveyed the unique impression of being uncluttered and accessible while, at the same time, possessing a dense and diverse collection of holdings.” “As a playwright,” he noted, “I was naturally interested in the people” and that made Elizabeth Drinker’s remarkable diary, just then available in print, a true find. But physically seeing and touching some manuscripts he consulted actually influenced what he wrote. The “quickly penned notes from stricken families” appealing for help, what he describes as the eighteenth-century’s 911 calls, proved especially moving. These and other sources allowed him to write a play that, via readings as well as performances, gives people a sense what life was like during the days of Philadelphia’s worst human disaster.<sup>93</sup>

What has a century of scholarship which has entailed significant prospecting in the rich HSP manuscripts revealed? Certain themes stand out. It seems clear that, whatever his faults, William Penn truly made a difference, especially when it came to fashioning a peaceful society. Penn’s vision of creating a symbiotic friendship with the Native Americans proved

<sup>93</sup> Quotations and additional information from Eric Brogger to author, Jan. 15, 1999, and Mar. 3, 1999. Erik Brogger kindly supplied me with a copy of *Stranger's Ground*, which was revised in 1998, and has had readings in Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Philadelphia and was produced at the Eugene O'Neill Center in 1997. On public history developments, see, for example, Cynthia Jeffress Little, “Beyond Text Panels and Labels: Education and Public Programming in American Historical Societies,” *PMHB* 114 (1990), 83–95.



crucial to the peoples of early Pennsylvania, giving them seven decades of unprecedented peace. Equally important, Penn's commitment to religious tolerance was vital to making early Pennsylvania one of the most religiously tolerant societies of its day. This development helps to explain why immigrants, especially those from the European continent, found the colony so inviting. However, distinctions rooted in religious and ethnic differences remained vibrant well past the close of the eighteenth-century. Indeed, it appears that religious antagonisms constituted one of the reasons political parties came into being so early in Pennsylvania. Moreover, religious and ethnic considerations certainly influenced what all scholars agree were the extraordinarily contentious internal political battles of the revolutionary era and beyond. Still, even granting that early Pennsylvania experienced sharp and at times prolonged internal political conflicts, it is the tolerance that seems striking—until one considers the question of race.

The Pennsylvanians' justifiably famous sense of toleration was not extended to nonwhites. While William Penn dreamed of living peacefully with the Native Americans, virtually all other whites wanted them and the forests which sustained them to vanish so the land could benefit the colonists and their progeny. In the early period, the great majority of African Americans who arrived in Pennsylvania arrived in chains. And while the Revolution for a brief moment seemed to hold out hope for equality for African Americans, it was not to be. By 1820, racism held sway.

Although some scholars dissent, the majority—from the first generation through the second wave and into the 1990s—hammer the point that the desire to prosper materially was a prime motive for most of the peoples of Pennsylvania's dominant society. James Logan, who supposedly did it in part to become a family man, was not the only one looking for "the main chance." Many it seems were aggressive about advancing economically and often socially too. Pennsylvanians, from immigrants on the frontier to most of Philadelphia's merchant community and almost everyone else in between, seemed motivated—perhaps driven—by a desire to prosper. And in many ways Pennsylvania was the best poor man's country, provided one was not a Native American. Yet even in Pennsylvania the evidence, especially quantifiable evidence, reminds us that all regions and all communities experienced a growing inequality in wealth holdings. Philadelphia's "lower sort" certainly found the chances of advancing dicey, and so too did indentured servants wherever they lived in Pennsylvania. The growing economic inequality did not necessarily equal class conflict, but it did

underscore potentially antagonistic senses of how society should function. Different perceptions of where power should reside led, at least during the Revolution, to Pennsylvania undergoing what can be called a contentious experiment with democracy. This came about because power dramatically shifted downward and that shift was both resisted and reversed. If the Philadelphia militia dreamed of greater equality, of a world where "[w]e wish not to have the preeminence; but we will no longer be trampled upon," they lost out even if they were not trampled.<sup>94</sup> And the poor faced increasing efforts to force them into deferentially accepting the nonpoor's visions of how society should function.

The literature also contains a strong degree of support for the theme that early Pennsylvania—perhaps even more than the rest of the mid-Atlantic region—prefigured what America became in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. That theme is voiced by scholars who approach history from very different angles. Pennsylvania's economic mix and the emergence of cities as well as towns and farms did prefigure later developments; so too did the growing economic inequality that made poverty and poor relief a central concern of government and society as a whole. Early Pennsylvania's blend of religions, ethnic groups, and races did make it pluralistic, did make it resemble modern America. The growing if imperfect tolerance, especially regarding race, did resemble how America would develop. However, the extent to which cultural exchange occurred in that pluralistic society remains foggy. Scholarly disputes and disagreements, especially about cultural influences and what is called worldview, abound.

Perhaps more than anything scholars would agree that we still know much too little about early America. We still have much to learn about how gender considerations affected life and especially the life of the family. Among other topics, the influence of worldview, of cultural considerations, of religion, of ethnicity, and of class remain problematic. No doubt future research will continue to expand our knowledge in these and other areas, some not yet even imagined. And the manuscript holdings at the HSP will continue, as they have for more than a century, to provide answers. Certainly one can return to the rich veins—the individual HSP manuscript collections—time and again. Shepherd mined the Penn Manuscripts for his

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in John K. Alexander, "The Fort Wilson Incident of 1779: A Case Study of the Revolutionary Crowd," *W&MQ* 31 (1974), 589–612, quotation from 599.



1896 institutional monograph and Merrell extracted a good deal of material from the same collections for his 1999 study of the meeting of cultures. The HSP manuscript collections will yield their treasures to any scholarly approach if one is willing to dig. The gold mine is truly an inexhaustible treasure trove.

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