

The Ambitions of William Henry

HISTORIANS HAVE TRAPPED William Henry of Lancaster (1729–86) in the identity of gunsmith. Though meant as a compliment—most accounts portray Henry as the most important gunsmith in the “rifle-making hub of colonial America,” Lancaster County—this confinement is ironic, since Henry escaped this occupation as soon as he was able. The term gunsmith, then as now, could describe men who repaired guns, who produced specialized gun parts (such as barrels or locks), who created an entire gun from scratch (lock, stock, and barrel), or who ran a factory that employed other men. Henry seems not to have engaged in any of these activities after 1760. By the last decade of his life, Henry had achieved a level of financial security (and apparently embodied the virtuous independence thought to derive from it) that led his peers to entrust him with positions of responsibility and that left Henry free to accept them. He served first in local and state governments and was later appointed an administrator and financier for the Continental army and elected twice to the Continental Congress. We have failed to register the shape of his career, the magnitude of his transformation; instead, historians have imagined that during all these varied activities, Henry continued to work as a gunsmith. Indeed, the belief that Henry “was engaged in the manufacture of firearms for over thirty years,” that he produced the rifles or muskets carried by soldiers from the French and Indian War through the Revolution, has been central to stories about him.¹

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¹ Joe Kindig Jr., *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in Its Golden Age* (New York, 1960), 72; De Witt Bailey and Douglas A. Nie, *English Gunmakers: The Birmingham and Provincial Gun Trade in the 18th and 19th Century* (New York, 1978), 13; *Henry of Boulton: A Pennsylvania Gunmaking Family and Its Firearms* (Nazareth, PA, 1988), 5. For Lancaster as the center of colonial riflemaking, see J. Wayne Heckert and Donald Vaughn, *The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle: A Lancaster Legend* (Ephrata, PA, 1993), 1; M. L. Brown, *Firearms in Colonial America: The Impact on History and Technology, 1492–1792* (Washington, DC, 1980), 437; Alexander Rose, *American Rifle: A Biography* (New York, 2008), 15–16, 21; John Walter, *The Rifle Story: An Illustrated History from*

The belief that Henry was a career gunsmith has flourished due to confusion over his role during the Revolutionary War. As a procurement officer for the Continental army and for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Henry was responsible for obtaining working guns and dispersing these guns to the troops, and a substantial correspondence survives in which army leaders beg him for guns. These requests have been taken as evidence that Henry continued to work as a gunsmith, still practicing in the 1770s the skills he had learned as an apprentice gunsmith in the 1750s. Collectors have searched for the Revolutionary War guns that Henry must have produced, but no example of Henry's work is known to have survived—a "curious" fact only if one believes that Henry was producing a large number of rifles over a long period of time.² But to believe that during the Revolution Henry produced the guns that others requested of him one must isolate these requests for guns—as researchers focused on early America's gun trade have done—from the many other requests that he received: for shoes, for flour, for spontoons, for cartouche boxes, for hats. This wider context suggests that in the 1770s Henry was no more a gunsmith, directly involved in the making or repairing of guns, than he was a cobbler or a miller. He was a high-level procurement officer who purchased and financed the production of guns precisely as he purchased and financed the production of shoes. Henry may have been a skilled craftsman in the 1750s, but by the 1770s he was a bureaucrat struggling to orchestrate large-scale production of items to keep America's armies in the field.

An unusual amount of information about Henry survives because his family, proud of his Revolutionary War service, preserved a vast mass of his papers. These materials ensured that while most colonial gunsmiths

1776 to the Present Day (London, 2006), 20. Even Michael A. Bellesiles, who distorted evidence to insist on the "surprisingly low number of gunsmiths" and guns "in early America," calls Lancaster County "the great exception" to this picture (*Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* [New York, 2000], 107). For the controversy over *Arming America*, awarded the Bancroft Prize in 2001 and then stripped of it in 2002, see James Lindgren, "Fall from Grace: *Arming America* and the Bellesiles Scandal," *Yale Law Journal* 111 (2002): 2195–249, and Clayton Cramer, "Why Footnotes Matter," *Plagiarism: Cross-Disciplinary Studies of Plagiarism, Fabrication, and Falsification* 1 (2006): 149–77, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/p/pod/dod-idx?c=plag;idno=5240451.0001.016>.

² Whitfield J. Bell Jr., "William Henry (1729–1786)," in *Patriot-Improvers: Biographical Sketches of Members of the American Philosophical Society* (Philadelphia, 1997), 1:349. In 1960, Henry J. Kauffman found "complete agreement among informed collectors that [a] musket [at the Lancaster County Historical Society] was made by Henry about the time of the American Revolution" (*The Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle* [New York, 1960], 91–92). Only this gun's lock, perhaps dating from the 1750s, is now attributed to William Henry of Lancaster.

remained in or sunk into obscurity, Henry stayed visible to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians. When Henry's family members began to write narratives of their accomplished ancestor, they too construed him as a career gunsmith. They saw him through the lens of four subsequent generations of Henry gunmakers who spent most of their working lives in the rifle business. This model of the Henrys as professional gunsmiths was firmly established when John Woolf Jordan, a Henry descendant and a librarian at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania for forty years, began researching William Henry in the 1870s. Jordan's research was shaped by constant conversation, extending over forty years, with his gunsmith cousins, James and Granville Henry, who naturally understood their famous forefather to be a patriotic gunsmith like themselves.³ Henry was a useful figure for those eager to honor the early American gunsmith, and recent historians have advanced Jordan's heroic narrative; both Jerome Wood and Mark Häberlein, for example, refer to "William Henry, Lancaster's master gunsmith" or to "the gunsmith William Henry" when they discuss his activities during the Revolution as if, during these years, he remained involved in the same gunmaking activities he had been during the 1750s. A variety of factors, then, have conspired to promote the image of William Henry as a gunsmith who, as William Heller wrote, "established a factory in 1752 for the making of firearms" and whose "muskets and rifles were in great demand during the Revolutionary War."⁴

Discarding the picture of Henry as a career gunsmith enables us to look anew at his remarkable career. As Rosalind Beiler has written of Caspar Wistar, William Henry's "success was not a foregone conclusion." One means of raising oneself from "craftsman" to "gentleman"—land

³ The standard biography, Francis Jordan Jr., *The Life of William Henry, of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1729–1786: Patriot, Military Officer, Inventor of the Steamboat* (Lancaster, PA, 1910), written by a great-great-grandson, relied on a grandson's earlier study: Mathew S. Henry, "The Life of William Henry" (typescript, 1860), American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia. The four subsequent generations of Henry gunmakers were William Henry II (1757–1821); his sons J. Joseph Henry (1786–1836) and William Henry III (1794–1878); James Henry (1809–95), only child of J. J. Henry; and James Henry's son, Granville Henry (1832–1912). The vast correspondence of John Woolf Jordan with James and Granville Henry is at Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE; Moravian Historical Society, Nazareth, PA; and Jacobsburg Historical Society, Boulton, PA.

⁴ Jerome H. Wood Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1790* (Harrisburg, PA, 1979), 146, 153; Mark Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism: Congregational Life and Religious Diversity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1820* (University Park, PA, 2009), 141; William J. Heller, *History of Northampton County (Pennsylvania) and the Grand Valley of the Lehigh*, 3 vols. (New York, 1920), 1:141.

speculation—seems not to have been part of Henry’s social transformation.⁵ It was very unlikely in colonial Pennsylvania that a gunsmith would rise above his status as a mechanic, let alone rise to positions of public responsibility. The career of Matthias Roesser (1708–71), with whom Henry apprenticed in the 1740s, is instructive. Roesser seems to have had a long career in his trade. The inventory taken at his death indicates that he was capable of producing every aspect of a rifle, though he may not have regularly used the full range of these skills. Like many gunsmiths, Roesser diversified his activities to make ends meet. Listed on Lancaster’s tax roll in 1759 and in 1770 as a gunsmith, Moravian church registers consistently identify him as *schlosser*, or locksmith. Two of his sons became gunsmiths, one moving from Lancaster to Hagerstown and then Mercersburg in search of work. Roesser typifies Lancaster’s gunsmiths in the years before the Revolution. These men made a living at their trade and trained the next generation, but none escaped the intense daily labor required of the gunsmith. Although Joe Kindig’s *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in Its Golden Age* (1960) taught writers to emphasize the artistry of the eighteenth-century rifle (and the varied skills that gunsmiths needed to work in multiple media: wood, iron, and brass), the gunsmith’s trade involved “long hours and hard work”: forging and welding barrels; crafting locks, each with many parts; carving stocks from aged curly maple; and constant repair work, especially the “freshing” of worn barrels.⁶ William Henry managed to leave all this—the forging, the hammering, the sawing, and, above all, the filing—behind. How did he succeed at moving beyond gunsmithing?

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⁵ Rosalind J. Beiler, *Immigrant and Entrepreneur: The Atlantic World of Caspar Wistar, 1650–1750* (University Park, PA, 2008), 3; Melissah J. Pawlikowski, “Agency and Opportunity: Isaac Craig, the Craftsman Who Became a Gentleman,” in *Pennsylvania’s Revolution*, ed. William Pencak (University Park, PA, 2010), 231–57.

⁶ Kindig, *Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle*, 9; Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Colonial Craftsman* (New York, 1950), 154. An influential film, *Gunsmith of Williamsburg* (1969), revealed the expertise involved in crafting each aspect of a rifle: the film also demonstrates, if inadvertently, the intense physical labor of gunsmithing. For Roesser, see Henry Kauffman, *The American Gunsmith* (Morgantown, PA, 1998), 11; Lancaster Congregational Catalogs, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA; Lancaster County Tax Lists, Lancaster County Historical Society, Lancaster, PA. For many years researchers debated whether the colonial gunsmith “by virtue of his isolation and the primitive conditions under which he lived and worked, was forced by circumstances to become a self-reliant and truly individualistic craftsman” or whether he used locally produced or imported components (Brown, *Firearms in Colonial America*, 244). See also Henry J. Kauffman, “Jacob Dickert, Rifle Maker,” *Pennsylvania Folklife* 40, no. 2 (1990): 75.

William Henry's father seems to have been a gunsmith. A John Henry, who died in Lancaster in the mid-1740s, possessed gun barrels, locks, and "a parcel of Small to[o]ls for Making of Guns." Henry noted in a short spiritual memoir that after his father died, he "came to Lancaster and entered apprenticeship with Matth. Roeser, to learn the trade of gunsmith." His memoir makes almost no other mention of his gunsmithing activities, although it does reveal, in passing, that his house in the center of Lancaster included a "workroom," presumably the space he used to repair or craft rifles (and later, as we will see, to work on inventions).⁷ The few documents that refer to William Henry during the 1750s describe him at work repairing—not manufacturing—guns. This is not surprising, since, as many historians suggest, the primary labor of most gunsmiths at this time involved the maintenance rather than the production of firearms. When in June 1756 Captain Joseph Shippen led a company of Pennsylvanians from Lancaster to Shamokin to build Fort Augusta, he took "Wm Henry with" him "to repair" his men's weapons: Henry was ordered "to do every Thing with regard to the Pennsylvanian arms." The variety of gunsmithing skills that Roesser had taught Henry are evident from Shippen's remark that Henry had "taken a great deal of pains to rectifie [the arms], & bore & straiten the Barrels." A receipt for payment to Henry for some of "the Work done by himself and Men at Harris's Ferry and Shamokin" identifies him simply as "Mr. William Henry, of Lancaster County, Gun Smith," and this occupational label accompanies most of the references that survive from this period; in 1754 a Moravian diarist recorded the arrival at Shamokin of "a gunsmith from Lancaster" named "Billy Henry." Another receipt, which carries William Henry's certification that Henry Willis of York had been paid for "thirty five Days use of his Boreing Mill and gun Smith Shop at ten Shillings per Day," suggests that working for Shippen confronted Henry—who surely possessed equipment to bore barrels by hand—with a quantity of work, and an urgent deadline, that made it desirable to use water power instead.⁸

⁷ John Henry Inventory [May 27, 1747], Lancaster County Historical Society; William Henry, "Memoir" (1786), ed. Scott Paul Gordon, in Gordon, "Entangled by the World: William Henry of Lancaster and 'Mixed' Living in Moravian Town and Country Congregations," *Journal of Moravian History* 8 (2010): 44–45. Henry recorded that his father (who was named John Henry) died "in my fifteenth year," which would suggest he died in 1744 or 1745. At the end of his own life, Henry may have misremembered the date of his father's death; or, this inventory may have been taken a few years after Henry's father's death or not be that of Henry's father.

⁸ Joseph Shippen to Edward Shippen, June 2, 1756, in "Military Letters of Captain Joseph Shippen of the Provincial Service, 1756–1758," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 36

It is important to consider the significance of the place, Lancaster, where Henry spent these early years as a gunsmith. Henry did not live in one of Pennsylvania's many small towns or villages, nor was he working in a communal, egalitarian Moravian settlement (as his eldest son would). Lancaster was a highly competitive and cosmopolitan environment. Founded in 1730, Lancaster quickly became the largest inland town in colonial America, with some two thousand inhabitants in 1755 and over three thousand a decade later. The unexpected annihilation in July 1755 of Edward Braddock's army as it marched on Fort Duquesne, however, reminded residents that, unlike the eastern urban communities such as Philadelphia that they emulated, Lancaster was situated in Pennsylvania's backcountry. "Women from Carlisle, Lancaster, and Reading," provincial secretary Richard Peters reported in October 1755, were "leaving their Families" to flee to Philadelphia. "Who can dare to Stay on their Plantations betwixt here and Philadelphia," wondered Edward Shippen, Lancaster's leading citizen, "if [the] enemy Should take possession of this town and destroy the People"? Lancaster's residents believed that the Indians planned to make "Winter Quarters at Lancaster," and at one point rumors spread that "1500 French and Indians had burnt Lancaster Town to the Ground." But if during wartime Lancaster was a vulnerable frontier town, its size and its prosperity, which stemmed from the town's central role in the Indian trade, differentiated it from other backcountry communities. Lancaster merchants such as Joseph Simon—who would take William Henry on as a business partner—funded ventures that sent goods and food west and received in turn the furs that were sent to partners in New York, Philadelphia, and London. Thomas Barton, Lancaster's Anglican minister, described the town as a "very respectable & wealthy Place," but of course only a small portion of its population was prosperous. Lancaster was diverse economically, as well as ethnically and religiously; the Jewish population was large enough to sustain a kosher

(1912): 386; William Clapham to Robert Hunter Morris, June 11, 1756, *Pennsylvania Archives* (Philadelphia and Harrisburg, PA, 1852–1935), 1st ser., 2:664; "Provincial Commissioners: Orders for Payment," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven, CT, 1959), 7:27; Shamokin Congregational Diary, Apr. 20, 1754, Moravian Archives; Norris of Fairhill Manuscripts, box 33, Loan Office Accounts, 1743–1758, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. That Henry traveled across the Susquehanna to do this work suggests that Lancaster County had no boring mill at this time. For repairing versus making guns, see Brown, *Firearms in Colonial America*, 244; Jim Mullins, *Of Sorts for Provincials: American Weapons of the French and Indian War* (Elk River, MN, 2008), 41. Despite a family legend, Henry was not the armorer for Braddock's 1755 expedition: see Scott Paul Gordon, *Two William Henrys: Indian and White Brothers in Arms and Faith in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Nazareth, PA, 2010).

butcher; a wide variety of trades and craftsmen flourished; and, perhaps most important to Henry's early career, the town had a visible elite tied to the provincial government through marriage and business interests.⁹

The sons of William Penn and their supporters have not fared well with many historians, who have exposed the proprietors' 1737 scheme to defraud the Delaware Indians of land and have sided with Benjamin Franklin and the Pennsylvania Assembly in their decades-long struggle with the arrogant Thomas Penn. But in the 1750s the Proprietary Party was the ruling elite in Pennsylvania, and nobody expected this fact to change. Most ambitious young men in colonial Pennsylvania would have aspired to join this elite, represented in Lancaster by a group of English-speaking families—Shippens, Burds, Atlees, and Yeateses—who intermarried and promoted one another through patronage and trade. All these families owned pews in Barton's Anglican St. James Church; Barton described them to a supervisor in England as "people puffed up with a notion of their superior knowledge, fortunes and families [who] seem apprehensive of ranking with the meaner sort." William Henry prudently rented a pew in Barton's church in 1759 for thirty shillings a year. Renting this pew reveals how Henry chose to dispose of some of the disposable income that he had earned as a gunsmith.¹⁰

Henry's choice of the Anglican Church is significant. His memoir indicates that he was "trained" in the Presbyterian Church. He came to Lancaster in the mid- to late 1740s, apprenticed to the Moravian Roeser

⁹ Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, quoted in Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies, and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America* (New York, 1988), 334; Edward Shippen to William Shippen, Nov. 29, 1755, in Shippen Family Papers, 1671–1936, reel 3, Library of Congress, Washington, DC; "Extract of a Letter from Bohemia, in Cecil County, Maryland, November 10, 1755," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Nov. 20, 1755; "At a Council held at Philadelphia," in *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania from the Organization to the Termination of the Proprietary Government*, in *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, ed. Samuel Hazard (Harrisburg, PA, 1838–53), 6:673; Thomas Barton to Daniel Burton, Nov. 16, 1764, quoted in James P. Myers Jr., *The Ordeal of Thomas Barton: Anglican Missionary in the Pennsylvania Backcountry, 1755–1780* (Bethlehem, PA, 2010), 212. For eighteenth-century Lancaster, see Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads* and Häberlein, *Practice of Pluralism*.

¹⁰ G. B. Warden, "The Proprietary Group in Pennsylvania, 1754–1764," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 21 (1964): 367–89; Stephen Brobeck, "Revolutionary Change in Colonial Philadelphia: The Brief Life of the Proprietary Gentry," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 33 (1976): 410–34; Thomas Barton to Philip Bearcroft, Dec. 6, 1760, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, Letter Books, ser. B, vol. 21, no. 8, Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies, Rhodes House Library, Oxford, UK; H. M. J. Klein and William F. Diller, *The History of St. James' Church* (Lancaster, PA, 1944), 78. For recent accounts of the Penns, see Jennings, *Empire of Fortune*, and Steven Craig Harper, *Promised Land: Penn's Holy Experiment, the Walking Purchase, and the Dispossession of Delawares, 1600–1763* (Bethlehem, PA, 2006).

and, after a brief involvement with Quakers, joined the Moravian Church in 1765. But Henry did not join the Moravians during his apprenticeship or in the decade after, a choice that may have been determined by Henry's social aspirations. In the 1740s and 1750s the Moravians were, as Henry himself recalled, a "despised people." When in 1745 the Moravian Laurentius Nyberg hosted a synod in Lancaster's courthouse, townspeople cursed him as "the Wounds-preacher, the Blood-Preacher," and an angry woman pelted Bishop Augustus Spangenberg with mud. In 1756, the Proprietary spokesman and provost of the College of Philadelphia, William Smith, contended that it would be a "disgrace" to elect to office any Moravians, who befriended enemy Indians and "for ought we know may be Popish"; the previous year, Shippen tried to stop the governor from appointing two Moravians as magistrates, since they were "men not of a suitable Turn for such a Station." Henry joined the Moravian Church only after an internal struggle that pitted his spiritual yearnings against his social aspirations: "I reproached the dear God with all that I had already had to endure, since I had left the Anglican Church and gone to the Quakers, and [said] that it would be much worse if I were to join this despised people; surely he would not want me to prostrate myself again."¹¹ Although Henry does not elaborate on what he "endure[d]" after leaving the Anglican Church, his discussion reveals his awareness of the different social rankings of Lancaster's various churches. By attending the English-speaking Anglican Church in the 1750s, Henry set himself apart from the German-speaking gunsmith community in which he had apprenticed.

Henry made himself eligible, in effect, for continued patronage from Lancaster's elite. He must have impressed the Shippens with his gunsmithing work during the summer of 1756. Two summers later, during General John Forbes's expedition, Henry acted again as armorer, this time for Virginia troops, and traveled to Winchester to repair arms. He reported to William Byrd that he "does not think the old Guns, (about 320) are fit for Service, for they have been in the Magazeen . . . ever since the Reign

¹¹ Henry, "Memoir," 50; William Smith to William Vernon, quoted in Laurie M. Wolfe, "William Edmonds," in *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania: A Biographical Dictionary*, vol. 3, 1757–1775, ed. Craig W. Horle (Harrisburg, PA, 2005), 457–58; Edward Shippen to William Allen, June 17, 1756, Shippen Family Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. For Henry and the Moravian Church, see Gordon, "Entangled by the World," 7–52. For attitudes toward eighteenth-century Moravians, see Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and the Challenge of Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2007).

of King William.” George Washington, then a colonel in Virginia’s militia, commanded Henry to “set about cleaning and putting all the Virginia Arms in the best repair you can,” specifying how Henry should prioritize his work (“Such Pieces as want Locks, or in other respects much repair, let be your last care”) and how to pack the guns. A recently discovered document, which reveals that in 1762 Henry owned land along the road that Forbes carved on his march toward Fort Duquesne (in what is now Bedford, Pennsylvania), suggests that Henry may have received land in compensation for his service as armorer to Forbes.¹²

A position of responsibility, such as armorer, could be a career maker. Henry may have “lobbied” for this assignment, as Carlisle’s elite did for military contracts at this time. Certainly he could not have received any such patronage without the support of Lancaster’s elite. Edward Shippen, who as paymaster and commissary of British and provincial troops under Forbes and Colonel Henry Bouquet “work[ed] tirelessly . . . to organize the resources” of the Lancaster region, may have recommended Henry. Henry had served Shippen’s son in summer 1756, as we have seen, and in the following spring Joseph Shippen again patronized Henry, who sent various fabrics to Fort Augusta: “green Thread,” “3 pair of Britches,” and large amounts of linen, dyed green. These brief traces reveal a continuing relationship between the powerful Shippens and the young Henry. Edward Shippen even trusted Henry to carry important letters to England when Henry traveled there in 1760.¹³

¹² Memoranda, June 12, 1758, in *The Forbes Expedition*, in *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. S. K. Stevens et al. (Harrisburg, PA, 1951–94), 2:79; William Byrd to John Forbes, June 23, 1758, in *The Papers of George Washington: Colonial Series*, ed. W. W. Abbot et al. (Charlottesville, 1983–95), 5:236n3; George Washington to [William] Henry, Armourer, June 24, 1758, in *Papers of George Washington: Colonial Series*, 5:240; “No. 2965: William Henry Hath Made Application for three hundred Acres of Land . . . Dated Philadelphia this Third Day of March 1767,” Private Collection. See also Records of the Land Office, Warrant Applications Register, West Side Applications Register, 1766–1769, RG-17, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. At his death, Henry seems to have owned a “lot” in “Fredericks Town,” which his family tried to sell (William Henry [II] to Ann Henry, July 12, 1787, Society Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania).

¹³ Judith Ridner, *A Town In-Between: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the Early Mid-Atlantic Interior* (Philadelphia, 2010), 89; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 176; Receipt, James Burd and Joseph Shippen to William Henry, Apr. 15, 1757, Burd-Shippen Papers, ser. 5: Receipts, American Philosophical Society; see also a payment to William Henry, for Sundries for the Use of Fort Augusta, Oct. 11, 1758, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th ser., 6:4881. Shippen told a friend that “Mr. William Henry” had “left this Borough yesterday morning to . . . sail from Philadelphia to London”: Shippen to William Logan, Dec. 8, 1760, Shippen Family Papers. For Edward Shippen as patron, see Wayne L. Bockelman, “Local Politics in Pre-Revolutionary Lancaster,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 97 (1973): 45–74.

These varied connections with the Shippen family are suggestive. It seems that Henry realized he could use his gunsmithing skills to forge cultural and political connections. This is not an obvious thing for him to have done. Henry could have used his gunsmithing expertise, as other Lancaster gunsmiths did, to produce and repair arms from his Lancaster shop for a primarily local clientele and eventually earn a reputation as a master gunsmith. Such a career could have sustained him over the course of his working life. But Henry seems to have recognized early on that the path to advancement in colonial Pennsylvania was through providing services, on a larger scale, to elite clients. Presumably through a combination of individual initiative and help from others, who perhaps preferred to patronize an English-speaking, rather than a German-speaking, gunsmith, Henry secured high-visibility gunsmithing positions that led to further patronage. Such positions involved risk, since further patronage would be withheld if the jobs were not done well; these assignments also required Henry, perhaps for the first time, to hire and supervise others. It is notable that, even while he was practicing the gunsmith's trade, Henry was diversifying the ways he could help the Shippens and, more generally, the colonial government, by supplying Fort Augusta with other necessary items, such as linens and clothes. This early instance of Henry acting as a trader reinforces the possibility that he aimed to make himself into a man who could be relied on to undertake major and varied tasks. Henry used his gunsmithing, in effect, as a means to form connections with the Proprietary elite in Lancaster, to insert himself into a patronage network.

Henry's marriage, too, may have helped him join Lancaster's cultural elite. Ann Henry (1734–99), the daughter of New Jersey Quakers, came to Lancaster when her widowed mother remarried Joseph Rose, an Irish immigrant who became a Lancaster lawyer in 1750. A “good Greek & Latin scholar” and a “deep read lawyer,” Rose had a large library by which William Henry educated himself, and, it is likely through acquaintance with him that Henry met his wife. The 1756 marriage allied the gunsmith with the educated lawyer, but Ann Henry contributed more than family ties. She was a “seeker,” dissatisfied with the religion in which she had been raised, and it was she who first visited the Moravian church where the Henrys found a spiritual home. She bore thirteen children between 1757 and 1777, seven of whom reached adulthood. In 1777, when the British occupied Philadelphia and Pennsylvania's government settled in Lancaster, Ann Henry's home became the residence of both state treas-

urer David Rittenhouse and Thomas Paine. In 1786, after her husband's death, Ann Henry became Lancaster County's treasurer, carrying out all necessary duties and receiving a salary. She continued in this position until 1791.¹⁴ This was an extraordinary position for a woman in Revolutionary America, and the willingness of local and state authorities to entrust her with this responsibility—which, being both public and financial, challenged conventional attitudes towards women's proper roles—suggests that men such as Rittenhouse had gained confidence in her abilities during their acquaintance with her and her husband in the previous decades.

Henry's other activities in the 1750s reveal his social aspirations. When he involved himself in Lancaster's Juliana Library Company, organized in 1759 and incorporated by Thomas Penn in 1763, Henry emulated Lancaster's elite. Shippen, Barton, and Ross all served on the library's original board of directors, which by 1761 also included the physician Samuel Boude and the lawyer William Atlee. Joining the Library Company was a good strategy to gain business connections or social standing; Joseph Simon, Henry's partner, joined despite his inability to read or write. By 1766, Henry was on the board of directors, and the library itself was moved to his home. The extraordinary *Death of Socrates* (1756), which Henry commissioned from the young Benjamin West, also signals Henry's attempt to ally with the Proprietary group; the painting sides with the Proprietary Party in its struggles with the Quaker-led assembly over efforts to arm the backcountry during the early months of the French and Indian War. The simple fact of this commission testifies to Henry's desire to emulate his "betters" in the Lancaster pecking order. At a time when few eighteenth-century craftsmen, as Harry Rubenstein writes, "could afford the cost of a painted portrait," Henry had West produce portraits of himself and of his wife—and an historical subject, unprecedented in colonial America. The *Socrates's* history reveals much about Henry's connections at this period. William Smith saw the picture in Lancaster and, impressed, launched West on a European career

¹⁴ John Joseph Henry, Genealogical note (ca. 1808?), William Henry Papers, 1759–1826, 2:132, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Henry, "Life of William Henry," 2. There is no reliable account of Ann Henry, but see Adelaide Brooks Hall, "Ann Wood Henry, 1732–1798," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 64 (1960): 223–26, and George Steinman, "Ann Wood Henry: Lancaster County's Woman Treasurer," *Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 1 (1896): 69–71.

that culminated in West's tenure as president of Britain's Royal Academy.¹⁵ Perhaps Smith was familiar enough with Henry to have visited his house and noticed the unusual painting. More likely, news of the painting drew Smith to Henry's house. *The Death of Socrates* both reveals Henry's atti-



Benjamin West's *Death of Socrates*. Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection.

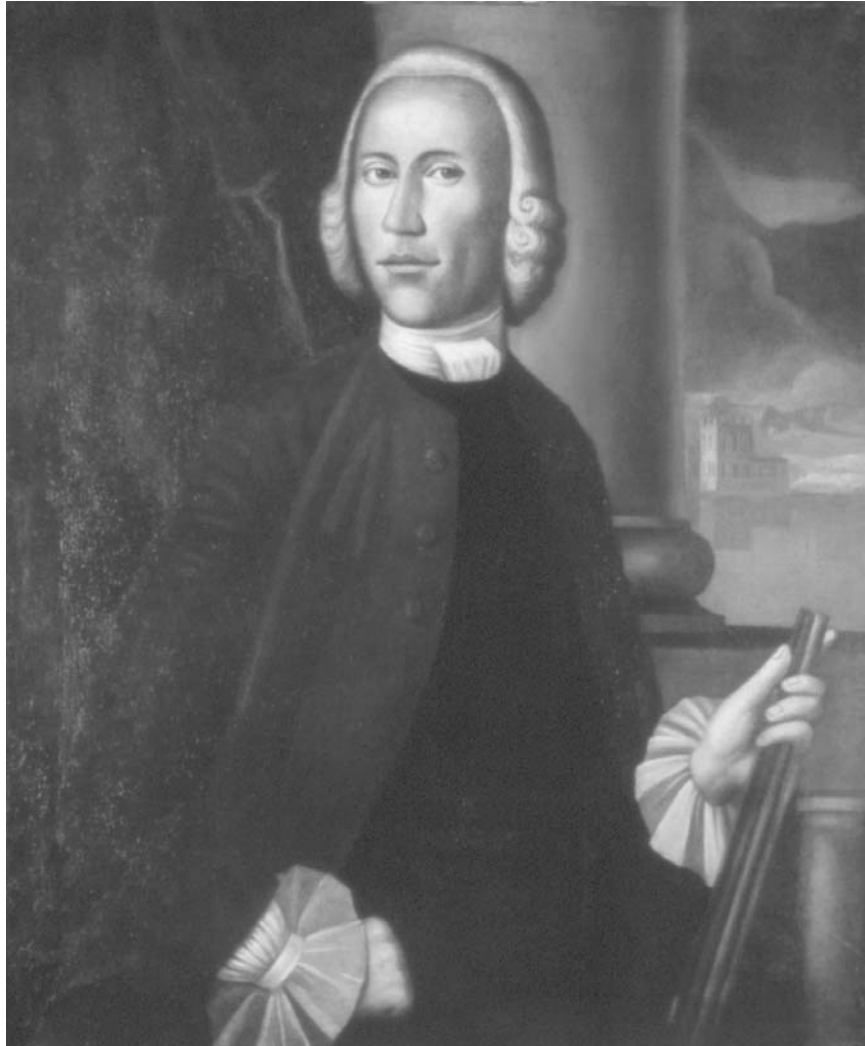
¹⁵ Charles I. Landis, "The Juliana Library Company in Lancaster," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 43 (1919): 24–52, 163–81, 228–50 (for Simon's illiteracy, see "Simon Gratz, Joseph Gratz, and Jacob Gratz, Administrators of Michael Gratz, deceased, v. Levi Philips, Leah Philips, and Beliah Cohen," in *Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania*, vol. 1, comp. William Rawle, Esq., Charles B. Penrose, and Frederick Watts [Harrisburg, PA, 1830], 1: 340); Scott Paul Gordon, "Martial Art: Benjamin West's *The Death of Socrates*, Colonial Politics, and the Puzzles of Patronage," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 65 (2008): 65–100; Harry R. Rubenstein, "With Hammer and Hand: Working-Class Occupational Portraits," in *American Artisans: Crafting Social Identity, 1750–1850*, ed. Howard B. Rock, Paul A. Gilje, and Robert Asher (Baltimore, 1995), 179; John Galt, *Life and Studies of Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy of London, prior to His Arrival in London* (Philadelphia, 1816), 50–51. The *Socrates*, which remained in the Henry family from 1756 to 1989, was bequeathed to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in the will of Mary Henry Stites (1908–89).

tudinal alignment with Lancaster's Proprietary elite and served as a catalyst to forge closer ties with them.

Both Henry's activities as a "mechanic" and his cultural aspirations, then, gained him attention and patronage from Lancaster's elite. West's 1756 portrait of Henry registers the tension between Henry's occupation as gunsmith and his aspirations to join his betters. Henry appears as a gunsmith, holding the sort of firearm that he had been trained to repair and produce. But his attire points in a different direction. The high collar, elaborate cuffs, and elegant wig testify to cultural ambitions that do not typically follow from the "craftsman" identity of gunsmith. This odd juxtaposition is evident when one compares West's painting with John Singleton Copley's 1768 portrait of another craftsman, the silversmith Paul Revere. In Copley's painting, the open collar, exposed sleeves, and natural hair (no wig), signal Revere's working-class credentials.¹⁶ The Henry portrait suppressed these features; it displays, instead, Henry's cultural aspirations beyond gunsmith.

I am not suggesting that Henry in the 1750s wanted to shed his identity as gunsmith because he already aimed at the sort of public roles he would play in the 1770s and 1780s. The desire to sweat less at the forge was motivation enough. Most eighteenth-century individuals worked with their hands, but few would have chosen to do so if they had an alternative. Henry harbored no disgust toward a life of labor or the occupation of a gunsmith; long after he left the trade, he apprenticed his eldest son to an accomplished riflemaker and, a decade later, sent a younger son to apprentice with this older brother. But many others openly disdained those who worked with their hands—in 1769 William Henry Drayton disparaged men who "knew only . . . how to cut up a beast in a market to the best advantage" or "to cobble an old shoe in the neatest manner"—and craftsmen recognized that they were valued less than those who worked with their heads. Copley noted in 1767 that Americans considered painting only "a usefull trade . . . like that of a Carpenter tailor or shewmaker, not as one of the most Noble Arts in the world." The examples of Copley and Henry show that those who performed manual labor could become merchants or even gentlemen, but no

¹⁶ The portraits of Ann and William Henry are in the Philadelphia History Museum. Copley's painting is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. See Theodore E. Stebbins Jr., Carol Troyen, and Trevor J. Fairbrother, *A New World: Masterpieces of American Painting, 1760–1910* (Boston, 1983), 198.



William Henry. Portrait by Benjamin West. Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection.



Ann Henry. Portrait by Benjamin West. Courtesy of the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania Collection.

social mobility was possible if, as Carl Bridenbaugh put it, they “clung to leather-apron ways and appearances.”¹⁷

While it is difficult to know Henry’s ambitions in these years, whether he hoped merely to leave the forge for the shop or imagined occupying positions of authority in Lancaster, he surely recognized that any advancement in colonial Pennsylvania would require him to transcend the occupation of gunsmith. Benjamin Franklin, who retired from his printing business at age forty-two, had shown the way. Franklin recalled that it was only when he “disengag’d . . . from private Business” that “the Publick, now considering me as a Man of Leisure, la[id] hold of me for their Purposes.” The logic is explained well by Gordon Wood: those “who had occupations and had to work with their hands for a living lacked the proper qualifications for virtuous and disinterested public leadership.” Henry may have had his eye on Franklin—and on his strategy for climbing out of his identity as mechanic—all along. In 1768, Henry asked Cadwalader Evans to send a “draft” of one of his inventions to Franklin, then in London.¹⁸ Whether he deliberately emulated Franklin or not, the arc of Henry’s career resembles Franklin’s: he began as a mechanic, established cultural credentials in Lancaster by involving himself in a library company and working on a variety of inventions, and devoted the latter part of his life to public service in the Revolutionary cause. Both Henry and Franklin left their early occupations as mechanics as soon as possible, and Henry was no more a career gunsmith than Benjamin Franklin was a career printer.

In late 1760, carrying letters from Edward Shippen, William Henry sailed for London. The trip stemmed, Henry stated, from a “partnership in the iron business” established in 1759 “with a gentleman in Lancaster.” Thomas Barton wrote that Henry “goes to England to settle a Correspondence & Trade, & intends to return in the Spring.” John Joseph Henry remembered that his father, “having made a tolerable fortune,”

¹⁷ John Singleton Copley to [Benjamin West or Captain R. G. Bruce], 1767, in *Letters and Papers of John Singleton Copley and Henry Pelham, 1739–1776* (Boston, 1914), 65–66; William Henry Drayton in *South Carolina Gazette*, Sept. 21, 1769, quoted in Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789–1815* (New York, 2009), 22; Bridenbaugh, *Colonial Craftsman*, 158.

¹⁸ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography*, ed. Daniel Aaron (New York, 1990), 116; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 21–22 (cf. 27, 350; also Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* [New York, 2004], 55–56); Cadwalader Evans to Benjamin Franklin, June 11, 1769, in *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 16:156.

“entered into trade.” He had not made enough money as a gunsmith to abandon business altogether; he could not become a gentleman as the printer Franklin had. But, as Thomas Doerflinger notes, “merchants had higher status than artisans” because “they used their brains instead of their hands to make money,” and Henry was stepping out of one identity into another. In early 1761, Joseph Shippen, in London and eager to hear from his family, wrote to his father that he hoped that “Mr. Wm Henry the Gunsmith . . . has taken Care of my Letters,” indicating that he still thought of Henry as a gunsmith.¹⁹ But at that very moment, Henry was fashioning himself into something different.

Joseph Simon (1712–1804), one of Lancaster’s “principal Merchant[s],” according to Barton, helped Henry leave his occupation of gunsmith. Simon was forty-seven years old, and Henry had just turned thirty. Simon likely provided much of the needed capital, receiving in exchange the benefits of the social connections that his young partner had accumulated. Moravian records document a fire in “the store house and shop of Joseph Simon, the Jew, & the buildings that belonged to it” in December 1764:

All of it burned to the ground. Since the wind was still and snow was on the roofs, the fire could not spread further, even though it was quite large and the people were fighting it mightily, otherwise the whole row of houses from the corner to the courthouse would have been endangered. William Henry who is associated with Simon was also a victim of this. They suffered losses of £3,000 although many goods could still be carried out of there, but much of that was also looted.

This report registers the community’s perception that the store belonged to *Simon*, with whom Henry was “associated.” The report’s tally of the men’s losses provides some measure of the capital that had been invested in the store. Like many wealthy men in colonial America, Simon and Henry also functioned as *de facto* banks—as a source of credit—for many of Lancaster’s leading citizens; Barton, for example, drew his ministerial

¹⁹ Henry, “Memoir,” 46; Thomas Barton to Philip Bearcroft, Dec. 6, 1760; John Joseph Henry, *An Accurate and Interesting Account of the Hardships and Sufferings of that Band of Heroes, who Traversed the Wilderness in the Campaign against Quebec in 1775* (Lancaster, PA, 1812), 215; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986) 37; Joseph Shippen to Edward Shippen, Mar. 17, 1761, Shippen Family Papers, 10:68.

salary from Simon and Henry. The partnership persisted throughout the 1770s and perhaps into the 1780s.²⁰

By partnering with Simon, Henry inserted himself into, and gained access to, a trading and communication network that reached across the Atlantic and also into western Pennsylvania and the Ohio Country. Simon had a stake in many enterprises. He partnered in 1757 with Samuel Boude in a potash business; in 1759 with the German blacksmith John Miller to make horsebells and beaver traps; and with Miller and Mordecai Moses Mordecai to produce distilled liquors and other spirits. By 1764 he and Benjamin Nathan opened a store in Heidelberg (now Shaefferstown, Pennsylvania) that sold clothing, ironware, gunpowder, and glass. He received government contracts during the French and Indian War and again during the Revolutionary War. Most crucial was Simon's involvement in the western Indian trade. Simon owned a house in Carlisle and, by 1760, had a store at Fort Pitt. He purchased goods from Philadelphia merchants and sent them west through Lancaster and Fort Pitt to the Ohio Country, where his men would trade with settlers and Indians. The furs they purchased would pass back through Lancaster on their way to Philadelphia and across the Atlantic. One load in 1762 included 975 fall deerskins, 501 raccoon pelts, 279 summer deerskins, and 173 beaver pelts.²¹

Simon and Henry's "iron business" imported a variety of merchandise from England. A 1762 advertisement in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* listed some two hundred items, including anvils, brass candlesticks, scythes, compasses, "childrens knives," enameled or paper instrument cases, brass mortars and pestles, silver matches, coffee mills, "and numerous other articles, too tedious to mention." The partners supplied parts to local gunsmiths, including Henry's younger brother; a 1765 invoice shows that

²⁰ Thomas Barton to William Johnson, July 22, 1767, in *Papers of Sir William Johnson* (Albany, NY, 1921–65), 5:604–5; Lancaster Congregational Diary, Dec. 21, 1764, Moravian Archives; Diane E. Wenger, *A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania: Creating Economic Networks in Early America, 1790–1807* (University Park, PA, 2008), 47. A translation mistake led earlier writers to claim that in 1759 the business relation was dissolved, rather than established (Jordan, *Life of William Henry*, 34) and even recent writers (James B. Whisker, *Arms Makers of Colonial America* [Selinsgrove, PA, 1992], 103) state that the partnership dissolved in the 1770s. But Joseph Simon continued to have an account with Simon & Henry in 1783 and the Philadelphia merchant John Morton requested money from "Simon & Henry, Merchants, Lancaster" in 1784 (Henry Family Papers, 1758–1909, Acc. No. 1209, box 11, folder 8, Hagley Museum and Library).

²¹ For Simon, see Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 133–35, and David Brener, "Lancaster's First Jewish Community, 1715 to 1804: The Era of Joseph Simon," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 80 (1976): 211–322.

John Henry obtained 340 cocks, 359 cock pins, 350 tumblers, 258 fuzee main springs, 225 forged breeches, 492 filed side pins, and 700 forged side pins. Other surviving records offer a glimpse at the sort of items that other customers purchased from Simon and Henry: in 1767 and 1768, Captain John Stewart purchased brass knob locks, hinges, pulleys, buttons, a shovel, and a frying pan; in 1765, Colonel James Burd purchased nails, a chisel, a half-inch auger, and an iron lock; in 1767, Adam Simon Kuhn and others purchased (in bulk) nails, screws, and springs “for the Use of the [Lutheran] Church”; and in 1769, the Juliana Library Company ordered “tin and pewter work.”²² These few invoices demonstrate that a variety of Lancaster’s citizens, elite and ordinary, and from different religious backgrounds, patronized Simon and Henry.

It seems unlikely that Henry was still working as a gunsmith at this time, and no document that has survived refers to Henry as a gunsmith after 1761. William Henry may have helped establish his brother John as a gunsmith, however, perhaps transferring the tools he had used and directing customers his way. Jasper Yeates patronized Simon and Henry for “Metal Jacks for the Window Blinds,” for “Hinges” and nails, for a “Blade for a Wood Saw,” and for quires of paper. But when Yeates needed a gunsmith’s help—for mending locks or for “making a pair of Bullet Moulds for my Pistols”—he went to *John* Henry. A 1765 Lancaster tax list identifies John Henry as a “gunsmith”; it records William Henry as an “ironmonger.” The 1773 tax list, again noting John Henry as “gunsmith,” describes “William Henry, Esq.” as a “store keep[er].” Lancaster’s authorities called on John Henry, not William, to inventory and appraise the possessions of Lancaster gunsmiths when they died.²³

Henry had stepped out of an occupation defined by manual labor. From this point on, Henry worked with his hands as men with more leisure did, tinkering, experimenting, and inventing. Again he followed Franklin’s path; “When I disengag’d myself . . . from private Business,” Franklin recalled, “I flatter’d myself that, by the sufficient tho’ moderate

²² “Mr. John Henry Bought of Simons & Henry” [Jan. 24, 1765], “Captain John Stewart To Simons & Henry” [June 6, 1768], “Kuhn, Hubley, and Lowman to Simon & Henry” [May 30, 1769], William Henry Papers, 2:9–10, 13; “Col. James Burd to Simon & Henry” [Aug. 20, 1765], Burd-Shippen Papers, ser. 5: Receipts; Landis, “Juliana Library Company,” 36.

²³ Daybook of Jasper Yeates, 1766–67, Yeates, Lancaster County Historical Society Collection, 1699–1934, MG-205, folder 31, Lancaster County Historical Society; Lancaster Tax [1765?], Lancaster County Manuscripts, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; “Returns for the Sixteenth Eighteen-Penny Tax for the County of Lancaster, 1773,” *Pennsylvania Archives*, 3rd ser., 17:458; James Chambers Inventory, Mar. 12, 1764, Lancaster County Historical Society.

Fortune I had acquir'd, I had secur'd Leisure during the rest of my Life, for Philosophical Studies and Amusements. . . . I proceeded in my Electrical Experiments with great Alacrity." Henry's experiments with the steam engine in the early 1760s are well known, as is his design for a self-regulating flue that he sent to the American Philosophical Society. He also invented the screw auger, testing his design on turnips and later creating an iron version that would bore wood. Entirely forgotten is the fact that Henry, like Franklin, experimented with electricity. In 1768, a Moravian couple from Lititz brought "their crippled daughter" to Lancaster "to have Brother Henry to try an electrification on her," and after Henry's death his children tried to recover an "Electric machine" and "artificial Magnet made by our father." John Joseph Henry remembered his father's "laboratory." In the 1760s, William Henry

entered into trade, but his inclinations led him into chymical experiments. His evenings and mornings were devoted to the laboratory For the instruction of his children, my father would discourse upon the subjects of science and particularly of chymistry, which was his favorite theme, and in which the names of Franklin and Priestley, were sure to stand foremost.

John Joseph Henry suggests that, although his father had to spend his days in the marketplace, his "inclinations" drew him to the life of the mind. In 1783 a later visitor, Johann David Schoepf, drew the same conclusion more explicitly: "the experiments, magnetick and electrical, which employ the leisure hours of Mr. Henry in a useful and agreeable way . . . show him to be a thinking and self-examining man."²⁴ In his "leisure," William Henry displayed the "gentleman" he was becoming.

By the early 1760s, the wars with the Indians and French—which had increased the need for gunsmiths, as well as for arms—had ended. Nobody anticipated that a new conflict a dozen years later would generate an even more urgent need for weapons. Henry's brother John was a practicing gunsmith in Lancaster, and another brother was by 1766 at Fort Pitt repairing guns for the firm of Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan. William Henry had become a prosperous merchant who had the leisure

²⁴ Franklin, *Autobiography*, 116; Joseph Hutchins, "The American Screw Auger," *Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association* 64, no. 3 (2011): 89–107; Lancaster Congregational Diary, July 31, 1768; John Joseph Henry to William Henry, Jan. 14, 1807, Miscellaneous Letters, William Henry Papers; Henry, *Accurate and Interesting Account*, 215; Johann David Schoepf, *Travels in the Confederation 1783–1784: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia*, trans. Alfred J. Morrison (Philadelphia, 1911), 2:15.

to experiment in his spare time. His business took him to Philadelphia, to York, to Bethlehem, and to Maryland. He joined the Moravian Church in 1765 and began to shoulder civic responsibilities in Lancaster as an assistant burgess, a justice of the peace, and an assistant justice of the county courts. In 1771 the colony of Pennsylvania appointed Henry to serve on its canal commission, and in November 1772 he explored the Welsh Mountains that separate the Susquehanna River from the Schuylkill and the Delaware Rivers with David Rittenhouse and others.²⁵ Henry had no reason to think that he would ever be associated with the gun trade again.

When Lancaster County did organize again, first to protest British revenue acts and then to prepare for war, William Henry played a leading role. Taking an early public stand on the emerging crisis, he joined a committee of four others—the lawyers George Ross and Jasper Yeates, the merchant Ludwig Lauman, and the physician Robert Boyd—to sign a letter on June 28, 1770, expressing solidarity with a nonimportation policy proposed by Philadelphia's Committee of Merchants. Four years later, Lancaster County obeyed the Continental Congress and formed a Committee of Observation and Inspection to monitor compliance with the boycott on British goods, and Henry served at times as this committee's chairman and treasurer.²⁶ Like county committees across colonial America, Lancaster's committee slowly began to assume full governmental functions. It assumed judicial authority to try and punish citizens; it fined and disarmed non-Associators, who refused to bear arms; it raised militias; it struggled to meet the quota of muskets that Pennsylvania's assembly required from Lancaster County.

It would not be surprising if Lancaster's leaders had looked to William Henry when the need for arms became evident. Although he had not worked in the gun trade for fifteen years, he had been an armorer to Forbes when armed conflict had last galvanized Lancaster. But from the committee's minutes, one would have no idea that Henry had ever been a

²⁵ Scott Paul Gordon, "The Henrys and the West: Moses Henry, Gunsmith and Indian Agent," *Jacobusburg Record* 35 (2008): 6–10; Report, Jan. 30, 1773, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 8th ser., 8:6931–34.

²⁶ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 28, 1770. For the importance of the county committees, see T. R. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York, 2010). Only a small fraction of the minutes of the Lancaster County revolutionary committee has been published (*Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., 13:275–99), but the rest survive in the Peter Force Collection, ser. 8D, #86, Library of Congress.

gunsmith. His name never appears as a practicing gunsmith or as an advisor on armaments. The names of dozens of gunsmiths and gunsmiths' apprentices appear in these minutes, which note that Jacob Dickert supplied rifles to Paul Zantzinger's company, that Joel Ferree would "Work & Forge, Bore & Grind a Number of good Musket Barrels," and that John Henry provided "a Mould for Casting Bullets of different Sizes to be ready for such Troops as may have occasion to march from this County." But only when the committee asked Henry's brother and others to "value certain Riffles in the hands of Mr. William Henry which shall or may be delivered out for the use of the Service of this Continent" does Henry's name appear in proximity to gun-related matters. These rifles were likely taken from non-Associators or were perhaps older weapons, much like the "Muskets & military Accoutrements," stored since the "late War," that were "a Parcel of Rubbish . . . so covered with Rust that they were thought almost unfit for Use & scarcely worth repairing." After Henry left the committee, it felt free to call on him for particular tasks—it asked "William Henry Esquire" to "assist the Committee in superintending & directing" the construction of new barracks—but it never recruited him on matters related to arms production, not even during its struggle with Lancaster's gunsmiths, whom the committee threatened to deem "Enemies to this Country" when they balked at producing muskets instead of rifles.²⁷

The suspicion that the conflict between the colonies and Britain would not end quickly seems to have convinced Henry, in early 1776, to once again involve himself in the gun business. His precise role remains difficult to ascertain, but the prosperous merchant who reentered it was not the practicing gunsmith of 1758. The fact that Henry had been a gunsmith in the 1750s has tempted writers, as we have seen, to think that his activities during the Revolution continued or expanded on his earlier trade. Filling the gap in the documentary record, they have imagined that after returning from England in 1761, Henry "resumed the direction of his gun works" or "gradually expanded his gunsmithing business," and even that, to adjust to wartime production, he "increased his gun manufacturing capabilities by leasing additional space and hiring more gun-

²⁷ Lancaster Committee of Observation Minutes, May 23, Aug. 4, Nov. 9, Nov. 10, Dec. 11, 1775, and July 12, Aug. 24, 1776, Peter Force Collection. The subcommittee that corresponded on gunsmithing matters consisted of Alexander Martin, Thomas Clark, and William Bausman (see *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., 13:511, 525, and also *Colonial Records*, 10:530).

smiths.”²⁸ But no evidence whatsoever suggests that a Henry gun factory existed in the 1760s or early 1770s. At this point in Henry’s career, few would have identified gunsmithing skills as his most valuable assets, especially given the large number of gunsmiths in Lancaster County. Far more valuable to the Revolutionary cause—and more rare—was the financial and organizational acumen that had served Henry well as a merchant.

Henry’s decision to reenter the arms business must have resulted both from a sense of patriotic duty and from a recognition of financial opportunity. Several years later, asked about Lancaster County’s overdue taxes, Henry noted that “it is private interests that execute Government” and that “most Men” could not do their jobs if “their Pay would not support them.” In this he agreed with Nathanael Greene, quartermaster general of the Continental army, who told Congress in 1779 that “little service is to be expected from any order of Men . . . whose pay is insufficient for their support.” Henry differentiated himself from “most Men,” noting that he had “laid out” between “Sixty & Seventy Thousand Pound . . . in purchase of Leather and Paying Workmens Wages at the Shoe-Factory at Philadelphia, Allentown and Lancaster,” for “the whole of the Factorys must have stop’d for want of Pay and Materials, if I had not supported them with Money.” But he then added, “I do not even draw Commissions on the Money furnished the Factories.” These remarks reveal not only the amount of money that routinely passed through Henry’s hands and the size of the organization for which he was responsible. They show, too, that procurement work offered a significant source of income in commissions. Between April 1778 and August 1779, for instance, Henry earned £5,790 as a procurement officer for the Continental army, only 10 percent of which was salary, the rest deriving from a 5 percent commission he received on arms he repaired and the arms, shoes, and clothing he purchased. The following year he earned about £6,452, only 6 percent of which was salary.²⁹ It is unlikely that Henry conceived of such vast sums in early 1776. But he surely understood that he could be useful to the

²⁸ Jordan, *Life of William Henry*, 56; Brown, *Firearms in Colonial America*, 258; Heckert and Vaughn, *Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle*, 70.

²⁹ Henry to Joseph Reed, Apr. 25, 1780, in Jordan, *Life of William Henry*, 116–18; Nathanael Greene to John Jay, Mar. 6, 1779, in *Papers of Nathanael Greene*, ed. Richard K. Showman et al. (Chapel Hill, NC, 1976–2005), 3:333; “The United States in Account with William Henry” [Aug. 1779], William Henry Papers, 1:30; “United States in Account with William Henry” [Aug. 1780], and “United States to William Henry C. of Hides” [Aug. 1780], box 11, folder 9, and box 11, folder 3, Henry Family Papers, Hagley Museum and Library. For the matter of commissions, see Erna Risch, *Supplying Washington’s Army* (Washington, DC, 1981), 14–15.

Revolutionary governments—much as he had been useful during the French and Indian War—in ways that promised significant reward.

William Henry ended his service to Lancaster's Committee of Observation in November 1775. He would leave Lancaster for Philadelphia a year later as a member of the first assembly elected under the 1776 state constitution—but he did not know this when, in March 1776, he offered to supply arms both to Pennsylvania and to the Continental army. Congress had formed a committee in February 1776 to “contract for the making of muskets and bayonets for the use of the United Colonies,” and within two weeks it appropriated \$10,000 for this purpose. William Henry won part of this contract. Congress ordered on March 29, 1776, that fifteen pounds of gunpowder be delivered to “Mr. William Henry and Co. . . . to prove the musquets he has contracted to make for the Continent.” The same month, Pennsylvania appointed four men to establish a “provincial Manufactory of Gun Locks” and to “contract for the making of fire arms.” Although the order implied that most of the “artificers” would be in Philadelphia, a few weeks later, on March 23, 1776, Pennsylvania “agreed with William Henry for making 200 Rifles.” It is no coincidence that, also in March 1776, John Henry joined with Jacob Dickert to build a grinding and boring mill on land in Manheim Township, Lancaster County; the two men recognized the urgent demand for new arms and for components to repair damaged arms. William Henry was trying to ride this same wave in March 1776.³⁰

These traces of Henry's return to the gun industry, however, provoke more questions than they answer. How, in these early years of the war, did he plan to supply these muskets and rifles? He had no active gunshop and was not offering to return to the forge. Was he proposing to direct other men's work in a factory setting? A May 1776 congressional resolution refers to a “manager of the continental factory of fire arms at Lancaster,” and gunstockers working in Pennsylvania's state factory were aware of their counterparts “employ'd in the Continental Factor[ies]” who “Constantly receive *their* Rations.” George Moller claimed that at this Continental factory, men “repair[ed] and rebuil[t]” weapons rather than

³⁰ Febr. 23, Mar. 29, and May 23, 1776, in *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington, DC, 1904–37), 4: 169, 240, 384; Committee of Congress to Abraham Hunt, Mar. 9, 1776, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774–1789*, ed. Paul H. Smith (Washington, DC, 1976–2000), 3:361; “In Committee of Safety,” Mar. 6 and Mar. 23, 1776, in *Colonial Records*, 10:506, 523; Lancaster County Recorder of Deeds, Deed Book S, 514–16, Office of Recorder of Deeds, Lancaster, PA.

“fabricated new” ones, but we know little more about this factory than that it operated from 1776 to 1779; who ran it remains unknown. Peter Dehaven superintended the Pennsylvania state factory of arms, which quickly expanded beyond a gunlock facility. By early 1777 Dehaven had nineteen men under his direction at a sizeable “Factory of Muskets & other Arms”—located first in Philadelphia, then at French Creek (Chester County), and finally at Hummelstown (Lancaster County)—that “Repair[ed] A Great Maney arms, & ma[d]e som New ones.” (Pennsylvania had another arms factory in Allentown where, by October 1777, John Tyler had “sixteen hands Employ’d.”)³¹ It is possible that in early 1776 Henry established a similar gun factory in Lancaster, counting on a supply of barrels from his brother’s mill. But it is also possible that by 1776 Henry had already devised the procurement system he would use several years later, meeting his promises to supply a wide range of items by purchasing others’ products, perhaps even financing others’ production or providing them with material. Until more evidence surfaces, we can only speculate on how Henry planned to obtain the muskets and rifles that he agreed in early 1776 to supply for the state and Continental forces. Whatever plans he had, he would have to abandon them—or turn them over to somebody else—when he left Lancaster in November to serve in the General Assembly in Philadelphia.

Henry was involved in this controversial assembly’s early legislation, drafting bills for a militia law and for collecting fines from non-Associators. But after May 1777 he remained in Lancaster with his son, who had been injured in the 1775 assault on Quebec. The significant responsibilities that landed on Henry’s shoulders once he returned to Lancaster suggest that his time in the assembly altered how local, state,

³¹ May 23, 1776, in *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 4:384; Memorial of Gun Stockers in the State Factory, Oct. 30, 1777, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:733; George D. Moller, *American Military Shoulder Arms*, vol. 1, *Colonial and Revolutionary War Arms* (Niwt, CO, 1993), 148–49; Peter Dehaven to Council of Safety, Jan. 3, 1777, and John Tyler to Thomas Wharton, Oct. 31, 1777, *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 1:155, and 5:731–32. John Nicholson submitted a plan for a gun factory, built near a barrel mill, that would contain nearly a dozen forges (several for forging locks, several for forging barrels, others for bayonets, ramrods, etc.), a shop for “ten Gun stockers,” a casting shop for brass mountings, and another for “putting the Guns together,” and he asked for a yearly £300 salary and a £5 commission for “every hundred Guns made in the Factory” (John Nicholson to Committee of Safety, June 4, 1776, in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st ser., 4:767–68). For Dehaven’s factories, see J. Wayne Heckert, “Rifles and Muskets on the Swatara: Clandestine Hummelstown Factory Armed the Revolution,” *Kentucky Rifle Association Bulletin* 34, no 1 (2007): 3–6 (but see also *Colonial Records*, 11:48, 593, 641, 662–63); for the Allentown factory, see Eric Kettenburg, “John Tyler, Ebenezer Cowell and Sixteen Unknown Workmen,” http://web.mac.com/kettenburgs/Site_2/Part_4.html.

and Continental authorities viewed him—and likely altered his sense of himself. As burgess and justice of the peace, Henry served alongside lawyers, innkeepers, and merchants. But his new roles, which involved breathtakingly complex financial operations, distinguished him from most of his contemporaries. One of Henry's fellow assemblymen had been Robert Morris, the "financier" of the Revolution who was also the "principal actor in supplying" the American war effort with arms and ammunition in its early years. Whether or not he conversed with Morris, his service in the assembly must have made Henry aware of the failed supply system on which state and Continental forces depended. Neither reorganizations nor reforms solved this "inability of staff officers to provide the army with food, clothing," and other materiel. Many felt that the only solution lay in finding "competent personnel," as Greene insisted in early 1779: the ideal procurement officer must "have a proper knowledge of the forms of business, be a man of activity and good judgment; [and be] of a fair character and of good repute."³² Henry surely recognized that while it was crucial to ensure that adequate materiel was produced, the urgent need was for men (like Morris) who could marshal and master the finances necessary to obtain and distribute that materiel effectively.

Henry was appointed treasurer of Lancaster County in 1777, responsible for collecting and transferring vast sums of money raised through taxes and fines (he sent £1,587,147.6.3 to state treasurer David Rittenhouse, for instance, in one eleven-month period). In August 1777, Henry became the commissary of military stores for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and six months later, in April 1778, the Congress's Board of War appointed Henry the superintendent of arms and military accoutrements for the Continental army. He earned this appointment, Horatio Gates wrote, by repairing "without much Aid from the Public in the Course of the Winter . . . three Times the Number of Arms & ma[king] as many Accoutrements as the whole of the other Persons employed by Congress in these Branches within this District put together." Washington was "exceedingly glad . . . that so active a Man as Mr Henry

³² *Journal and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Common-wealth of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1777); Otto Krogstrup to Nathanael Seidel, May 19, 1777, box: Letters from Lancaster, Moravian Archives ("William Henry is supposed to be in the Assembly now but cannot leave home because of his sick son"); Charles Rappleye, *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution* (New York, 2010), 38, 45; Risch, *Supplying Washington's Army*, 14; E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1984), 51, 55; Nathanael Greene to John Jay, Apr. 15, 1779, in *Papers of Nathanael Greene*, 3:406.

is universally represented to be" had accepted the position. Throughout 1778 Henry had also supplied shoes and boots to the Continental army (Washington reported in January that "a Mr Henry of Lancaster" had offered to "contract for one, or two hundred thousand pair of shoes, annually, to be paid for in raw hides"), and on the basis of this performance he was named commissary of hides for the states of Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland on August 5, 1779. Competence was a rare commodity among those responsible for supplying Washington's army, and by proving himself competent Henry became, as Whitfield Bell said, "one of the most influential and responsible men in Lancaster County."³³

All these appointments licensed Henry to pay men to produce the items—shoes, guns, cartridges, hats—that state and Continental forces needed, and they obligated the governments to reimburse Henry for the funds he spent. As commissary of hides, for instance, Henry purchased leather, hired and paid workmen, and established the shoe factories at Philadelphia, Allentown, and Lancaster; he then ensured that the finished products were distributed to the military leaders who requested them. A document produced on May 10, 1780, which lists individuals making shoes for the Continental army, identifies many laborers "working at their own dwellings in Philadelphia Suburbs & Elsewhere," and notes further that some of these men, "being Master Shoemakers," have "three, or four, Hands at work" under them.³⁴ Some of these shoe producers were gathered in factory-like settings at the barracks and the prison, with managers overseeing them; others were working in their

³³ *State of the Accounts of the Taxes in Lancaster County* (Philadelphia, 1788); "Council Met," Aug. 22, 1777, in *Colonial Records*, 11:274–75 (the title "Commissary of Military Stores" appears only in "Wm Henrys account with the State of Pennsylvania from Sept 1777 to Sept 1st 1778," Miscellaneous Accounts, United States Accounts, 1775–1791, RG-4, Records of the Comptroller General, Pennsylvania State Archives; elsewhere this same position is called Armorer: Sept. 4, 1778, *Colonial Records*, 11:569); Horatio Gates to Henry Laurens, Apr. 21, 1778, Papers of the Continental Congress, Reports of the Board of War and Ordnance, 1776–81, 2:14, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC; Washington to Horatio Gates, May 1, 1778, and Washington to Continental Congress Camp Committee, Jan. 29, 1778, in *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series*, ed. Philander D. Chase et al. (Charlottesville, VA, 1985–), 15:4 and 13:393; "Shoes made by Sundry Persons for the United States in Lieu of their Tour of Duty in the Militia of the State of Pennsylvania" [Jan. 14–Sept. 26, 1778] and "Shoes and other Articles made by Sundry Person in Lieu of Militia duty" [Dec. 27, 1777–Sept. 26, 1778], Henry Family Papers, box 11, folder 3, Hagley Museum and Library; Bell, *Patriot-Improvers*, 354.

³⁴ "A List of the Persons Drawing Rations and working at the State Prison and Elsewhere for the Continental Shoe Factory at the Barracks" [1780], Henry Family Papers, box 11, folder 3, Hagley Museum and Library. See also David L. Salay, "Marching to War: The Production of Leather Shoes in Revolutionary Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 60 (1993): 51–72.

homes, either alone or with several apprentices. Henry's job was to orchestrate this decentralized operation. He neither produced shoes himself nor operated or supervised a factory that produced shoes. He organized a vast network of producers whom he paid (and often supplied with raw materials) and from whom he received the finished products that he distributed to the militia and Continental army.

Henry used the identical model with respect to gun production for the state and for the continent. When in 1777 Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council "appointed & empowered [Henry] to employ Workmen to make Arms for the use of the Militia of [the] State," these "Workmen" were not employed—as has always been assumed—in a Henry arms factory. An account of the funds that Henry spent on behalf of Pennsylvania from September 1777 to September 1778 identifies the many independent gunsmiths from whom he procured muskets and rifles. The eight men that the Supreme Council "excused from going to Camp" as long as they could "be usefully employed in making Arms for the use of the State" and would "continue in the employ, under the direction of . . . Will'm Henry, Esq'r," functioned in this system.³⁵ An 1838 pension application captures the circumstances under which one gunsmith worked. In 1777 Jacob Messersmith was about to depart for militia service when John Henry appeared at his house to announce that Virginia troops in Lancaster needed their arms repaired; for the next "two to three weeks," a "guard was placed around the House & Gunshop." Henry's accounts for the Continental army record, similarly, the names of the men whom he paid "for repairing of arms" between April 1778 and August 1779. The amount of funds paid to some—£2,143 to Jacob Dickert, £5,656 to Samuel Sarjant—indicates that these individuals ran large establishments. A later invoice itemizes nine men who worked under Sarjant at a factory at Carlisle in Cumberland County.³⁶ The amount of

³⁵ "The Council Met," Aug. 22, 1777, in *Colonial Records*, 11:275 (see also Thomas Wharton to William Henry, Sept. 6, 1777, Henry Family Papers, box 11, folder 8, Hagley Museum and Library ["I hope you made a beginning to employ Workmen to Make Arms"]); "The Council Met," Dec. 5, 1777, in *Colonial Records*, 11:380. In November Henry had brought 638 stand of arms from Bethlehem "to be tried and repaired" (Nov. 6, 1777, in *Colonial Records*, 11:366).

³⁶ Susanna Messersmith [Jacob Messersmith], Pension Application, Sept. 1, 1838, Revolutionary War Pension Application Files, Pennsylvania, RG-15, Records of the Veterans Administration, Washington, DC; "The United States to William Henry, for repairing of Arms" [1779], Henry Family Papers, box 11, folder 1, Hagley Museum and Library; "The United States to William Henry, Superintendent of Arms and M. Accoutrements, for Monies expended for Repairing of Arms . . ." [1782], William Henry Papers, 2:49.

money provided to Dickert suggests that, in these years, it was he who ran a gun factory in Lancaster. When the Board of War praised Henry for having repaired so many more arms and made so many more accoutrements than “the whole of the other Persons employed by Congress in these Branches within this District put together,” it was recognizing the success of the mixed factory and nonfactory system on which Henry was relying. Those who imagine that there was a Henry gun factory during the Revolution have failed to recognize that by 1777 he functioned not as a producer but as an orchestrator of dispersed “Hands,” who generated the vast amounts of materiel that Henry obtained for state and Continental forces.³⁷

Indeed, those writers who suggest that Henry’s “own shop produced thousands” of guns while he was “in charge of procurement” for state and Continental forces overlook that when he became the superintendent responsible for supplying arms to the Continental army, Henry would have been explicitly prohibited from supplying Continental forces with any items of his own manufacture. Congress insisted that its supply agents “not . . . engage in or carry on any kind of trade or traffic whatever, nor make or endeavor to make . . . any other or greater emolument profit or advantage whatever by the said Office.” Behavior that “mix[ed] private and public trade” was considered corruption, the very charge leveled at other executives in the supply department, including James Mease, Robert Hooper, and Thomas Mifflin.³⁸ Republican principles, which generated these standards and the furious denunciations when they were violated, considered private gain incompatible with public service—the capacity to serve the “Publick,” as we have seen Franklin suggest, depended on possessing “Leisure,” that is, on being free from any need to conduct “private Business.”

³⁷ Jordan’s assertion that Henry had a factory “on Mill Creek, outside the Borough of Lancaster, where what is known today as the ‘Old Factory Road’ crosses that stream” (*Life of William Henry*, 91) is often repeated: Heckert and Vaughn claim Henry established “one of the largest manufactories of Revolutionary arms in the country” in an “old mill on Mill Creek near the outskirts of town” (*Pennsylvania-Kentucky Rifle*, 68). This was pure guesswork, as L. D. Satterlee noted: he concluded there was “something very mysterious about that rifle factory” (Satterlee to G. M. Shultz, Sept. 17, 1937, and Oct. 12, 1937, Henry Family Papers 1740–1989, ser. 1, box 23, Jacobsburg Historical Society).

³⁸ John Ward Willson Loose, *The Heritage of Lancaster* (Woodland Hills, CA, 1978), 34; Kurt Daniel Kortenbof, “Republican Ideology and Wartime Reality: Thomas Mifflin’s Struggle as the First Quartermaster General of the Continental Army, 1775–1778,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 122 (1998): 184–85, 209.

The range of items that military leaders requested from Henry—what Timothy Pickering called “the multiplicity of your business”—confirms that these leaders did not appeal to him because they thought he was a man involved in the gun industry. They counted on Henry to undertake the financial and organizational activities that ensured that state and Continental soldiers had the items they needed. When the Board of War applauded him for producing arms, it obscured—in typical eighteenth-century fashion—the labor of the “Hands” and credited the gentleman who set them in motion. In May 1778 Pickering asked Henry to “set some of your people at work immediately” in making carbines and, a month later, to “set as many hands at work as possible in making” cartridge boxes for Washington. Charles Lukens inquired about the availability of one thousand “Small Hatchets or Tomahawks,” while a year later Pickering was in search of two thousand hats. In the summer of 1779, Pennsylvania’s Supreme Council even recruited Henry to purchase large quantities of “Wheat in several Mills about Lancaster” and “cause it to be Manufactured into Merchantable Flour, fit for exportation.” This language registers what Henry was doing. He was *causing* things to be manufactured: shoes, spontoons, cartridge boxes, flour, and guns.³⁹

The varied items that Henry caused to be produced seem to have been gathered in a store in the center of Lancaster guarded by a sentry. Christopher Marshall, the Philadelphia druggist and chemist who moved to Lancaster in 1777, frequently visited Henry’s store to hear the “news of the day.” Daniel Brodhead, waiting to march west in June 1778, said that he was “desirous to have the Rifles with Bayonets, which [he] had seen at Mr. Henry’s Store.” A month later, when General Lachlan McIntosh could not obtain in Carlisle all the six hundred muskets with bayonets that he needed, he “sen[t] at Lancaster to Mr. Henry’s store for to have immediately 3 hundred muskets ready” to make up the difference. Given such constant demand for large quantities of items—including, often, requests for “all” that Henry had (“you will be pleased to pack up without delay, all the remaining cartouch boxes, bayonet belts and bayonet sheaths, also all the muskets with bayonets fit for service, in your posses-

³⁹ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (1973; New York, 1975), 90; Timothy Pickering to William Henry, June 8, 1778, and Pickering to Andrew Levy, May 4, 1779, William Henry Papers, 1:21, 27; Timothy Pickering to William Henry, May 26, 1778, and Charles Lukens to William Henry, Aug. 5, 1778, in Jordan, *Life of William Henry*, 97, 101; “In Council,” Aug. 25, 1779, *Colonial Records*, 12:84.

sion, and send the same”)—Henry’s warehouse often may have seemed empty.⁴⁰

William Henry had become, like his former patron Edward Shippen, a public servant. Far from producing muskets himself or supervising a factory where others did so, Henry spent his days sitting in court sessions, in committee meetings, or at his desk, signing the accounts and inventories drawn up by his subordinates. He deliberated about Hessian prisoners, wrote and received countless letters, issued orders to apprehend spies, and scrambled to procure materiel of all sorts for the troops. When the end of the war obviated the need for a procurement officer, Henry was twice chosen to represent Pennsylvania in the Continental Congress. In Trenton and New York during the 1784–85 and 1785–86 sessions, he worked on legislation on government finances and on the committee that drafted the 1787 Northwest Ordinance. In December 1786, however, after an illness that had lasted several months, Henry died at the age of fifty-seven in his home in Lancaster. He left such complex personal and official finances, many related to his activities during the Revolution, that his estate would not be settled until 1811—after the deaths of his wife and six of the seven children who survived him.

He died as “William Henry, Esquire.” In early America, the honorific “esquire” typically attached to individuals who had served as justice of the peace or as a justice in the courts of common pleas. Henry had first served as a justice of the peace in 1758, but surviving receipts from the Lancaster tradesmen with whom he dealt suggest that the honorific was not bestowed on Henry during the 1760s. Even in the early 1770s, after Henry had become a justice in Lancaster’s court of common pleas, he was rarely called “esquire.” Henry’s positions of responsibility during the Revolution, however, altered this pattern. Both official correspondence written to or about Henry and public announcements, such as the broadsides that list members of Lancaster’s Committee of Observation, routinely dub him “esquire.” More striking is that Lancaster’s tradesmen who had been peers of “William Henry, Gunsmith”—the tailor George Koch,

⁴⁰ William Duane, ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, Kept in Philadelphia and Lancaster, during the American Revolution, 1774–1781* (Albany, NY, 1877), 194, 205; Daniel Brodhead to Lachlan McIntosh, June 24, 1778, in *Lachlan McIntosh Papers in the University of Georgia Libraries*, ed. Lilla Mills Hawes (Athens, GA, 1968), 29; Chevalier de Cambray to Charles Lukens, July 31, 1778, in Henry Family Papers, box 11, folder 8, Hagley Museum and Library; Timothy Pickering to William Henry, May 10, 1779, William Henry Papers, 1:41 (Jordan, *Life of William Henry*, 108–9, mistakenly ascribes this letter to Richard Peters).

the barber George Meyer, the shoemakers Francis McCabe and Peter Bier, the brickmaker Peter Albright, the Lititz candlemaker Abraham Hessler—began to distinguish him as “esquire.” The furniture (six Windsor chairs, seven armchairs, two breakfast tables, a walnut couch, a chest of drawers, three looking glasses), cutlery and flatware (sets of silver teaspoons and tablespoons, china bowls and plates), and personal items (a silver watch, a landscape, and a history painting) that filled William and Ann Henry’s home testify to the comfortable life they had attained. In December 1778, Henry spent £125 on a “Chair,” presumably a four-wheeled post chaise, which, given the frequency with which he traveled, may have seemed a practical purchase. But possessing this item, and those that filled his home, conspicuously separated Henry from most of those with whom he lived and worked in the town of Lancaster. Although an ingenious mechanic, Henry did not attain his elite status in Lancaster by producing a commodity that his neighbors wanted or needed—his genius, it turned out, was to recognize in times of great crisis the value of a man of “judgment and integrity” who could orchestrate others’ work.⁴¹

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SCOTT PAUL GORDON

⁴¹ Receipts, and William Henry Inventory [1787], Henry Family Papers, box 10, folder 2, and box 13, folder 1, Hagley Museum and Library; Timothy Pickering to Richard Caswell, July 23, 1778, in *The Colonial and State Records of North Carolina*, ed. William Saunders and Walter Clark (Raleigh, NC, 1886–1907), 13:200.