

Delivering the Goods: The Country Storekeeper and Inland Commerce in the Mid-Atlantic

SCHAEFFERTOWN STOREKEEPER SAMUEL REX (1766–1835) was busier than usual Thursday, November 14, 1799. He served twenty-two customers, weighing tea, coffee, sugar, pepper, and tobacco, pouring quarts of oil, molasses, and wine, and cutting yards of linen, rattinett, and serge. Towards the end of the day, Nicholas Hawk picked up a half ton of bar iron, Widow Weaver came in for two quarts of salt, and Mrs. Donnelly selected a pair of shoes.¹ With business this brisk, it was good that Rex was about to leave for Philadelphia, where he would buy provisions, hardware, dry goods, and housewares to refill his shelves. Besides stocking the store, Rex had another reason to go to the city: he had things to sell. Like most storekeepers, Rex took in country produce, including butter, lard, whiskey, and beeswax, along with the barrels that held these goods, from customers in exchange for cash or credit. Now it was time to deliver some of these goods to city buyers.

Before leaving Rex likely asked customers if they had any special orders for him to fill, and he would have made sure that his wife, Mary, and his apprentice clerk, Samuel Roop, were prepared to manage the store, with the help of Mary's brother Michael Valentine who had a tavern in the building.² To drive the wagons to and from the city, Rex hired

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¹ Samuel Rex daybook 9, Historic Schaefferstown, Inc. archives, Schaefferstown, PA (hereafter HSI).

² Samuel Roop indenture, 1795, Lebanon County Historical Society, Lebanon, PA. Samuel Rex and his brother-in-law leased a combination store and tavern from Henry Schaeffer. Rex left Mary and Michael Valentine in charge of his store even before he and Mary were married. 1798 U.S. Direct Tax for Heidelberg Township, Dauphin County (hereafter USD); John Rex to Samuel Rex,

farmers Nicholas Swanger and Casper Ellinger, who had made the trip for Rex many times before.³

Horses pulling fully laden wagons could travel only about thirty miles a day and had to stop to rest frequently, so the seventy-five-mile trip would take the three men about three days.⁴ Along the way they might have slept along the road or lodged at a tavern. Period traveler Johann Schoepf noticed German farmers on their way to Philadelphia sleeping in their wagons and living on bread and cheese they carried with them, but another traveler, Theophile Cazenove, described farmers ("each driving a four horse wagon with twelve barrels of flour to Philadelphia") who spent the night sleeping on the floor of a tavern, lying in a circle with their feet near the fire.⁵ There were several routes Rex could have used, but if he chose the Lancaster Turnpike, finding a room would have been easy, since there were sixty-one taverns in a sixty-six-mile stretch of road.⁶ By Tuesday, November 19, the men were in the city, and Rex was buying goods at city shops. They arrived back in Schaefferstown late the following Monday, in time for Rex to wait on the last store customers of the day.⁷

This article details the important contributions that Rex—and other mid-Atlantic storekeepers—made to the early national economy. By buying and selling locally and in seaport cities and moving goods between the two places, storekeepers formed networks of relationships that linked rural residents with each other, the Philadelphia business community, and the Atlantic world of commerce. Rex was not unique among storekeepers in early America. With few exceptions country stores served the same

reel 6: AS188 and reel 5: AS101, Leon E. Lewis Microfilm Collection (hereafter LEL), copies in Lebanon County Historical Society, and Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Library, Winterthur, DE.

³ While in Philadelphia Rex paid Nicholas Swanger and Casper Ellinger 7s. 6d. and 15s., respectively; he entered the debits in his daybook when they came into the store to buy goods on Nov. 26 and 29. Rex daybook 9, HSI.

⁴ On wagon travel, see James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1972), 20, and Paul F. Paskoff, *Industrial Evolution: Organization, Structure, and Growth of the Pennsylvania Iron Industry, 1750–1860* (Baltimore, 1983), 45–51.

⁵ Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation, 1783–1784*, trans. and ed. Alfred J. Morrison (Philadelphia, 1911), 1:104; *Cazenove Journal, 1794: A Record of the Journey of Theophile Cazenove through New Jersey and Pennsylvania*, ed. Rayner Wickersham Kelsey (Haverford, PA, 1922), 84.

⁶ John T. Faris, *Old Roads Out of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1917), 123.

⁷ Changes in handwriting in the daybooks show the length of Rex's absences and the corrections he made when he returned. His presence in Philadelphia is confirmed by bills and receipts for purchases in the city.

functions in all regions; they sold a wide range of goods, they took in local produce, and they were sources of credit and news.⁸ One way that Rex stands apart from his peers, though, is in the large collection of papers that survive from his business.⁹ These documents permit an in-depth analysis of one storekeeper and provide new insight into inland commerce in the mid-Atlantic. Rex's trips contradict conventional wisdom about the difficulty and expense of overland transportation, but, more importantly, they show storekeepers' crucial role in moving goods between the countryside and seaports.¹⁰ Scholars have long noted the importance of the agricultural hinterlands to Philadelphia's economy, but they have been surprisingly vague about how country goods made their way to the city. In 1959, Arthur H. Cole described Philadelphia merchants' assembling of export cargoes, and noted that "we know precious little about the process. Apparently, the staves and the salt fish, the flour and the pit iron walked themselves to the ports." Twenty years later, scholars studying the economy and transportation of the Philadelphia region still called for additional investigation into rural-urban commerce.¹¹ Even recent studies of consumption have not addressed the movement of goods; as Richard

⁸ On storekeepers, see Gregory Nobles, "The Rise of Merchants in Rural Market Towns: A Case Study of Eighteenth-Century Northampton, Massachusetts," *Journal of Social History* 24 (1990): 5–23; Elizabeth A. Perkins, "The Consumer Frontier: Household Consumption in Early Kentucky," *Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 486–510; Kevin M. Sweeney, "Gentlemen Farmers and Inland Merchants: The Williams Family and Commercial Agriculture in Pre-Revolutionary Western Massachusetts," *Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings* 11 (1986): 60–73; and Daniel B. Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry: Retail Trade in Colonial Rowan County, North Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 48 (1991): 387–408. One exception is the store owned by Moravians in Bethlehem, PA. The church-owned store was more specialized in its operation than individually owned businesses and did not extend credit or buy large quantities of local goods. Katherine Carté Engel, "The Strangers' Store: Moral Capitalism in Moravian Bethlehem, 1753–1775," *Early American Studies* 1 (spring 2003): 90–126, esp. 102–3.

⁹ Surviving documents include forty-four of Rex's estimated forty-eight daybooks, three ledgers, two receipt books, and letters and receipts from over two hundred Philadelphia merchants. Manuscript documents are in the Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Library, and HSI. Other Rex papers are on microfilm in LEL, with copies in the Joseph Downs Collection and the Lebanon County Historical Society.

¹⁰ On overland transportation, see Thomas M. Doerflinger, "Farmers and Dry Goods in the Philadelphia Market Area, 1750–1800," in *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763–1790*, ed. Ronald Hoffman et. al. (Charlottesville, VA, 1988), 170.

¹¹ Arthur H. Cole, "The Tempo of Mercantile Life in Colonial America," *Business History Review* 33 (1959): 288; Diane Lindstrom, *Economic Development in the Philadelphia Region, 1810–1850* (New York, 1978), 93–95; David E. Dauer, "Colonial Philadelphia's Intraregional Transportation System: An Overview," *Working Papers from the Regional Economic History Research Center* 2 no. 3 (1979): 2.

Bushman notes, we understand far more about wholesale international trade than about American retail sales.¹²

Further, shifting the scholarly eye from the more frequently studied farmers to storekeepers provides a new way to think about rural Americans and markets. Rex operated his store from 1790 to 1807, a time when American trade flourished. This period ushered in what many scholars argue was a "market revolution," when a community-oriented eighteenth century gave way to a market-focused nineteenth century amid social upheaval and strife.¹³ Related to the idea of a market revolution is the debate on America's transition to capitalism and farmers' resistance to or acceptance of the market. Allan Kulikoff characterized the two sides of the debate as falling broadly into two categories: social historians, who believe early Americans produced goods mainly for family use (or community exchange) rather than for sale, and market historians, who glimpse early Americans as capitalists who produced goods for commodity markets.¹⁴ Christopher Clark, for example, has argued that farmers sold their surplus crops only after meeting their families' needs; when economic changes forced them to take on new kinds of work, raise different crops, and deal with outside markets, they did so reluctantly, but clung to the old values. In this reading, relationships between farmers and storekeepers were in tension, and local commodity exchanges and the market cash nexus existed as "competing ethics of exchange." Daniel Vickers has suggested that farmers used market opportunities to achieve what they considered "comfortable independence" or competency, a concept that varied from one person to another but did not include an all-out pursuit of wealth. Market historian Winifred Rothenberg, on the other hand, has used economic models and charted price convergences in cities and countryside to identify when a mature market economy emerged in Massachusetts. She argues that farmers showed signs of a market orientation as early as the 1750s; as time went by, they were willing to travel greater and greater distances to sell crops and buy consumer goods.¹⁵

¹² Richard L. Bushman, "Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), 234.

¹³ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York, 1991).

¹⁴ Allan Kulikoff, "The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 46 (1989): 120-44.

¹⁵ Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), 164-67; Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in

Recently scholars have proposed a conciliatory approach to the questions of farmers' market involvement and a market revolution. Paul G. E. Clemens and Richard Bushman argue persuasively that traditional and market-oriented activities went on simultaneously before and after the period of supposed change. Naomi R. Lamoreaux's research also conflates, rather than separates, market and community behavior. Lamoreaux shows that farmers and merchants acted alike in keeping accounts (using single-entry methods, seldom charging interest), hiring and forgiving the debts of family members, and forming a community of peers. (As the century wore on, however, the culture of the two groups diverged, and Lamoreaux plots this change with new economic models.) Likewise, analysis of the records of Samuel Rex calls into question the concept of a sudden and disruptive market revolution and refutes the notion of competing mentalities and behaviors among farmers and businessmen. This study demonstrates that a more accurate model for the early American economy is a network of relationships among farmers, craftsmen, rural storekeepers, and city merchants who, by acting in both community- and market-oriented ways to meet their economic goals, created a "composite" economy.¹⁶

The geographic location of Rex's business is significant, because the transition debate has focused mainly on New England with its communal villages and mixed agriculture. The economy and society of southeastern Pennsylvania, however, were quite different; by the eighteenth century farmers were producing a staple crop of wheat for distant markets.¹⁷ Thus, assumptions about the aversion of community-minded New Englanders to raising goods for the market do not necessarily hold for Pennsylvanians. Most of Rex's customers were ethnic Pennsylvania

Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 47 (1990): 3–29; Winifred B. Rothenberg, "The Market and Massachusetts Farmers, 1750–1855," *Journal of Economic History* 41 (1981): 283–314.

¹⁶ Paul G. E. Clemens, "Rural Culture and the Farm Economy in Late Eighteenth-Century New Jersey," in *Land Use in Early New Jersey: A Historical Geography*, by Peter O. Wacker and Paul G. E. Clemens (Newark, NJ, 1995), 3, 30; Richard Lyman Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 55 (1998): 351–74; Naomi R. Lamoreaux, "Rethinking the Transition to Capitalism in the Early American Northeast," *Journal of American History* 90 (2003): 437–61.

¹⁷ Theophile Cazenove and Benjamin Rush specifically commented about the large quantities of grain farmers hauled to Philadelphia. Cazenove *Journal*, 44, 49; Benjamin Rush, *An Account of the Manners of the German Inhabitants of Pennsylvania*, ed. Theodore E. Schmauk (Lancaster, PA, 1910), 67–68.

Germans who maintained much of their Old World culture. But, unlike some earlier arrivals who sought religious freedom, they were part of a later influx of German-speaking migrants who came to America for economic opportunity.¹⁸ Though traditional in many ways, these farmers and craftsmen regularly grew crops, raised livestock, and produced butter, whiskey, and manufactured goods for local and distant markets. Nor does it appear that their dealings with the storekeeper, their local market representative, were particularly troubled. Rex and his customers did business in a cooperative spirit because each had something the other needed. Rather than competing ethics of exchange, their business deals melded traditional community attitudes with market savvy and worked to the advantage of all parties. Rex was traditional in that he allowed his customers ample time to pay store bills. However, if a customer was too lax in paying (the time allowed for this varied), Rex might have him sign a note or bond to insure repayment; in extreme cases, Rex sued for payment before a justice of the peace. Customers seem to have accepted these terms and Rex's markups as the price of doing business, not as evidence of greed or duplicity. Besides patronizing his store, they trusted him for years as justice of the peace and scrivener, to write their wills, deeds, and other important documents, and to manage funds as treasurer of the local Lutheran congregation.¹⁹

Rex's dealings in the city also show the composite nature of the economy; here, too, businessmen blended traditional attitudes and behavior with the less personal ones characteristic of a mature market economy. These transactions also reveal new insights into the important relationships between rural storekeepers and the urban merchants who served as their agents.

Doing business in the city and countryside came naturally to Rex. He grew up in a Pennsylvania German family in Chestnut Hill, and he

¹⁸ Pennsylvania Germans, also known as Pennsylvania Dutch, are German-speaking Europeans who settled in Pennsylvania between 1683 and about 1820 and their descendants. They were the largest European minority in America in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scott T. Swank, "The Germanic Fragment," in *Arts of the Pennsylvania Germans* (New York, 1983), 4. On migration motives, see Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia, 1996), 21-24, 37.

¹⁹ Appointments as justice of the peace, 1798 and 1822, reel 6: AS141, reel 8: TR68, LEL; Samuel Rex treasurer accounts, Parish Records of St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church, Schaefferstown, PA, 1763-1834 (typescript). The only evidence of legal troubles in Rex's voluminous papers is a suit by his apprentice, Samuel Roop, for breach of contract. Samuel Roop summons, Mar. 9, 1804, reel 6: AS155, LEL.

learned about storekeeping from his father, Abraham, who operated a "great store" on Germantown Road. Farmers brought their produce to the Rex store to save themselves the ten-mile trip over bad roads into Philadelphia; Abraham Rex, in turn, sold these goods to merchants who came out from the city to buy meat, grain, and vegetables.²⁰ Samuel Rex gained insight into city business ways when he went to work as a clerk or scrivener in Philadelphia; there he met one Lewis Kreider, who offered him a position as clerk in a general store in Schaefferstown (then known as Heidelberg) for an annual wage of £30, plus washing, mending, and boarding.²¹ After working for Kreider for a year, Rex set up his own store in Schaefferstown. He joined the local German Lutheran Church and, in 1791, he married Mary Valentine, his landlord's daughter. These actions helped solidify his place in the community and may have forestalled any potential tensions, since many of Rex's customers were also his neighbors, fellow Lutherans, and, in some cases, his in-laws.²²

Rex was perfectly suited for his work. As a fellow Pennsylvania German, he spoke the language and understood the culture of Schaefferstown, but he was equally at home in the city, since he had clerked there and knew merchants who had shopped at his father's store. As he moved regularly between Philadelphia and Schaefferstown on his buying and selling trips, he bridged the geographic and cultural divide between the small, ethnic village and the large, diverse seaport. He was an economic broker for business exchanges, and he was also a culture broker who brought new goods and ideas to the countryside and mediated between his ethnic customers and the largely Anglo business and legal communities.²³

²⁰ Samuel Rex's grandfather, Hans Jorg Rüger, immigrated from a German-speaking region of Europe; the family subsequently changed its surname to Rex. Doris Rex Schutte, "George Rex (1682–1772) of Germantown, Pennsylvania," *National Genealogical Society Quarterly* 68 (1980): 247. The former Rex store is still standing at 8031–8033 Germantown Avenue; it is discussed in John J. Macfarlane, *History of Early Chestnut Hill* (Philadelphia, 1927), 53, 97, and David R. Contosta, *Suburb in the City: Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, 1850–1990* (Columbus, OH, 1992), 14–15, 20.

²¹ A letter from N. Hammond to Samuel Rex, Oct. 28, 1790, hints at Rex's work in the city. Rex wrote the terms of his employment in his small notebook. Reel 13: L53 and reel 6: AS111, LEL.

²² Samuel Rex married Anna Maria (Mary) Valentine on Dec. 13, 1791, at Christ Lutheran Church, Stouchburg, PA. Rex's receipt book shows he paid "half a years House Rent" to Mary's father, innkeeper Henry Valentine, on Nov. 17, 1791. Marriage record, Lebanon County Historical Society; receipt book, HSI.

²³ On culture brokers, see Lu Ann De Cunzo, "The Culture Broker Revisited: Historical Archaeological Perspectives on Merchants in Delaware, 1760–1815," *North American Archaeologist* 16 (1995): 181–222; Nobles, "Rise of Merchants," 5; and A. G. Roeber, "The Origin of Whatever Is

Rex's decision to go into business in Schaefferstown attests to specific opportunities in the village and surrounding countryside. Schaefferstown was laid out in 1758 by German immigrant Alexander Schaeffer, who planned the town as a market and commercial center. The town was situated at the intersection of two busy roads, in the fertile limestone soil of the Lebanon Valley. On the town square, Schaeffer erected a market house, a large limestone hotel, and two public water troughs served by a system of underground wooden pipes.²⁴ Besides its rich farmland, the countryside around Schaefferstown was noted for iron ore. By the time Schaeffer arrived, furnaces and forges were operating in the vicinity; teams hauling ore and bar iron traveled regularly through Schaefferstown and brought trade to the town's stores, shops, and taverns. The town's potential even attracted the attention of distant entrepreneurs, and soon after its founding, four Philadelphia financiers invested in a store there.²⁵

Although it was a busy commercial place for a time, Schaefferstown's character was decidedly rural. As a village rather than a borough, its administrative unit was the township. Though smaller today, in Rex's day Heidelberg Township took in three villages (Schaefferstown, Myerstown, and Newmanstown) and the surrounding countryside.²⁶ In 1779 Schaefferstown had about three hundred residents, making it the largest of the three settlements; by 1798 the village had over four hundred residents. Joseph Scott estimated that Schaefferstown had one hundred dwellings in 1805, for a likely population of six hundred people.²⁷ The village was also distinctly Germanic, with residents displaying their

Not English among Us': The Dutch-speaking and the German-speaking Peoples of Colonial British America," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991), 264.

²⁴ The market house never served its intended purpose and was dismantled in the mid-nineteenth century. A. S. Brendle, *A Brief History of Schaefferstown* (1901; repr., Schaefferstown, PA, 1979), 11, 13. The same situation occurred in Germantown; see Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *Urban Village: Population, Community, and Family Structure in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1683-1800* (Princeton, NJ, 1976), 21.

²⁵ Philadelphia merchants Henry Harrison, David Franks, Charles Woodham, and James Young, and Lancaster businessman Joseph Simon owned a store in Schaefferstown; Simon operated the store in partnership with Benjamin Nathan. Harrison et. al. deed, Aug. 7, 1763, HSI.

²⁶ Schaefferstown's population is not listed separately in early census reports; it is counted in Heidelberg Township. On townships in general, see Lucy Simler, "The Township: The Community of the Rural Pennsylvanian," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 106 (1982): 41-68.

²⁷ Newmanstown had about one hundred residents and Myerstown had eighty-four. Direct tax assessors listed sixty-eight households in Schaefferstown in 1798, suggesting a population of about 408. Lancaster County tax lists, 1779, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., 17 (1897): 670-72; Joseph Scott, *A Geographical Dictionary of the United States of North America* (Philadelphia, 1805).

ethnic roots through religion (the town had two churches, a German Lutheran and a German Reformed), architecture, and language. Village homes revealed "a late medieval mentalité." Most were small hewn-log buildings, but some were half-timbered or limestone; roofs were steep pitched, covered with red clay tiles or straw-thatch and pierced by a central chimney.²⁸ The main language of the town's residents was the Pennsylvania German dialect until the establishment of a public school system with teaching in English in 1840, and the churches conducted services exclusively in standard German until at least the mid-nineteenth century.²⁹ (The bilingual Rex could have conversed with customers in Pennsylvania German and English. He kept his accounts in English, with an occasional German phrase, but whoever kept the books when Rex was away wrote entries entirely in German.)

In deciding to open a business in 1790, Rex was also responding to the rising national economy. Under the Articles of Confederation, the nation experienced high levels of unemployment, increased bankruptcies, and an unfavorable balance of trade. In 1789, however, the commercial economy began rebounding as producers responded with confidence to the new Constitution and Alexander Hamilton's fiscal policy; European demand for food in the wake of the devastating Napoleonic Wars further aided the recovery. By 1791, Rex's first full year in business, American commerce was flourishing.³⁰ This increased trade meant that rural storekeepers could stock an enormous variety of goods. Though located far from a seaport, Rex brought an international selection, as well as locally produced items, to his customers. He sold books printed in Lancaster, Philadelphia, and London, and rum, sugar, and molasses from the West Indies. His inventory also included European imports: shawls, "beeds,"

²⁸ On Schaefferstown houses see Charles Bergengren, "From Lovers to Murders: The Etiquette of Entry and the Social Implications of House Form," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29 (1994): 48-49; and "The Cycle of Transformations in the Houses of Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1988).

²⁹ On the language of Schaefferstown, see Sherman Day, *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1843), 417. Services in English began in 1871 at the German Reformed Church, and St. Luke Lutheran held both English and German services prior to 1863. *History of St. Paul's Church, Schaefferstown, Penna., 1765-1965* (Myerstown, PA, 1965), 53; Abraham Rex [Samuel's brother] account of church expenses, loose manuscript sheets, St. Luke Lutheran Church archives.

³⁰ Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (1980; New York, 1982), 101; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (1986; New York, 1987), 266-67. (Page numbers refer to the 1982 and 1987 editions.)

broaches, silver watches, knee buckles, wine, butter boats, twifflers, teaware, and much more.

Of this assortment, Rex's largest investment was in cloth; when he bought his initial stock in December 1790, he spent over 38 percent of the total budget on textiles.³¹ Country stores typically carried a wide range of cloth, and rural consumers preferred imported cloth to homespun.³² In fact, sometimes people sold locally made cloth at the store in order to buy imported goods.³³ In March 1801 John Stookey picked out over fourteen yards of furniture cotton and paid Rex with 4s. 8d. worth of flax linen. In one case a local weaver, H. M. Shultz, bought cloth from Rex rather than make it himself; in May 1801 Shultz wrote to ask Rex for "black striped Ankeen . . . sufficient for a jacket. I wear a large jacket, therefore be so kind to send a full pattern."³⁴

Among the fabrics that Rex sold were German stripe and German lawn; these textiles, along with German language books, seem to be the only items he stocked especially for Pennsylvania German consumption. Earlier shopkeepers apparently felt a greater need to provide specific goods for a German market; in 1763 Schaefferstown storekeepers Benjamin Nathan and Joseph Simon advertised goods "suitable throughout for the Germans," but, unfortunately, they did not specify which goods they thought Germans wanted.³⁵ By the time Rex opened shop three decades later, his German-speaking customers seemed to prefer a general assortment of goods. In fact, their purchases of such items as tea, teaware, curtain rings and curtain calico, and fancy vest patterns suggest leanings toward the gentility and status associated with the dominant culture rather than a desire to retain a distinctive Pennsylvania German culture.³⁶

³¹ "Invoice of Sundry Goods Sent Samuel Rex . . . December 11, 1790," reel 1: AB1, LEL.

³² On consumers' purchases of textiles, see Doerflinger, "Farmers and Dry Goods," 177; Adrienne D. Hood, "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 53 (1996): 59, 64–65; Carole Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 13 (1982): 253–58.

³³ This strategy was used in rural Kentucky as well as Schaefferstown. See Perkins, "Consumer Frontier," 508.

³⁴ Rex daybook 15, and H. M. Shultz to Samuel Rex, May 18, 1801, reel 1: AB11 and reel 6: AS171, LEL.

³⁵ Cited in David Brener, "Lancaster's First Jewish Community," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 80 (1976): 253–54.

³⁶ Historians sometimes describe accumulation of such goods as evidence that ethnic groups wanted to become more "English," but Cary Carson and Cynthia Falk argue that Pennsylvania Germans were more concerned with status than with discarding ethnicity. See Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial America: Why Demand?" in *Of Consuming Interests*, ed. Carson,

One other category of goods in Rex's inventory is noteworthy: his array of specialty items for craftsmen. Here, as in other rural regions, craftsmen relied on storekeepers for certain components and raw materials.³⁷ These items show the range of goods available in country stores and emphasize the utilitarian nature of the production that went on in Schaefferstown. John Reydel bought stirrups, saddle tips, linen, girth web, binding, brass nails, and bits for his saddlery; hatter Christian Garret bought logwood for dye; and the town weavers purchased special brushes and weavers' reeds, the small pieces of wood that fit onto the beater of a loom to produce the pattern. John Kaley, a dyer, bought madder and indigo; locksmiths Philip Brecht and Christopher Seiler bought sheet iron and files; potter John Flower bought red lead by the barrel for glazes; and Jacob Gass, Matthias Focht, and Matthias Young obtained Spanish white, glass, and glue for their cabinetmaking trade. Businessmen and professionals also procured supplies from Rex. Tavernkeepers stocked up on whiskey, wine, drinking glasses, ham, and loaf sugar, and physician Jacob Grubb selected components for his prescriptions, along with the patent medicine Godfrey's Cordial.

But, despite all the goods packed into Rex's store, there were some necessities that he did not sell; these "missing" items tell us what people made or grew for themselves or obtained through other networks. Rex never sold flour and seldom dealt in wheat or other food grains. Farmers had grain ground into flour at a local gristmill, and people who did not grow grain could buy flour from the miller, who kept a portion from each bushel of grain he milled as his "custom." Those with surplus grain sold it to a merchant miller.³⁸ Nor were fruits and vegetables, easily grown in one's garden, sold at the store. Rex sold many kinds of alcoholic beverages, but never beer or cider, which people made at home; beer was also available at a local brewhouse.³⁹ Rex did not sell guns, locks, or furniture

Hoffman, and Albert, 672; and Falk, "Constructing Identity with Belongings and Buildings: Pennsylvania Germans in the New Nation" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2000), 21. Though they bought consumer goods, Schaefferstown people did not disregard their heritage; surviving artifacts reveal that they acquired, from sources other than the store, ethnic objects such as *frakturs* and decorated furniture that are highly collectible today.

³⁷ Johanna Miller Lewis describes a similar occurrence in North Carolina stores in *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry* (Lexington, KY, 1995), 61.

³⁸ On the miller's custom, see Philip E. Pendleton, *Oley Valley Heritage: The Colonial Years, 1700-1775* (Birdsboro, PA, 1994), 38-40.

³⁹ Jacob Philippi owned a 36-by-20-foot, one-story limestone brewhouse in Schaefferstown. USDT.

either; these could be ordered directly from gunsmiths, locksmiths, and cabinetmakers.⁴⁰

Though Rex did not sell all possible goods, he did offer a range of banking services. Like most storekeepers, Rex made cash loans; some storekeepers took cash deposits, but Rex did not extend this particular service.⁴¹ Customers could also draw on their store credit to pay a debt. When William Gayda was "in a pinch for to get hay" for his cow, he wrote to Rex explaining that John McClane had a stack of hay but that he had no money to pay McClane.

He [McClane] told me that if I would let him have goods at your store, that would do him the same service. The price of the hay is five dollars; if you would let him have that amount on my account, you would oblige me in the highest degree.

Gayda's financial embarrassment vanished through a series of exchanges. McClane presented Gayda's letter to Rex, and Rex gave McClane goods worth £1 17s. 6d. (\$5.00) on Gayda's tab.⁴²

Besides selling and banking services, another important aspect of Rex's business was buying goods. Historians have interpreted this practice in different ways. Christopher Clark concludes that storekeepers in Massachusetts accepted commodities rather than not be paid at all, but other researchers, and evidence from the Rex store, suggest that some storekeepers relied on local suppliers for part of their inventory.⁴³ Indeed, Rex accepted only items that he could use or resell profitably; in fact, he solicited pork, barrels, and butter in large quantities because he needed them in his business, and this spurred production. Moreover, Rex and his customers had choices. There were other stores in town that people could

⁴⁰ The selection in country stores varied from one place to another; Lewis found that North Carolina storekeepers did not sell pottery, furniture, or silver, suggesting that local people bought these items directly from the artisans. *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 60.

⁴¹ Storekeepers in North Carolina took cash deposits. Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry," 392.

⁴² William Gayda to Samuel Rex, Dec. 20, 1799, and McClane purchase, Rex daybook 10, reel 6: AS114 and reel 1: AB9, LEL. The United States adopted the present monetary system in 1792, but many Americans (including Rex and some of the city merchants he dealt with) continued to use the more familiar British system as their money of account for years afterward; it is not unusual to see dollars and pounds used side by side in account books and other documents.

⁴³ Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism*, 164–67. Lewis and Thorp state that storekeepers needed local goods in their business. Lewis, *Artisans in the North Carolina Backcountry*, 64; Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry," 399.

patronize if they did not like Rex's terms, and if Rex was not sure about a product, he took it provisionally. In November 1797 he accepted two pairs of mitts from Mrs. Wilson "on commission." Thereafter he bought her mitts a few pairs at a time, paying 2s. 6d. a pair and selling them for 3s. 3d. However, on April 1, 1800, Rex returned ten pairs of mitts to Wilson; apparently, if this seasonal item did not sell by spring, he removed it from stock.⁴⁴ In addition, not every craftsman wanted to pay Rex in goods; some reserved their products for other venues (or sold them from their own shops) and paid him with cash. Locksmith Philip Brecht, for example, bought smithing supplies regularly, but never sold locks to Rex. In short, when Rex took in a good, both buyer and seller got what they wanted; the producer earned store credit to buy goods or cash to pay other obligations, and Rex obtained a useful commodity.

The fact that commodities were not the only means customers had to pay bills is further illustrated by an analysis of Rex's books. Thirty percent of the total payments (by value) in Rex's 1798–1808 ledger were cash, but only 14.4 percent were country produce and 4.3 percent craft goods. Over 19 percent were made in paper instruments, 11 percent in iron (the commodity payment preferred by local ironmasters), 4.5 percent of total payments were settled by work done for the storekeeper, and another 15.5 percent were paid by book credit or by having another person assume the debt.⁴⁵

Rex's purchases of local goods differed in type and volume. Mrs. Wilson brought in mitts two pairs at a time, probably when she needed extra store credit; at various times, she also sold butter, linen, and a hog to Rex. (Her purchases included a small book, sugar, coffee, a bowl, and a fine comb.) For a few years, cordwainer James Maddach regularly sold shoe heels to Rex for 2s. 6d. a dozen, but heels were such low-priced items that they did not earn him very much income. For all of 1800 his total credit for heels was only £1 11s. (He spent it on a silk handkerchief, Bateman's Drops, tincture, awl blades, rosin, and some sugar, whiskey, and fish.) Other deals were probably initiated by Rex; at various times he purchased shoes, medicine, fresh meat, a coverlet, a saddle, and a milk cow from customers and paid for them with store credit. Using store credit to fill his household needs worked to the storekeeper's advantage in several ways; he obtained goods he needed without cash, and he might even

⁴⁴ Rex daybook 4, reel 1: AB6, LEL; Rex daybook 11, HSI. The date may be significant since the first of April was traditionally the day that leases expired and new contracts were made. *The Landis Valley Cookbook: Pennsylvania German Foods and Traditions* (Lancaster, PA, 1999), 2.

⁴⁵ Rex ledger 5, 1798–1808, HSI.

realize a profit, since the customer would use the credit to buy, at retail rates, goods that Rex obtained wholesale.⁴⁶

Other purchases that Rex made, including tobacco and snuff, almanacs, earthenware, tin goods, brushes, rakes, and barrels, were quite different. These were larger in volume, provided regular additions to his inventory, and often came to him wholesale. Craftsmen producing at this level dealt with Rex on a more professional basis than smaller producers who only occasionally sold goods. Tinsmith Jacob Folmer, for example, rendered itemized invoices, as did John Flower, who expressed his prices in the same terms as city merchants and discounted his pottery by a "commission" of 3s. 9d. on the pound.⁴⁷ These larger-scale producers did not sell to Rex because they needed to buy goods or pay a store bill; some took partial payment in merchandise, but most wanted cash.⁴⁸ Folmer, for example, made the rounds of many country stores and could choose where to buy goods.⁴⁹ The same was true of tobacconist Christian Demuth and printers Albright and Lahn, who came out from Lancaster, twenty miles to the south, to deliver snuff and almanacs to Rex. Since they lived in a city that abounded with specialty shops, they understandably preferred payment in cash.

Rex's arrangements with two tradesmen went beyond the routine; these illustrate the interconnected nature of the community economic network, the different relationships Rex had with tradesmen of varying status, and the problems of pricing. From 1800 to 1803, Rex had a regular agreement with nailsmith John Sweitzer that resembled the putting-out system used by New England storekeepers.⁵⁰ Every few weeks Sweitzer picked up a bundle of iron rods from Rex; he worked the rods into shoe, cask, lath, shingle, and saddler nails, returned them to Rex to sell in the store, and took payment in store credit.⁵¹ The impoverished Sweitzer had

⁴⁶ Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman make this observation about colonial Virginia storekeepers in *A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750* (New York, 1984), 229.

⁴⁷ Jacob Folmer invoice and Flower invoice, reel 6: AS104 and reel 2: B1, LEL.

⁴⁸ Producers did not always receive payment immediately; sometimes Rex took months to pay for an order.

⁴⁹ Jacob Folmer also sold tinware to the Kipplinger Store in Jonestown, PA, and to the store owned by Samuel's brother, Abraham Rex, in Mount Pleasant, Cocalico Township, PA. Kipplinger store ledger, 1797-1799, Lebanon County Historical Society; Abraham Rex daybooks, passim, HSI.

⁵⁰ Thomas Dublin, "Rural Putting-Out Work in Early Nineteenth-Century New England: Women and the Transition to Capitalism in the Countryside," *New England Quarterly* 64 (1991): 531-73.

⁵¹ Rex-Sweitzer nail account book, Joseph Downs Collection.

no real estate of his own; even the house he rented was "in bad order."⁵² His purchases of food and other necessities at the store exceeded what he earned making nails, so he mowed and reaped for Rex. At one point, Sweitzer fell into debt so badly that he surrendered his nailsmith tools to a creditor, and Rex bought them back for him.⁵³ Though this gesture aided Sweitzer, it was not pure philanthropy on Rex's part; by bailing Sweitzer out, Rex kept him at work so he could keep the supply of nails flowing and pay off his mounting debt. The arrangement also shows how Rex met one challenge of rural storekeeping. He received iron rods from ironmaster George Ege as payment on his store bill, but he could not (usually) add a markup on iron because the price was fixed, by local custom or by ironmasters' agreements, in areas near the furnaces.⁵⁴ So Rex had Sweitzer convert the iron rods into nails, which did sell at a profit.

Rex had a somewhat different agreement with prosperous tanner John Klein.⁵⁵ Whenever Rex took in a cowhide from a customer, he turned it over to Klein at cost; that is, any time Rex credited a customer for a hide, the next entry in his daybook was a debit to Klein for the hide at the same price. It seems that the price of hides, like iron, was determined by local custom (or by the tanner himself, who was the only person who could use raw skins); both iron and hides functioned as commodity money with fixed values.⁵⁶ Even though Rex ran hides and iron through his books with no markup, these transactions kept the economy moving. By providing a market for hides, Rex provided a community service that kept people coming into his store, and, once in the store, customers might be tempted to buy goods that did accrue a profit for him.

Though Rex bought goods from people of varying economic levels and occupations, he needed more farm goods than manufactures in his business. He presented more opportunities, therefore, to people who could produce farm products than to those who had only manufactures to sell. In 1791, 1798, and 1806–1807, 40 percent of the credits in Rex's daybooks were for produce, while only 10 percent were for manufactured

⁵² John Sweitzer rented an 18-by-16-foot log house, assessed at \$105, from Widow Fidler. USDT.

⁵³ Agreement for nailsmith tools, Nov. 13, 1800, reel 9: TR141, LEL.

⁵⁴ On ironmakers' cartels in colonial times, see Paskoff, *Industrial Evolution*, 67–69.

⁵⁵ Assessors valued Klein's house and tanyard, which occupied multiple town lots, at \$852. USDT.

⁵⁶ Samuel's brother treated hides the same way at his Mount Pleasant store. Abraham Rex daybooks, passim, HSI.

items. This imbalance was due, in large part, to Rex's longstanding arrangement with ironmasters to supply pork to feed their workers. During butchering season, farmers from miles around responded to Rex's call by bringing in anything from a side of meat to a small herd of swine. Over sixteen years Rex took in nearly 80,000 pounds of meat from 150 customers, including 8 craftsmen, 2 widows, and 140 farmers. Top supplier was farmer Henry Mock who sold 4,501 pounds of pork over five years for a total of over £91. Entrepreneurial cooper Peter Moore was the craftsman who sold the most meat; over a three-year period, he sold six hogs weighing a total 1,182 pounds and earned £23. Most craftsmen sold considerably less pork than Moore, and few sold meat more than once.

Farmers also sold apple and rye (and occasionally peach and cherry) whiskey to Rex, in quantities ranging from four gallons to six hundred gallons at a time. Rex resold this whiskey by the barrel in Philadelphia and in pints or quarts at the store. Customers usually brought in their own container to have it filled, but Rex could supply a bottle for an additional charge. While some storekeepers combined tavernkeeping with selling goods, Rex did not sell alcohol by the glass, probably because drinks were available in his brother-in-law's tavern across the hall.

Farmers usually sold grain to merchant millers, not the storekeeper. Rex did buy flaxseed, however, and his handling of the flaxseed trade highlights the village's close connection to the city market and Rex's vulnerability to market fluctuations. Rather than reselling flaxseed in Philadelphia, Rex sold it to local oil miller Michael Grabill, who pressed it into linseed oil, which *he* sold in Philadelphia. (Farmers may have sold the seed to Rex rather than going directly to Grabill's farm because Rex was centrally located and offered ready payment.) Unlike iron and hides, the price of flaxseed was not set locally; it varied according to the Philadelphia market. (Rex occasionally received a listing of "prices current" by mail from a merchant in Philadelphia.) Usually Rex made a profit on selling the flaxseed, but if he misjudged the price, he had to sell to Grabill at cost. Grabill, who did business in Philadelphia, knew the market too and was apparently willing to pay something—but not too much—in middleman fees. Such market fluctuations caused a problem in August 1797; Rex had bought flaxseed at 10s. a bushel, but by the time he sold it to Grabill on August 26 the price had fallen, and he handed over eighty-three bushels at the price he had paid—10s. each. Whether Grabill informed him of the market slump or Rex learned of it by mail is unclear,

and if they exchanged angry words as they struck the deal there is no record of it. However, the next day Rex reduced the price he paid for flaxseed to 7s. 6d. so that he could mark the seed up for a profit when he sold it to Grabill.⁵⁷

Pork, whiskey, and flaxseed were the most profitable commodities to sell at the store, but butter was the farm item that customers traded most frequently. People at all economic levels sold butter to Rex, but as with hogs, farmers, who had the means and physical space to raise larger numbers of animals, sold butter more often than craftsmen. Of the 45 people listed in Rex's ledger 5 (1798–1806) who sold butter, only six were craftsmen, and of the 116 people who sold butter in 1791, 1798, and 1806–1807 (as listed in his daybooks), only four were craftsmen.

Customers brought in from one to one hundred pounds of butter to Rex at a time; he weighed it, credited the customer's account, and placed it into a barrel that quite likely already held butter brought in by previous customers. While dairymaids may have prided themselves in their fine products, once butter arrived at the store, the storekeeper stirred it into his stock indiscriminately; there was no way of distinguishing one person's butter from another's when repacking it for sale.⁵⁸

Though women produced the butter Rex purchased, they rarely appeared in his records; the men of their families received store credit for it. Of 139 customers who sold butter to Rex in 1791, 1798, and 1806–1807, only 8 were women, and all but 1 were widows. Though the actual number of female suppliers is hard to gauge because Rex recorded purchases in the head of the household's name, other evidence suggests that more men than women did come to the store. Rex tended to note it when someone other than the person charged or credited made a purchase or delivered a commodity, and his daybooks list women as customers only 10 to 12 percent of the time. Of course, there is no way of knowing how many women accompanied their husbands to buy goods that Rex then charged to the husband, but it seems that few women came to the store alone. Cultural norms in some regions precluded women from shopping, so this low percentage of female buyers is not unique, and, in fact, the Rex figures are higher than those for some regions.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Rex daybook 4, reel 1: AB6, LEL.

⁵⁸ On storekeepers' butter trade, see Clarence H. Danhof, *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820–1870* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 40.

⁵⁹ Only 10 to 14 percent of shoppers in rural Kentucky were female. Fewer than 4 percent of account holders at the Lowrance, NC, store were women, and they were all widows. Females made

If they seldom came to the store in person, women still contributed greatly to the local and regional economy by their butter production; Joan Jensen estimates that selling several hundred pounds of butter enabled mid-Atlantic residents to buy most of their annual household necessities.⁶⁰ Purchases by farmers John Royer and Jacob Hoffman provide concrete examples of butter's buying power in Schaefferstown. Royer used proceeds from butter sales to buy silk gloves, coffee, and other goods worth 13s. 4d., and Hoffman used his credit to purchase coffee, sugar, wine, wine glasses, muslin, rice, and sewing notions totaling £1 13s.⁶¹ Even if butter did not buy all of a Schaefferstown family's needs, it put coffee, sugar, and rice in the larder and enhanced the lives of its members with such pleasant items as silk gloves, wine, and wine glasses.

Rex resold some butter at the store, but he sold most of it in Philadelphia. (The anticipation with which one city resident greeted fresh country butter is evident in a letter from merchant Henry Darroch. Writing in 1792, Darroch told Rex that he "would be glad how soon you send the keg butter as I am in want for family use.")⁶² Though we think of butter as quite perishable today, in Rex's day, properly salted butter was believed to stay fresh for one year; adding sugar or saltpeter preserved butter for up to three years.⁶³ Preserving butter properly was important because Rex held it for months before taking it to the city; as with flaxseed, this time lag also complicated pricing. Rex was more successful here, however, than in buying flaxseed, and he regularly profited on his butter sales. When he resold it at the store he added a markup of 1d. per pound, and when he took it to Philadelphia he received from 2d. to 4d. a pound over the price he had most recently paid. Jensen found that women who lived near Philadelphia sold butter there in 1798 and 1799 for 1s. 6d. and 1s. 10½d. per pound, but in 1799 Rex received only 13d. to 14d. per pound.⁶⁴ The difference may be that he sold to merchants who paid less

up only 2 to 4 percent of customers in South Carolina low-country stores. Perkins, "Consumer Frontier," 495–96; Thorp, "Doing Business in the Backcountry," 399; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, 1995), 97.

⁶⁰ Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750–1850* (New Haven, CT, 1986), 83.

⁶¹ Purchases for May 1807, Rex daybook 41, HSI.

⁶² Henry Darroch to Samuel Rex, Dec. 20, 1792, reel 5: AS15, LEL.

⁶³ On preserving butter, see Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds*, 109, and Elinor F. Oakes, "A Ticklish Business: Dairying in New England and Pennsylvania, 1750–1812," *Pennsylvania History* 47 (1980): 204.

⁶⁴ Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds*, 82–83.

because they added a markup for resale; but what he lost in price, he gained in volume. Jensen's women sold 30 or 40 pounds of butter at a time, but a typical shipment for Rex was between 159 pounds and 5,034 pounds of butter. When Rex, Ellinger, and Swanger headed to Philadelphia on the November 1799 trip, for example, they hauled forty-seven kegs and one tub of butter, weighing a total of 3,520 pounds, with them.⁶⁵

The butter sales, along with Rex's other dealings in Philadelphia, reveal the network of relationships that linked Schaefferstown to the city; they also emphasize the importance of storekeepers to the urban and regional economy and highlight the vast difference between city and countryside. Schaefferstown and Philadelphia were both market centers, linked to each other by trade, but the contrast between the two places could hardly have been greater. With a population of sixty thousand people in 1800, Philadelphia was a cosmopolitan port, a banking and cultural center, and the largest and wealthiest city in America. It boasted fine taverns, lively coffee houses, museums, entertainment, and numerous shops and stores; on Wednesdays and Saturdays over 250 vendors vied for customers at the High Street market. In contrast to Schaefferstown's widely spaced log homes, most city buildings were brick structures nestled close to each other and rising three or four stories.⁶⁶

The city grid stretched for miles between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers, but most residents congregated in the streets closest to the Delaware, where the population reached as high as 1,411 people in a few city blocks.⁶⁷ Though Sam Bass Warner has argued that these groups mingled with each other rather than living in the enclaves that would characterize the city in later years, Mary Schweitzer's work suggests that Philadelphians preferred to live close by others of the same occupational, social, or ethnic background.⁶⁸ Germans, for example, favored the north-

⁶⁵ Receipt for butter from Dubs and Earl, Nov. 23, 1799, reel 6: AS107, LEL.

⁶⁶ On the market and Philadelphia in general in this era, see Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, NY, 1990), 34-35; Richard G. Miller, "The Federal City, 1783-1800," in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, ed. Russell F. Weigley (New York, 1982), 155-205; Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); Edward M. Riley, "Philadelphia, the Nation's Capital, 1790-1800," *Pennsylvania History* 20 (1953): 357-79; and Sam Bass Warner Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth* (Philadelphia, 1968), 3-19.

⁶⁷ Mary M. Schweitzer, "The Spatial Organization of Federalist Philadelphia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 24 (1993): 39.

⁶⁸ Warner, *Private City*, 14; Schweitzer, "Spatial Organization," 34-38.

ern part of the city proper and the Northern Liberties just outside the city. French émigré Moreau de St. Méry observed, "above Third Street in Northern Liberties . . . there are only Germans."⁶⁹ Some historians theorize that early businessmen preferred to deal with members of their own ethnic or religious groups rather than outsiders.⁷⁰ And, one might reasonably expect that the German section would have been Rex's destination on his shopping trips, since he was of German descent and shopping for a largely German clientele. However, the common language of trade, and Rex's need for a wide range of affordable goods, rather than ethnic solidarity or cultural considerations, determined where and with whom he did business. Rather than heading north, Rex shopped in the main commercial district, a T-shaped area that ran about seven blocks from the Delaware River to High Street along the market and took in the wharves and Front, Second, and Third streets on either side of High. On High Street alone, 248 out of 373 residents were storekeepers, merchants, or artisans.⁷¹

During his sixteen years in business Rex patronized over 250 different Philadelphia businesses; occasionally he also bought goods at vendues on the wharf. Bills and receipts from his November 1799 trip illustrate the range of Rex's shopping over the three-day period from November 19 through November 21. He visited Barbara Beates for "segars" and tobacco, and he bought window glass, English and German testaments and almanacs, and six "Ready Reckoners" at Godfrey Baker's bookstore. His purchases at Baker and Conegy included green cloth, children's hose, and spoons; he bought silk fringes and rattinett from Bickham and Reese, and "mixt cloth," calico, velvet, and shawls from John Davis and Company. He chose more cloth, butcher and Barlow knives, silk, and ribbon at William Chancellor and Company, selected enameled teapots, pint flasks, milk jugs, "chambers," and other china at Elizabeth Cottinger's shop, and bought five hundred "best" gunflints at Thomas Hockley's hardware shop. Other purchases included wool gloves, linsey, and other textiles at Nottmagle, Montmollin and Company, and one barrel each of coffee and indigo at Benedict Dorsey and Son, grocers.⁷²

⁶⁹ Kenneth Roberts and Anna M. Roberts, trans. and ed., *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey, 1793-1798* (Garden City, NY, 1947), 264.

⁷⁰ Jerome H. Wood Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730-1790* (Harrisburg, PA, 1979), 103; Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 59.

⁷¹ Cornelius William Stafford, *Philadelphia Directory for 1801* (Philadelphia, 1801), 9-16.

⁷² Merchants' receipts for Rex's purchases in Philadelphia, reel 2: B1, reel 6: AS107, reel 9: TR114, LEL.

Rex paid in full for most of what he bought on the November 1799 trip, so he received a discount for prompt payment, but early in his career he often bought on credit, and once he was caught short by a merchant's repayment deadline.⁷³ On April 13, 1791, Thomas Miller sent a note to remind Rex that he still owed money from the previous year:

I should thank you for the remainder of balance as soon as you can, as I am very much in want of cash at present; the balance is £59. 15. 9., a considerable part thereof above 4 months standing (instead of two months which is the usual credit on groceries).⁷⁴

Rex bought the groceries on December 11, 1790, so the anxious Miller waited only two days past the four-month deadline to call in the debt.

Rex's purchases in Philadelphia increased dramatically over time. Typically between 30 and 40 percent of his annual expenditures went, in nearly equal amounts, to a dry goods house and to a provisions or wet goods firm (dealing in rum, molasses, coffee, and other imported liquor and groceries). In 1791 Rex spent over £782 at thirty-six different stores; 19 percent of this amount (£147) went to provisions merchant Henry Darroch and 18 percent (£144) to Thomas Bartow, who traded in dry goods. In 1798 Rex spent £3,365 at one hundred different merchants and shopkeepers; 16 percent of the total, or £550, went to dry goods merchant Samuel Eldredge and 14 percent, or £457, went to the wet goods firm of Dubs and Earl. By 1806–1807 Rex was getting ready to sell the business, but he still spent over £1,621 at thirty-three businesses, with 21 percent (£342) going to Martin Dubs and another 20 percent (£324) to dry goods merchants Wistar and Cooke.

Like his purchases, Rex's sales of country produce in the city increased as his business grew. In 1791 he sold only £67 in produce, but by 1799 his sales rose to over £484. By 1801, his best year for sales, Rex delivered nearly £600 worth of farm goods to Philadelphia. Put in more concrete terms, over sixteen years in business, Rex sold over thirty-three thousand pounds of butter, or an average of one ton a year, in the city.⁷⁵

⁷³ It is impossible to calculate precisely the percentage of Rex's later purchases, if any, that were on credit. Merchant receipts, which might show credit purchases, are scant for the years after 1801, and his receipt book, the source of information about his buying from 1801 to 1807, shows only cash payments.

⁷⁴ Thomas Miller to Samuel Rex, Apr. 13, 1791, reel 6: AS104, LEL.

⁷⁵ These are minimum amounts; surviving documents may not show all of Rex's purchases and sales in the city.

Though Rex bought at many stores and shops, he established closer relationships with a few merchants who acted as his agents and to whom he sold goods.⁷⁶ Rex's wet goods agents included Thomas Miller (1790–1791), Henry Darroch (1790–1793), Dubs and Marquedant (1795), William Clark (1795), and John Martin (1795). After 1796 he used Martin Dubs (formerly of Dubs and Marquedant) and from 1798 to 1802 Dubs and Earl. He began dealing with dry goods merchant Samuel Eldredge as an agent after 1797.

These agents provided a variety of services. As the breakdown of his yearly purchases shows, agents provided some, but not all, of Rex's stock. They also kept him informed about changes in the market and "prices current" in the city. But perhaps most significantly, they handled his country produce. When Rex came to the city in November 1799, he deposited his load of butter at Dubs and Earl's warehouse, and they paid him £219 17s. 4d.⁷⁷ Other times, Dubs and Earl took Rex's produce as partial payment for purchases. In May 1801, for example, Rex delivered to the firm £250 18s. 2d. in produce and paid them another £132 8s. 10d. cash for molasses, coffee, oil, and other groceries.⁷⁸ Sometimes the agents found a buyer for the produce instead of taking it themselves, essentially acting as commission agents for these domestic products as some firms did for imports. When agents served in this role, Rex maintained some control. For example, when pork prices fell in the early 1800s, rather than selling at a loss, Rex hired a local man to salt the pork and pack it in barrels, then he shipped it to Dubs and Earl with instructions not to sell until the market improved.⁷⁹ Rex could stipulate a minimum price for produce; in October 1802 Dubs and Earl wrote that they had received the apple whiskey he sent by wagon, "which we will endeavour to sell at the price limit enclosed." Agents also acquired goods from other Philadelphia businesses for Rex. In July 1798 Dubs and Earl sent a wagonload of merchandise to him that included tobacco they obtained from Conrad Beates. The agents even cooperated with each other; in March 1801 they sent Rex a hogshead of sugar from their warehouse, along with dry goods

⁷⁶ The term is my own since there is no secondary literature on domestic agents. On international agents, see David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785* (Cambridge, 1995), 124–28.

⁷⁷ Receipt for butter, reel 6: AS107, LEL.

⁷⁸ Rex receipt book, HSI.

⁷⁹ On May 5, 1804, Rex noted that he sent pork to Dubs and Earl to be stored; daybook 26, reel 1: AB14, LEL.

from Eldredge. In July 1799 Eldredge sent Rex the thickset, ferret, and velvet binding he wanted, along with a note explaining that he could not find any flannel, though he had tried "at all the stores in Market Street."⁸⁰ (As a dry goods dealer, Eldredge never bought country produce, but at least once he either brokered the sale of Rex's bar iron or received payment for bar iron on Rex's behalf.)⁸¹

Rex's network of relations in Philadelphia was almost totally business related, but in a few instances he enjoyed the kind of personal associations that international wholesalers had cultivated for generations. William Schlatter, writing about an order for goods, added a friendly postscript concerning Rex's family: "N.B. All the people at Chesnut Hill are well." Eldredge occasionally traveled to the countryside near Schaefferstown; while on one trip he invited Rex to come to Womelsdorf to "pass the evening with me . . . should be happy to see you." Even if a warm friendship did not result from such meetings, they were the equivalent of city merchants' coffeehouse gatherings and would have helped Rex stay abreast of the market and enabled Eldredge to gauge the needs of his country client. Quaker merchant Benedict Dorsey Jr. also enjoyed a closer-than-usual relationship with Rex, apparently because he had in-laws in Schaefferstown. In 1795 Dorsey sent Rex a bill for whale oil and gunpowder, along with a note informing him that "Peggy would have been glad to have heard how her mother was and sends her love to her and you all." Though precise details of Dorsey's link to the town are unknown, his letter, like Schlatter's, reveals the multilayered network that connected Philadelphia and Schaefferstown.⁸²

Despite this level of personal contact, things did not always go smoothly for Rex in dealing with his contacts in Philadelphia. Sometimes window glass arrived "much broken," and occasionally merchants sent the wrong goods entirely. In December 1797 Richard Wister sent Rex a replacement keg of oil and an apology: "I am sorry for the mistake of the other as I had no more of that kind and had to purchase it, but still I hope there will be no [illegible] attending it." Though the apology was sincere,

⁸⁰ Dubs and Earl to Samuel Rex, Oct. 13, 1802, July 26, 1798, Mar. 30, 1801; Samuel Eldredge to Samuel Rex, July 31, 1799, reel 6: AS120, reel 6: AS119, reel 7: TR6, and reel 2: B1, LEL.

⁸¹ William Lane wrote that he paid Samuel Eldredge for the bar iron and would be glad to buy more. William Lane to Samuel Rex, June 30, 1801, reel 6: AS202, LEL.

⁸² William Schlatter to Samuel Rex, Nov. 6, 1800, Samuel Eldredge to Samuel Rex, Dec. 22, 1801, and Benedict Dorsey Jr. to Samuel Rex, Jan. 28, 1795, reel 6: AS193, reel 5: AS2, and reel 7: TR113, LEL.

Rex may have been piqued anew by the letter's address to "Samuel Rex, Jonestown," an error that showed little personal knowledge and attention.⁸³

Rex went to the city frequently, and he kept in touch between his own trips by mail or by sending the wagoners to deliver and pick up goods. But his was not the only network reaching out from Schaefferstown. Farmers, millers, and other producers carried goods directly to Philadelphia; rather than competing, Rex and his neighbors exchanged favors. On one trip to deliver his linseed oil to the city, Michael Grabill took along £50 from Rex for merchant Henry Darroch and brought back a load of goods for Rex.⁸⁴ Rex extended the same service to Grabill; on November 31, 1794, he received £75 in Philadelphia for the oil miller.⁸⁵ On other occasions, Rex paid tanner John Klein £4 15s. to haul twelve barrels of flour to Philadelphia, and he paid miller Jacob Thomas 15s. for bringing three hundred pounds of goods back from the city.⁸⁶

Despite these other occasional networks, however, when it came to moving goods regularly between inland regions and seaports, the efforts of rural storekeepers were unparalleled, and city merchants knew it. They actively encouraged this rural trade; they proactively sought business from country storekeepers because they bought large orders at regular intervals. When these businessmen assessed each other's creditworthiness, having good rural contacts was a crucial and positive factor.⁸⁷ Provisions dealers doubly welcomed a customer such as Rex, who could also deliver farm products.

The value that city businessmen placed on trade with storekeepers showed in their advertising. William Coats welcomed orders from "Town or Country," which would be "thankfully received, and carefully executed." Abbot and Simpson announced that country storekeepers "may have their orders executed with the greatest punctuality and on the most reasonable terms." Daniel Drinker promised country storekeepers' purchases would be "carefully put up, on very reasonable terms." Joseph Stansbury's china

⁸³ Richard Wister to Samuel Rex, Dec. 9, 1797, reel 2: B1, LEL. The mistaken address shows that merchants dealt with a number of rural clients.

⁸⁴ Henry Darroch reported the receipt of the money and the shipment of goods per "Mr. Grabill" in a note to Samuel Rex, June 20, 1792, reel 5: AS17, LEL.

⁸⁵ Rex daybook beginning May 21, 1792, reel 1: AB2, LEL.

⁸⁶ Rex daybook 3, Sept. 24, 1796 (Thomas), and daybook 19, June 18, 1802 (Klein), Joseph Downs Collection.

⁸⁷ Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 18.

shop was a place "where country orders are executed on the lowest terms with fidelity and dispatch." David Bevan advertised that he had previously been employed by "millers, farmers, &c. in selling of flour . . . [so] waggons from the country [who] are frequently at a loss" should feel at ease in his grocery shop.⁸⁸

In Rex's case, his contacts sought his continued patronage by emphasizing low prices. Eldredge once sent Rex his bill for yard goods with the message, "Hope they will prove to satisfaction as they are charged at the most reduced prices and well selected. You say you will be down in two weeks, I must wait patiently till you come and then will give you the best bargains." When Godfrey Baker sent a wagon to Schaefferstown loaded with bibles, hymnals, ink powder, and coffee mills, he stressed his reasonable terms: "We send you all the articles you want and at the old prices. The coffee mills have got higher in the prices. John Friend charged his but a week ago for no. 4, 5/9."⁸⁹

A final indication of the importance of rural-urban commerce is the efforts merchants made to improve highways into the city so goods could be transported more easily. In 1792 Philadelphia and Lancaster merchants formed a commission to improve the heavily rutted road between the two cities. The pounded stone turnpike was the first of its type in the nation, a physical link between city and countryside and a material acknowledgement of the importance of inland commerce.⁹⁰

Although Rex and his Schaefferstown store were obviously quite different from city merchants and their businesses, there were a number of similarities between country storekeepers and city merchants in this period. If city merchants led "nerve racking lives," so did their country counterparts.⁹¹ Both could be affected adversely by market fluctuations and find themselves overstocked with the wrong goods or goods bought too dear. They risked ruin from economic slowdowns and could be squeezed by demands from suppliers and creditors as pressure moved downward from international firm to city merchant to country storekeeper.

⁸⁸ William Coats broadside, Library Company of Pennsylvania; Abbot and Simpson ad, Daniel Drinker ad, Joseph Stansbury ad, and David Bevan ad, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 30, 1796, Nov. 5, 1767, May 21, 1788, Oct. 24, 1771.

⁸⁹ J. Dull (for Eldredge) to Samuel Rex, undated, and Godfrey Baker to Sameul Rex, Jan. 28, 1795, reel 6: AS192, reel 6: S106, LEL.

⁹⁰ Julius Friedrich Sachse, "The Wayside Inns on the Lancaster Roadside between Philadelphia and Lancaster," *Proceedings and Addresses of the Pennsylvania German Society* 21 (1912): 49.

⁹¹ On the adversity that city merchants faced, see Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 135-64.

Both had to be familiar with a range of currencies. They had to be good judges of character and accurately assess the creditworthiness of associates. They had to sometimes sell goods at no profit in order to make money later. Both had to assess the quality of a wide range of goods and be alert for damage; country storekeepers, who dealt in all types of merchandise, had to be familiar with an even greater array than city merchants, who tended to specialize. In transporting valuable cargoes on long, sometimes hazardous, trips storekeepers also mirrored city traders. Rex used farm wagons, not ships, and he imported and exported goods to and from the countryside, not seaports, but he relied on the carters as merchants relied on captains, and he used his agents as merchants did supercargoes and delegates in distant cities.

Rex was one of many country storekeepers doing business in the city, but his sales and purchases there were significant. He did not wield the same authority in the city as he did in Schaefferstown, where he was a principal businessman, but his large purchases and his prompt payments earned him urban merchants' respect.⁹² Still, this relationship lasted only as long as the two groups needed each other. When Rex sold the store to his brother in 1807, he discontinued regular trips to the city and virtually severed his contacts there.

Though he no longer was part of the city business scene, even after leaving storekeeping Rex stayed active in business affairs in his home community. The New England model of mobility depicts merchants moving from commerce into factory operations, but Rex took a different path. He still worked as justice of the peace, scrivener, and lender, but he added to his moneymaking pursuits by buying farms, installing tenants, and dealing in the grain that they grew.⁹³ His choice to invest in farms reminds us that, despite so-called revolutions in transportation and markets, agriculture was still the most common occupation in America at this time. Rather than being an era of a teleological progression from farm to factory, in the early republic, as in the colonies, commerce, agriculture, and small-scale manufacturing went on simultaneously.⁹⁴ And, in this

⁹² Doerflinger notes that colonial era dry goods dealers relied on a core group of customers who each spent between £75 and £250 annually; Rex's expenditure of between £144 and £550 a year on dry goods, even in a slightly later period, would have made him a valued customer. *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, 92.

⁹³ Rex daybooks, Sept. 15, 1810 to Aug. 6, 1823, and Dec. 9, 1831 to June 19, 1836, HSI.

⁹⁴ Joyce Appleby, "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," *Journal of American History* 68 (1982): 838

time and place, Rex evidently concluded there was more profit in farming than in setting up a factory or expanding a putting-out system. And profit he did. In 1798 Rex owned property worth over \$1,000; this placed him second among village residents, though still well below the wealthiest property owner in the township, Christian Ley, whose holdings were worth over \$18,000.⁹⁵ When Rex died in 1835, his estate, including outstanding notes, bonds, and interest-bearing loans, totaled \$52,297, and his real and personal property alone was worth \$15,961. In 1860, 27.4 percent of Philadelphia upper-level property holders had real and personal property worth over \$20,000; allowing for the slightly later time and higher property values associated with the city, Rex's estate was on a par with those of modest city merchants and businessmen.⁹⁶

Rex's management of a complicated network and his juggling of community and market relations demonstrate the important role that rural mid-Atlantic storekeepers played during the early republic years. Rex sold a wide variety of utilitarian and luxury goods, including specialty items for crafts, that belied his country location. He provided a regular market for produce and manufactures; his call for such products as pork, butter, flaxseed, and barrels stimulated production and gave local customers, especially farmers, a way to increase their incomes and conveniently buy both household necessities and more showy goods that evidenced their rising status. The store also acted as a *de facto* bank where Rex made cash loans and arranged for customers to pay debts to each other by using store accounts. As a culture broker Rex brought his country customers news, information, and the latest fashions from Philadelphia and beyond; he also mediated between them and the largely Anglo legal community by writing and filing their legal documents. Most significantly, Rex's regular trips between Philadelphia and Schaefferstown demonstrate the vital and largely unrecognized role that storekeepers played in inland commerce by moving enormous quantities of goods between seaports and the countryside.

As the nineteenth century wore on, storekeepers would have more transportation, communication, and business options than Rex and his peers enjoyed. These economic and technological developments changed the nature of storekeeping, rendered less personal the relationship of the

⁹⁵ USDT; Ley owned multiple houses and a large plantation near Myerstown, PA.

⁹⁶ Rex estate papers, reel 9: RE5, LEL and HSI. Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge, 1989), 118.

storekeeper and community, and decreased the need for an extended network of relations. But, in the early national years, Rex and other mid-Atlantic storekeepers were integral players in an era marked not by dualism between market and community but by interconnected networks of relations, where rural and urban residents alike used traditional and long-distance market exchanges to reach economic goals.

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