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Christopher Demuth: From “Single Brother” to Celebrated Snuff Maker

ABSTRACT: Christopher Demuth’s early years in the Moravian community of Bethlehem, which included the traumatic transition from its “General Economy,” shaped and helped prepare him for a new career in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Trained in carpentry and millwork, Demuth went on to be the most successful tobacconist in Lancaster, specializing in snuff, which he sold throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. His extensive operation demonstrates Lancaster’s importance as a production and distribution node, as well as the significant role that Pennsylvania tobacconists played in the state and national economy decades before tobacco was grown commercially in the state.

IN OPERATION FROM CIRCA 1770 to 2010, the Demuth Tobacco Shop, 114–116 East King Street, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is often described as the oldest of its kind in America. Remarkably, for most of those years it was run by one family. Robert (Rupurtus) Hartaffel began the business, but his son-in-law, Christopher Demuth, expanded it and is generally credited as founder. The ownership of the shop is well documented, as is much of the family history, including the career of artist Charles

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Demuth, Christopher's great-great-grandson.¹ However, virtually nothing has been published about Christopher Demuth's youth in the Moravian community of Bethlehem or his early years in Lancaster. Likewise, historians have paid scant attention to tobacco manufacturing in early America, particularly in Pennsylvania.

At first glance, there seems to be little common ground between life in a pietistic community and building a dynastic business in the early days of the American tobacco industry. However, evidence suggests that the two seemingly opposite phases of Demuth's life were closely connected and that living and laboring as part of the Moravian congregation directly shaped his later career. His experiences in Bethlehem, a closed religious community as well as a commercial and industrial center, instilled in him both artisanal skills and an understanding of the Moravians' extensive business connections with the regional economy. When his nonconforming ways prompted church officials to exile him, he was able to use the craft skills and entrepreneurial attitudes he had absorbed in Bethlehem to master the tobacconist trade and build a substantial business in Lancaster.

Demuth's journey from Moravian single brother to snuff maker is a fascinating story with implications well beyond individual or local history. It provides an in-depth picture of the wrenching changes that the Moravian church and its flagship American town, Bethlehem, underwent in the mid-eighteenth century and illustrates on a detailed level the effects of those upheavals. Additionally, a closer examination of Demuth's career is significant because so little work has been done on Pennsylvania's early tobacco industry, despite the fact that, in 1810, Pennsylvania, where tobacco was not yet grown commercially, rivaled Virginia and outpaced Maryland in tobacco manufacturing. Exploring the details of Demuth's operation also highlights the importance of Lancaster as a center of commerce, production, and distribution and reminds us that early Americans

¹ Henry C. Demuth, *Demuth's 1770: The History of a Lancaster Tradition* (Lancaster, PA, 1925); Miloslav Rechcigl Jr., "The Demuth Genealogy Revisited: A Moravian Brethren Family from Czechoslovakia," *Journal of the Lancaster County Historical Society* 92 (1989–90): 55–68; Emily Farnham, *Charles Demuth: Behind a Laughing Mask* (Norman, OK, 1971); Betsy Fahlman and Claire M. Barry, *Chimneys and Towers: Charles Demuth's Late Paintings of Lancaster* (Philadelphia, 2007). On the shop, see also Diane Wenger and J. Ritchie Garrison, "Commerce and Culture: Pennsylvania German Commercial Vernacular Architecture," in *Architecture and Landscape of the Pennsylvania Germans, 1720–1920*, ed. Sally McMurry and Nancy Van Dolsen (Philadelphia, 2011), 167–71. On Demuth's business, see Diane Wenger, "Christopher Demuth," in *Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies, 1720 to the Present*, vol. 1, ed. Marianne S. Wokeck, German Historical Institute, last modified Aug. 9, 2013, <http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=125>.

were deeply involved in business and industry well before the so-called market revolution or the late nineteenth-century industrial revolution.²

Demuth's connection with the Moravian Church came through his parents, Regina and Gotthard Demuth, who were among the Eastern European pietists who found refuge from persecution on Count Nickolaus Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony. Zinzendorf created the village of Herrnhut for the refugees and became the spiritual leader of the group who became known as *Unitas Fratrum* or Moravians. Moravians believed they were called to spread the gospel worldwide; the Demuths embraced that effort and joined the small missionary band that sailed to Savannah, Georgia, in 1735–36. For a number of reasons, the Moravians did not flourish in Georgia, and the Demuths were among the first to leave. They first went to New York but soon relocated to Germantown, Pennsylvania, where Christopher was born on September 19, 1738. Another son, Christian, followed on December 26, 1740.³

The Demuths maintained ties to the Moravian church, and Zinzendorf listed them as members of the Bethlehem congregation when he established the Pennsylvania town in 1741, in spite of the fact that they lived apart from this community.⁴ Under the social and economic system known as the "General Economy," residency in Bethlehem was restricted to church members, and town residents were divided by age, sex, and marital status into "choirs" who lived and worshipped together. They worked communally at various trades and professions, exchanging labor for food, clothing, and tools provided by the church, with profits supporting missionary outreach. Church leaders dictated virtually every aspect of members' lives, including the type of work they did, where they lived, whether they would be sent to the mission fields, and whom they would marry.⁵

² On the timing of the market revolution, see Diane E. Wenger, *A Country Storekeeper in Pennsylvania: Creating Economic Networks in Early America, 1790–1807* (University Park, PA, 2008), 3–8.

³ Gotthard sailed with the initial contingent in 1735; Regina came in 1736. Adelaide L. Fries, *Moravians in Georgia, 1735–1740* (Raleigh, NC, 1905), 47–48, 112, 237; Aaron Spencer Fogleman, "The Decline and Fall of the Moravian Community in Colonial Georgia: Revising the Traditional View," *Unitas Fratrum* 48 (2001): 10. The births are recorded in the "Catalog of Single Brothers and Boys in Bethlehem," BethSB 06:51, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, PA (hereafter MAB). I am indebted to Alan Keyser for translating these and other Demuth documents from the old German script. I am also grateful to Marianne S. Wokeck, whose astute comments at conferences where I presented papers on Demuth helped shaped my thinking about his business.

⁴ Kenneth G. Hamilton, *The Bethlehem Diary*, vol. 1, 1742–1744 (Bethlehem, PA, 1971), 18.

⁵ Katherine Carté Engel, *Religion and Profit: Moravians in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2009), 32–40; Beverly Prior Smaby, *The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem: From Communal Mission to Family Economy* (Philadelphia, 1988), 10–13; Gillian Lindt Gollin, "Family Surrogates in Colonial America: The Moravian Experiment," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 31 (1969): 655.

The Demuths visited Bethlehem frequently, and Gotthard, who was a carpenter, helped build the town's mill complex. When Gotthard died suddenly in December 1744, Regina was left with no means of support, and she and her sons moved to Bethlehem.⁶ The move gave her the support of the close-knit religious community, but it also meant that she and the boys were separated, as she lived with other widows in the house for "Married People," while six-year-old Christopher and four-year-old Christian entered the Little Boys' Choir.⁷ In 1745, the family was further split when the boys were enrolled in a Moravian boarding school in Montgomery County.⁸ After leaving school, Christian lived in Christiansbrunn, a sister settlement north of Bethlehem, and later moved to the Moravian town of Hope, New Jersey, where he died in 1781. Christopher returned to Bethlehem, where he trained as a carpenter, worked on the town's mills and waterworks, and played trombone for Sunday worship; as he grew to manhood, he became part of the Single Brothers' Choir.⁹

Although they lived in a closed settlement, Demuth and other inhabitants of Bethlehem were not cloistered. Town elders kept in close touch with the mother congregation in Herrnhut. They sent town residents on missionary journeys to far-flung places and occasionally reassigned members to other nearby Moravian settlements where their particular skills were needed. In addition, the Bethlehem congregation was deeply embedded in the local and regional economy. Members engaged in artisanal, commercial, and industrial activities, with proceeds financing congregational missionary work, and they welcomed trade with outsiders. In fact, the volume of these exchanges was large enough to prompt

⁶ Hamilton, *Bethlehem Diary*, 1:27, 34, 146, 151, 213, 215.

⁷ A separate Widows' House was constructed in 1755. See John W. Jordan, "A Historical Sketch of the Widows' House at Bethlehem, Pa., 1768–1892," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 4 (1892): 101–24.

⁸ "The Moravian School for Boys in Frederic Township, Philadelphia County, June, 1745, to September, 1750," in Abraham Reincke and William C. Reichel, "A Register of Members of the Moravian Church, and of Persons Attached to Said Church in This Country and Abroad, between 1727 and 1754," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 1 (1873): 401–5.

⁹ "Catalog of the Single Brothers and Boys in Bethlehem," 1762, BethSB06:54, MAB; Mila Rechcigl, "Demuth Family Tree: A Moravian-Brethren Family from Moravia, Czech Republic," last modified Aug. 26, 2002, <http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=mila&id=I0064>; Stephen H. Cutcliffe and Karen Z. Huetter, "Perfection in the Mechanical Arts: The Development of Moravian Industrial Technology in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741–1814," in *Backcountry Crucibles: The Lehigh Valley from Settlement to Steel*, ed. Jean R. Soderlund and Catherine S. Parzynski (Bethlehem, PA, 2008), 175.

the congregation to build a series of “strangers’ stores” and two taverns, the Crown and the Sun, specifically for these visitors.¹⁰ This meant that Demuth and other residents were familiar with the market exchanges between townspeople and non-Moravians, who regularly patronized Bethlehem’s workshops, stores, and mills. They understood the need for these artisanal shops and other businesses to make a profit to support the congregation.

Although they engaged in commercial transactions with outsiders, Moravians’ relations with “strangers” were not always cordial. Because of their pacifism, communalism, acceptance of female leaders, and unorthodox worship practices (which, in early years, focused on Jesus’s blood and wounds), Moravians were viewed with suspicion and, at times, outright hostility.¹¹ When the French and Indian War erupted in 1754, Moravians were further suspect because of their close relationships with Native American converts. Outsiders accused Moravians of siding with the French and Indians or even being papists. This sentiment was somewhat mitigated when natives attacked the Moravian mission at Gnadenhütten in November 1755 and murdered eleven people. But old antagonisms reemerged during Pontiac’s Rebellion (1763) because Moravians showed sympathy and support for Indians, whom by that time most Anglo-Americans regarded as the universal enemy.¹²

All of this meant that life in Bethlehem was not always serene for Demuth and other residents. The war and subsequent uprising had a direct effect on the settlement because it lay so close to the front lines. Mindful of danger, elders erected a palisade and took an inventory of the weapons in town; coincidentally, Demuth was one of the brothers who owned a gun.¹³ The church also opened Bethlehem to refugees, including Christian Indians, and the cost of housing and feeding the extra people strained congregational resources. At the same time, fighting in Europe raged around Herrnhut, so the war touched Moravians on both sides

¹⁰ Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 35; William J. Murtagh, *Moravian Architecture and Town Planning: Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Other Eighteenth-Century American Settlements* (Philadelphia, 1967), 46–48, 69–73, 79–82; Cutcliffe and Huetter, “Perfection in the Mechanical Arts,” 162.

¹¹ Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia, 2007), 139–41; Paul Peucker, *A Time of Sifting: Mystical Marriage and the Crisis of Moravian Piety in the Eighteenth Century* (University Park, PA, 2015), 26–28.

¹² Daniel K. Richter, *Native Americans’ Pennsylvania* (University Park, PA, 2005), 54–66; Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 137–46.

¹³ Minutes of *Aufseher Collegium*, Aug. 1, 1763, trans. Jeannette Norfleet, BethCong:130, MAB. In spite of their many other restrictions, Moravians were permitted private property.

of the globe. The effects of the war, along with years of imprudent fiscal management by Zinzendorf, created a financial crisis on top of psychological stresses.¹⁴

As church leaders sought to pay off mounting debts, Bethlehem's General Economy came under scrutiny. The leaders had considered ending the communitarian arrangement as early as 1748, but members of the community had mixed feelings about this prospect. While the General Economy may or may not have been intended to be permanent (historians disagree on this point), it had become for some members an important part of their spiritual lives, and they were reluctant to abandon it.¹⁵ Others felt differently; the population of Bethlehem had grown, and there were complaints about shortages of food and clothing, overly austere living conditions, and the unequal division of labor. For some, the enthusiasm for living in separate choirs had waned; they wanted more traditional families. At least a few craftsmen were tired of working under the heavy hand of the church and wished to operate independently, while single brothers, who outnumbered single sisters, may have resented the rule against marrying outsiders.¹⁶ In 1762, two years after Zinzendorf's death, Herrnhut leaders finally ended the General Economy, and Bethlehem transitioned from communal living to capitalism and more orthodox ways of living and worshipping. This did not occur without problems, as Demuth's experience shows. Along with other community members, Demuth grew discontented and even disobedient in these unsettling times, and church leaders frequently chastised him for his indiscretions.

One clash came in July 1762 over Demuth's failure to attend a community Lovefeast where he was supposed to play his trombone.¹⁷ As punishment, the elders temporarily banned Demuth and other errant musicians

¹⁴Hellmuth Erbe, *Bethlehem, Pa.: A Communitistic Herrnhut Colony of the 18th Century* (Stuttgart, Ger., 1929), 104–14; Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 135–46; Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 28–31.

¹⁵Smaby states the economy was meant to be permanent. Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 34. Engel reaches the opposite conclusion. Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 146–53.

¹⁶Cutcliffe and Huetter, "Perfection in the Mechanical Arts," 163. In 1754, according to Gollin, there was "one single Sister for every seven single Brethren." Gollin, "Family Surrogates in Colonial America," 655. Smaby found the adult population between 1754 and 1763 was 44 percent female and 56 percent male. Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 54.

¹⁷The Lovefeast (*Liebesmahl*) is a worship service in which participants "sang hymns and liturgies and shared a simple meal of buns and coffee or chocolate." Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 46. It remains an important custom in the Moravian Church today. See "The Lovefeast," *Moravian Church in North America*, last modified 2003, <http://www.moravian.org/faith-a-congregations/the-lovefeast/>. Music was an important component of Moravian worship. Visitors to Bethlehem frequently commented on the skill of the town's musicians. Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 21–22, 179–80.

from Communion and from playing their instruments.¹⁸ Demuth also ran into trouble because of his attitude in the workshop. When church leaders abolished the General Economy, they allowed some craftsmen to work independently but maintained ownership of such crucial businesses as milling, brewing, linen weaving, and carpentry. Workers in these trades received a set wage from the church rather than working for themselves. This system of paying one set of workers a fixed wage while allowing others to work independently seemed unfair to some participants and was bound to cause problems. To add to the brothers' disgruntlement, as Gillian Lindt Gollin suggests, pay rates in Bethlehem may have been lower than in the rest of the colony.¹⁹ In August 1763, Bethlehem's *Aufseher Collegium* (board of supervisors) learned of growing rebellion among the carpenters. Brother Sturgis had walked out of the shop, and "Brother Demuth did not want to work for fair weekly wage but rather wanted to be paid by the piece."²⁰ The following year (September 1764), Demuth's name again came before the supervisors because he was demanding a daily wage of five shillings. The board offered four shillings, six pence a day, reduced to four shillings in winter, and declared, "if [Demuth] was not satisfied with that he could look for work where he wished, only not in his trade."²¹

About the same time he was complaining about his pay, Demuth was again charged with misconduct in church. Congregational leaders claimed that he was glancing so frequently at the single sisters during worship that he distracted the other musicians. They decided the musicians could no longer play facing the sisters and again barred Demuth from playing. Shortly afterward, Demuth, along with others, was once more held back from Communion.²²

The next year the situation deteriorated further. On July 8, 1765, Brother John Christian Richter, head of the carpenter shop, reported to the supervisors that Demuth had accepted work from two other brothers without informing him, violating shop rules. Richter complained bitterly that "Demuth is trying in every way to be and act independently; his desire

¹⁸ Diary of the Single Brothers in Bethlehem (hereafter Single Brothers' Diary), July 31, 1762, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB.

¹⁹ Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 173; Gollin, "Family Surrogates in Colonial America," 656.

²⁰ Minutes of *Aufseher Collegium*, Aug. 17 and 22, 1763, trans. Jeannette Norfleet, BethCong:130, MAB.

²¹ Minutes of *Aufseher Collegium*, Sept. 24, 1764, trans. Jeannette Norfleet, BethCong:130, MAB.

²² When he apologized in writing he regained his trombone privileges. Single Brothers' Diary, Sept. 17 and 21, 1764, and Oct. 20, 1764, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB.

is not to work under a master." The board vowed that Demuth "could not and should not be established for himself. If that does not please him, he can go where he wants." Two days later they spoke to Demuth and urged him to comply with regulations, which he promised to do.²³

Historian Beverly Prior Smaby emphasizes that it was not unusual for church leaders to withhold members from Communion if they judged them to not be in proper spiritual condition.²⁴ Demuth seemed penitent, and he was readmitted to Communion each time, but it seems that he could not conform to congregational expectations. The Bethlehem system was meant to control behavior in order to ensure communal and spiritual harmony; if a member acted in ways "considered damaging" to the congregation, the individual was required to leave. Historian Kate Carté Engel sees little evidence of members challenging authority during the General Economy and theorizes that discontents probably left by choice. Likewise, Smaby notes the decision to dismiss unruly congregational members "was not taken very frequently."²⁵ However, dismissal was precisely what Demuth faced. On August 4, 1766, the Single Brothers' diary reported that Demuth, "with whom we have had patience and have so often reminded and warned[, but who] still went his own way[,] received the *Consilium Abeundi*."²⁶ Literally "advice to leave," this command is a traditional way of dismissing a student from university or church school in Germany.²⁷ Four other men were ordered out at the same time; the diary's year-end summary confirms the men's departure, describing them as "harmful and dangerous people."²⁸

Moravian records show that such expulsions may have been rare, but they were not unique. Shoemaker Jacob Musch "left [Bethlehem] in disrepute in 1759." He relocated to Easton and later sued the church (without

²³ Minutes of *Aufseher Collegium*, July 8, 16, and 18, 1765, trans. Jeannette Norfleet, BethCong:130, MAB.

²⁴ Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 17–18.

²⁵ Engel, *Religion and Profit*, 41; Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 23.

²⁶ "Krigte der bekannte Crph Demuth, den wir so viele Jahren mit Gedult getragen, und so oft erinnert und gewarnt worden, und doch immer seinen eigenen Gang fortgegangen ist, Consilium abeundi," Single Brothers' Diary, Aug. 4, 1766, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB.

²⁷ *International Dictionary*, s.v. "consilium abeundi," accessed Feb. 27, 2017, http://international-dictionary.com/definitions/?english_word=consilium_abeundi.

²⁸ "Von uns entlassen: Jos Sturzeous, Phil. Stöhr, und Christoph Demuth. Schädliche und gefährliche Leute," Single Brothers' Diary, Dec. 5, 1766, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB. Smaby found that single brothers consistently left at a higher rate than single women from 1754 to 1834 (peaking in 1764), but she does not distinguish between voluntary and forced outmigration; Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 67–69.

success) for back wages of £525. Jacob Schoen received *Consilium Abeundi* in 1760 after being chastised for his misbehavior. In 1764 master potter John Michael Odenwald was ordered out following repeated warnings. He had “given himself over to drink” and “finally arrived in such circumstances regarding women that . . . he received the *Consilium Abeundi*.”²⁹

After he left Bethlehem, Demuth wrote back to Brother Matheus to report that he was moving from place to place, staying with other Moravians, and part of a local church. He also confided that he had found someone he wished to marry, if elders consented. The letter shows that although Demuth had been dismissed, he still wanted church approval for his actions; it also suggests that part of his discontent may indeed have stemmed from the scarcity of single women in Bethlehem.³⁰ In March 1767, Demuth wrote to the Bethlehem elders from Lancaster, a borough about seventy miles from Bethlehem. He confessed that “a free spirit” had controlled him and pleaded for forgiveness.³¹ Church leaders absolved Demuth, but they did not want him back. They suggested that he stay in Lancaster or choose a country congregation such as Wachau (Wachovia), North Carolina, where he could easily find work.³² Demuth made one last attempt. In mid-May 1767, he traveled to Bethlehem to ask if he could return and “have a little place” there—meaning, perhaps, a home and a shop where he could be his own master. The brothers warned him they would not tolerate his former behavior, and Demuth left, promising to pray about his situation.³³

²⁹ Joseph Mortimer Levering, *A History of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1741–1892* (Bethlehem, PA, 1903), 380; Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 156–59; and Single Brethrens’ Diary, July 29–30, 1764, trans. Katherine Carté Engel, Bethlehem Digital History Project, http://bdhp.moravian.edu/community_records/catalogs_diary/single_brethren/singlebros1764.html.

³⁰ Demuth to Brother Matheus, n.d., BethCong268, MAB. Demuth does not give a location, but he may have already been in Lancaster. His *Lebenslauf* (a memoir that faithful Moravians wrote, or had written for them, at the end of life) states that he moved to Lancaster in 1766. Memoirs, Lancaster 0095, MAB. My thanks to Scott Paul Gordon for locating Demuth’s memoir and introducing me to the Moravian Archives staff.

³¹ Demuth to Brothers, “. . . und ich mus gestehen das mich ein freygeistisches wesen regired hat . . .” Mar. 1, 1767, trans. Alan Keyser, BethCong543, MAB. There are thirty letters (several from the same writer) requesting forgiveness and readmission in this file, further showing that Demuth’s situation was not unusual.

³² “. . . sich Lancaster oder eine andre Land Gemeine zum Aufenthalt zu erwehlen . . . Wo Er in Salem arbeit gnug finden werde,” Single Brothers’ Diary, Apr. 29, 1767, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB. On Moravians in “town and country” congregations such as Lancaster, which were not organized communally, see Scott Paul Gordon, “Entangled by the World: William Henry and ‘Mixed’ Living in Moravian Town and Country Congregations,” *Journal of Moravian History* 8 (2010): 7–52.

³³ “. . . jedoch wolte Er bitten wenn es seyn könnte ihm wieder ein plätzgen in Bethlehem zu erlauben,” Single Brothers’ Diary, May 20, 1767, trans. Alan Keyser, BethSB03:2, MAB.

In the end, Demuth opted to move to Lancaster, and there he entered the second phase of his life in a locale that suited him far better than Bethlehem. No longer a single brother in a closed and sometimes stifling community, in Lancaster Demuth found a growing urban center where he could pursue his craft on his own terms, without the close oversight of the elders, and where he could fulfill his desires to become an independent artisan and find a wife.³⁴

Demuth had chosen a good location to realize these ambitions. By the 1770s, Lancaster was home to a lively merchant and industrial community that served local customers and regional markets extending well into the backcountry and to the south. From 1799 to 1813 it was the state capital, by 1800 it was the largest inland settlement in the nation, and in 1818 it was officially designated a city.³⁵ As he settled in, Demuth could take further comfort in the fact that Lancaster had a sizable population of fellow German speakers and an active Moravian congregation. But there were many other denominations as well, so the town offered a different—and perhaps welcome—experience from Bethlehem, where church officials closely scrutinized and, when necessary, corrected members' personal behavior. On the other hand, coming from a homogenous settlement, Demuth may have been shocked by the feelings of some Lancastrians; in those early years, Moravians were, as historian Jerome Wood describes, “a religious minority in a very hostile community.”³⁶ Feelings toward Moravians ran so high, in fact, that prominent Lancaster citizen William Henry in the 1760s agonized about joining that congregation because it would so adversely affect his social and economic status. Reflecting on this decision in his memoir, he recalled Moravians were “a despised people.”³⁷ Besides their communitarian lifestyle, which upset the expected social order and allowed women too much power, and their borderline erotic emphasis on Christ's wounds, Moravians were often criticized because of their desire to unite their church, the German Reformed, and the Lutherans into one denomination. This ecumenical spirit had caused problems in Lancaster years before Demuth arrived. In the 1740s, the Lancaster Lutheran congregation split in two because the minister, Laurentius Thorstenson

³⁴ For unknown reasons, Demuth did not marry the woman he mentioned in his earlier letter.

³⁵ Jerome H. Wood Jr., *Conestoga Crossroads: Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1790* (Harrisburg, PA, 1979), 93–94; “History,” *City of Lancaster*, accessed Feb. 27, 2017, <http://www.cityoflancasterpa.com/visitor/history>.

³⁶ Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 186.

³⁷ Gordon, “Entangled by the World,” 17–19.

Nyberg, and some members were drawn to Moravian theology. The factions resorted to name calling, violence, letters to the press, locking each other out of church, and, finally, legal action. This resulted in a defeat for the pro-Moravian group, who in 1746–48 established their own congregation: St. Andrew's Moravian. By 1758, 254 people were associated with St. Andrew's, fifty-three of them full-fledged members.³⁸

Although he had run afoul of congregational leaders in Bethlehem and might have faced hostility from Lancaster's non-Moravians, Demuth did not give up on the only church he had ever known. He attended St. Andrew's, and that is likely where he met his future wife, Elizabeth "Lisel" Hartaffel, whose family members had emigrated from Germany twenty years before and belonged to the congregation.³⁹ On November 2, 1767, the couple met with Elizabeth's parents, Sophia and Robert Hartaffel, to discuss terms, and on November 12, 1767, they were married by Anglican minister Thomas Barton.⁴⁰

With marriage, a new location, and some maturity, Demuth became a changed man. He was readmitted to the church in 1772, and by 1773 he and Elizabeth were listed among the thirty-two couples in the congregation's Married Couples' Choir. Even before Demuth was reinstated, their children, beginning with Maria (born November 1768), were baptized in the church. By 1779, Demuth was serving as a *Diener* (church officer), and he and Elizabeth remained active members of the congregation for the rest of their lives.⁴¹ Marriage also facilitated Demuth's entry into Lancaster's community of artisans. Demuth's father-in-law, Robert Hartaffel, was a snuff maker; under his tutelage—and drawing on the skills he had learned

³⁸ Mark Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism: Congregational Life and Religious Diversity in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 1730–1820* (University Park, PA, 2009), 61–72; 98–105; Fogleman, *Jesus is Female*, 206–12; Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 184–87.

³⁹ Ralph Beaver Strassburger and William John Hinke, eds., *Pennsylvania German Pioneers*, vol. 1, 1727–1775 (1934; repr., Baltimore, 1980), 360–61; Elizabeth Hartaffel Demuth obituary, "Burials," Lancaster Moravian Church records (photocopy of typescript in possession of congregation), entry #814, LCHSCR:284.6L244cr, Lancaster County Historical Society (hereafter LCHS).

⁴⁰ It is unclear whether Moravian pastor Andrew Langgaard was out of town or if he refused to officiate at the wedding, since Demuth was not yet fully restored to membership. Diary of Lancaster Moravian Church, 1767, MSS., MAB. Elizabeth is referred to as "Lisel" in the diary. On Barton and the Moravian ministers, see Häberlein, *The Practice of Pluralism*, 118–24, 102.

⁴¹ The couple's membership is confirmed in the congregational catalogues. Membership Catalogues of Lancaster Moravian Church, 1783, 1784, 1785, 1791, 1803, 1804, 1806, 1810, and 1812, MSS., MAB. *Diener* translates as "servant." In Demuth's time, the *Diener(in)* (man or woman) "held a special office or carried out a specified responsibility within the Moravian community." Today the *diener* serves the Lovefeast meal. Glossary, s.v. "Diener," *Bethlehem Digital History Project*, last modified Sept. 2005, http://bdhp.moravian.edu/addtl_resources/glossary.html.

in the Bethlehem carpentry shop and mills—Demuth quickly learned the trade. By 1773 he was listed as a tobacconist on tax rolls.⁴²

Hartaffel may well have welcomed Demuth's help in his business. Tobacco, especially snuff, was a very popular product at the time. Scholars have written extensively on the economic and cultural place of tobacco in America. Wide-ranging studies address the importance of the crop to the survival of European settlers in the Chesapeake, the increasing use of slave labor in its cultivation, the rise of large tobacco companies, and changing attitudes toward tobacco use in the twentieth century.⁴³ Still, there are few scholarly studies of tobacco manufacturing and trade in the colonial and early national years. As Barbara Hahn points out, both historians and the general public usually locate the beginnings of the tobacco industry in the 1880s or 1890s with the rise of "Big Business." Hahn's work focuses on early tobacco manufacturing in Virginia, and she challenges the perception that the South remained exclusively agrarian while the North industrialized. Given Virginia's extensive cultivation of the crop, it is understandable that the state was a leader in processing and shipping tobacco. But Pennsylvania tobacconists such as Hartaffel and Demuth were part of what Hahn describes as a rapidly expanding national "commodity web" of tobacco processing, distribution, and consumption.⁴⁴ In fact, Pennsylvania's output rivaled—and, depending on the calculus used, even surpassed—that of Virginia. In 1810 Virginia manufactured 2,726,713 pounds of tobacco products with a combined value of \$469,000. Pennsylvania's output was just slightly behind—2,186,757 pounds, valued at \$410,910. Maryland manufactured tobacco products worth just \$200,000.⁴⁵ In terms of the percentage of overall production, Pennsylvania held a slight lead over the tobacco-producing states of Virginia and Maryland. In 1810 Pennsylvania accounted for 38.2 percent of the nation's total manufactured tobacco products, compared to Virginia's 37.2 percent and Maryland's 15.8 percent.⁴⁶ While Virginians and Marylanders were processing chewing and smoking tobacco and packing leaves for redistri-

⁴² Lancaster Borough Taxes, 1763–1786, microfilm, LCHS.

⁴³ See, for example, Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986); T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1985); Barbara Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright: Creating an American Commodity, 1617–1937* (Baltimore, 2011); and Allan M. Brandt, *The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, and Deadly Persistence of the Product that Defined America* (New York, 2007).

⁴⁴ Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 53.

⁴⁵ Tench Coxe, "A Series of Tables of the Several Branches of American Manufactures," in Coxe, *A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States of America for the Year 1810* (Philadelphia, 1814), 29, 44.

⁴⁶ The percentages are shown in Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 48.

bution, in Pennsylvania most of the output was in the form of snuff (Hartaffel and Demuth's specialty) and, to a lesser extent, cigars.⁴⁷

The importance of snuff to the early national economy is shown by Congress's decision in 1795 to tax snuff mills and machinery as part of Alexander Hamilton's fiscal recovery plan. It is also evident in the rapid growth of the industry. The report of the federal snuff tax shows there were twenty-eight snuff mills in the United States, six of them in Pennsylvania.⁴⁸ In the next fifteen years, the industry expanded dramatically. Tench Coxe's 1810 report on manufactures shows Pennsylvania boasted a total of sixty-seven snuff mills, five of them in Lancaster County.⁴⁹

The snuff industry flourished because so many men and women used and became addicted to it. At the age of sixty-eight, Philadelphia resident Elizabeth Drinker recorded in her diary that she had used snuff for "upwards of 50 years." Three years later, she lamented her dependence on snuff: "I wish I could easily leave it off."⁵⁰ Snuff was valued, both in Europe and America, because it could be used by laborers without risk of fire, as well as for its stimulant and medicinal qualities. French missionary Jean-Baptiste Labat in 1742 praised snuff for its power to regulate circulation, heal colds and headaches, treat apoplexy and "black melancholy," and provide relief in childbirth.⁵¹ Philadelphia tobacconists praised the health benefits of snuff in their newspaper advertisements. Richard Bowyer said his product was a "cure for the Headach, and a great Preserver of the Eyes." Christopher Marshall and Son touted their imported Royal Patented Medicinal Snuff as "a Stimulator and Purgative, [which acts] on the Stomach and Lungs as an Attenuator, and on the Blood and Juices as an Alternative."⁵²

⁴⁷ Coxe, "A Series of Tables," 29. By the mid-nineteenth century, tobacco became an important crop for Pennsylvania, particularly in the Lancaster and York areas, but in this early period tobacconists relied on tobacco imported from the South. Stevenson Whitcomb Fletcher, *Pennsylvania Agriculture and Country Life, 1640–1940* (Harrisburg, PA, 1950), 165–66; Daniel B. Good, "The Localization of Tobacco Production in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History* 49 (1982): 193–94.

⁴⁸ The count was taken between October 1, 1795, and September 30, 1796. "A Statement of the Revenue arising on Mills and Machinery used in the manufacture of Snuff, from the 1st day of October, 1795, to the 30th September, 1796," in *American State Papers: Finance*, 1:564. The snuff tax, like the federal whiskey tax and the 1798 window tax, was wildly unpopular; it was suspended in 1796 and repealed in 1800. See Chauncey Mitchell Depew, *One Hundred Years of American Commerce* (New York, 1895), 420.

⁴⁹ Philadelphia had the most mills (twenty-seven), while Northampton and York Counties had ten each. Coxe, "A Series of Tables," 29, 64, 66.

⁵⁰ Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker: The Life Cycle of an Eighteenth-Century Woman*, abridged ed. (Boston, 1994), 261, 280.

⁵¹ Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amérique*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1742), quoted in Jordan Goodman, *Tobacco in History: The Cultures of Dependence* (London, 1994), 77.

⁵² "Snuff good for the Headach and great Preserver of the eyes . . .," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 22,

Snuff can be used orally (“dipped”), but inhaling it into the nostrils was the usual method in early America. Users carried the finely ground tobacco in handy pocket-sized containers; well-to-do snuff takers brandished expensive snuff boxes made of rare woods, ivory, or silver as status symbols. For the elite, there was an etiquette associated with snuff use that included bowing with snuff box extended in the left hand and tapping it several times with the right before introducing a pinch of snuff into the nose, producing a cleansing sneeze. Snuff also had a practical side: inhaling it shielded the user—much as a perfumed handkerchief did—from the unpleasant smells of unwashed bodies and clothing emanating from those nearby.⁵³

Even in these early days, there were people opposed to the use of tobacco, including Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush, who decried its adverse health effects and the time people wasted using it.⁵⁴ One critic, who called himself simply “An Old Correspondent,” editorialized at length in May 1818 on the “pernicious effects of the use of Tobacco . . . the baneful, the accursed Weed!”⁵⁵ In May 1832, physician A. McAllister castigated those who prescribed tobacco for medicinal purposes or to cure skin diseases such as “scald-head” or other “cutaneous eruptions.” He warned of the sometimes fatal consequences of taking tobacco internally as well as applying it topically and called its use an “indecent practice” that “paves the way to drunkenness.”⁵⁶ The moral dilemma of using a product grown by enslaved African Americans laboring in abysmal conditions seems not to have troubled people at the time, other than perhaps the most ardent abolitionists. On the contrary, the connection between slavery and tobacco was emphasized in the use of African American images on cigar boxes and labels for tobacco and snuff in Europe and the United States.

We know now that those pointing to the health dangers that tobacco posed were correct, but early consumers paid little heed. Because of the high demand, there was money to be made in the tobacco trade, as Robert Hartaffel’s career trajectory illustrates. Hartaffel came to America trained in organ building and repairing, but he gave up making musical instruments, a costly commodity for which there was limited demand, and turned

1756; “Smith’s Royal Patent Medicinal Snuff,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Mar. 17, 1763.

⁵³ Eric Burns, *The Smoke of the Gods: A Social History of Tobacco* (Philadelphia, 2007), 120–22; Robert K. Heiman, *Tobacco and Americans* (New York, 1960), 64.

⁵⁴ Benjamin Rush, *Essays, Literary, Moral and Philosophical* (Philadelphia, 1798), 261–70.

⁵⁵ “Old Correspondent” to Mr. Poulson, *Lancaster Journal*, May 18, 1818; reprinted from the *Philadelphia Advertiser*.

⁵⁶ A. McAllister, M.D., *A Dissertation on the Medical Properties and Injurious Effects of the Habitual Use of Tobacco* (Boston, 1832), 11, 16–17.



Fig. 1: Robert Hartaffel purchased this property in 1771. Demuth bought it in 1782, and it remained the Demuth Tobacco Shop until 2010. Photograph, 2007, by Diane Wenger.

to snuff. He even left the organ commissioned by the Lancaster Moravian church uncompleted as he pursued the tobacco trade.⁵⁷ As a tobacconist, Hartaffel did well enough that, by 1771, he was able to buy a relatively new two-story brick townhouse on Lancaster's East King Street to reflect his rising economic and social status.⁵⁸ At twenty-seven by thirty-three feet, with a large, two-story attached kitchen and associated outbuildings, it had ample room for family living as well as sales and work space (fig. 1).⁵⁹

⁵⁷The congregation hired Hartaffel to build an organ in 1756 but lost patience and gave the commission to David Tannenbergh in 1762. In 1751 Hartaffel repaired the organ at Bethlehem, but I have found no evidence that he and Demuth crossed paths there. Raymond J. Brunner, *That Ingenious business: Pennsylvania German Organ Builders* (Birdsboro, PA, 1990), 107. An unfinished organ is listed in Hartaffel's probate inventory, Hartaffel family file, LCHS.

⁵⁸Tax records show that he was living in a rental property before the purchase. Christian Huber and wife Margaret sold the property to Hartaffel on October 14, 1771, for £512. A related deed states that the house had been recently built by John Hoff. Lancaster County Deed Book QQ, microfilm, 327, 331, 337, LCHS.

⁵⁹US Direct Tax, 1798, microfilm, LCHS.

One might expect that, as a German-speaking immigrant, Hartaffel would prefer a vernacular German form, but he chose a modish house built in what architectural historian Bernard Herman describes as “the British-American urban image.” Inside the house, the Hartaffels and, later, the Demuths maintained at least some German customs, including using stoves for heating, but the exterior of the home reflected Anglo-American style. Such duality was part of being a German immigrant (or first-generation German) in colonial America.⁶⁰ For Hartaffel and Demuth, familiarity with German language and culture was an asset since there were so many people of German descent in Lancaster, but they did not limit their customers or suppliers to fellow German speakers. They were also part of the dominant Anglo-American business and political community, where English was the preferred language, and they functioned in both spheres. Although German was his first language, by 1796 Demuth was keeping his business records in English. As historians have argued elsewhere about Pennsylvania Germans, when it came to doing business, “the language of trade transcended ethnicity.”⁶¹

Besides being fashionable, Hartaffel’s new house was in a good location to draw both local and transient customers. King Street was Lancaster’s principal thoroughfare; it was a heavily traveled route leading west to the Susquehanna River at Columbia and east to Philadelphia, the commercial and financial hub of the colonies. The building itself was just one block from the town square, site of the court house, market, and other businesses, and it was next door to the William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, tavern.⁶²

Demuth’s arrival in Lancaster coincided with the early years of the imperial crisis. As tensions with Great Britain grew, many town businessmen became staunch supporters of nonimportation.⁶³ When war came, some businesses—and given the popularity of tobacco, Hartaffel’s shop may have been among them—benefitted from trade with the Continental

⁶⁰ On the contrast between Pennsylvania German and British-American urban styles in Lancaster, see Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780–1830* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2005), 77–99. Hartaffel’s probate inventory lists a “round iron stove,” valued at three pounds, and Demuth’s inventory includes a stove and pipe worth three dollars. Photocopies, Hartaffel and Demuth family files, LCHS.

⁶¹ Wenger and Garrison, “Commerce and Culture,” 179.

⁶² Jacob Demuth, who took over the shop from his father, had twenty children by three wives. He bought the former tavern and cut a door through the common wall to provide additional space. It is now the Demuth Foundation Museum. Gerald S. Lestz, *Charles Demuth and Friends* (Lancaster, PA, 2003), 9–10.

⁶³ Patrick Spero, “Americanization of the Pennsylvania Almanac,” in *Pennsylvania’s Revolution*, ed. William Pencak (University Park, PA, 2010), 43.

Army, the nearby prisoner of war camp, and the influx of Philadelphians fleeing British occupation. Gunsmiths, builders of Conestoga wagons, tanners, and textile workers, in particular, saw increased business. Historian Jerome H. Wood notes that, as time went on, inflation, shortages, and depreciating currency forced some shops to close. But John B. Frantz and William Pencak argue that the town emerged relatively unscathed; there was no fighting in the area, and, because of the crucial role its businesses played in provisioning the Continental Army, the region prospered, “even if the prosperity was unevenly distributed.”⁶⁴

Still, the war offered those opposed to Moravians another excuse for suspicion and harassment of the group, and the conflict caused individual Moravians again to rethink their pacifist stance and to decide where to put their loyalty.⁶⁵ The church’s official position was that members should avoid politics, but there was a great deal of outside pressure on Moravian men to affirm their allegiance to the American cause and serve in the militia. This was particularly true in communities like Lancaster, where Moravians’ livelihoods and general well-being depended on the good will of non-Moravian neighbors. As a result, many Lancaster Moravians acceded to Patriots’ demands. Some took these actions eagerly, while others acted, as Scott Paul Gordon explains, “out of prudence.”⁶⁶ Whether from patriotism or prudence, Demuth and Robert Hartaffel were among those who complied. The men took the Oath of Allegiance and Fidelity on September 27, 1777, and Demuth served as a private in Lancaster’s Battalion of Associators. His brother-in-law, nineteen-year-old Frederick Hartaffel, went a step further and joined the Pennsylvania Battalion of the Continental Army.⁶⁷

Hartaffel’s business survived the war, but tragedy struck the family in 1782, when both Robert and Frederick Hartaffel died.⁶⁸ Since Frederick

⁶⁴ Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 144–55; John B. Frantz and William Pencak, *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland* (University Park, PA, 1998), xxii.

⁶⁵ Moravians living in such noncommunal settlements as Lancaster tended to side with those around them. Bethlehem leaders advocated neutrality but leaned toward Loyalism. By the end of the war, American Moravians supported the Patriot cause. Smaby, *Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem*, 39–42.

⁶⁶ Scott Paul Gordon, “Patriots and Neighbors: Pennsylvania Moravians in the American Revolution,” *Journal of Moravian History* 12 (2012): 111–42.

⁶⁷ “Oaths of Allegiance Index (1777–1789),” Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, accessed Feb. 27, 2017, <http://web.co.lancaster.pa.us/986/Oaths-of-Allegiance-Index-1777-1789>. The men’s service is described in *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 2, vol. 13, ed. William B. Egle (Harrisburg, PA, 1887), 335–36; and *Pennsylvania Archives*, ser. 5, vol. 2, ed. Thomas Lynch Montgomery (Harrisburg, PA, 1906), 489–92.

⁶⁸ “Burial Book of Moravian Church, Lancaster,” in *Pennsylvania Vital Records: From the “Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine” and the “Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,”* vol. 1 (Baltimore, 1983), 400.

was Hartaffel's only male heir, Demuth stepped in and took over the tobacco operation. In 1786 Demuth and his family, including five children ranging in age from five to eighteen years, moved in with Hartaffel's widow and her daughters, and he paid taxes on the house, a cow, a horse, a "pleasurable carriage," and the tobacco mill. Three years later, in 1789, he bought the property from his mother-in-law and Hartaffel's other heirs for £450.⁶⁹

A one-story wood "tobacco house," thirty-two by twenty-six feet, stood in the rear of the Hartaffel-Demuth town lot and was accessed by an alley.⁷⁰ This structure was probably where the men processed snuff. The public sales room was on the first floor of the home, facing the street. It was typical for a businessman and his family to live above the shop, and this front room (where the tobacco shop was still located two hundred years later) was a more visible location than the tobacco house. Demuth's probate inventory provides a glimpse into these spaces. His tools included a tobacco press, hook and scissors, five cigar presses, and two brands—presumably to burn a distinctive mark on tobacco casks. The sales room contained paper and wrapping yarn, canisters, scales and weights, and "shelves and shop furniture." Store inventory included over one thousand "Spanish" and "common" cigars ("segars"), pipes, and pipe stems. The overlap between living space and business is evident in the fact that barrels of tobacco were stored in the cellar and garret as well as in the shop.⁷¹

The inventory also lists a sign that would have identified the shop for passersby. At some point, additional advertising came in the form of a wooden carved figure—a man in colonial dress, with tobacco leaf in one hand and a snuff box in the other—which stood in front of the shop.⁷² However, there is no evidence that Demuth advertised in print, as his son Jacob would do when he took over the shop from his father (fig. 2). Rather, Demuth likely relied on fellow Moravians, business associates, and trusted customers to promote his business and help him ascertain the creditworthiness of potential clients whom he did not know personally.

⁶⁹ Lancaster Borough Taxes, 1786, microfilm, LCHS. The sale was subject to Sophia's dower rights and included a provision that she would stay in the home through her natural life. Lancaster County Deed Book QQ, 332, microfilm, LCHS.

⁷⁰ US Direct Tax, 1798, microfilm, LCHS. There was also a smoke house and wood frame barn on the site.

⁷¹ Demuth family file, LCHS.

⁷² "The Tobacco Man" survives in the Demuth Foundation collection; it is attributed to Christopher's son John (1771–1822) and is considered one of the earliest examples of American tobacco shop advertising. Lestz, *Charles Demuth and Friends*, 71; Farnham, *Charles Demuth*, 34–36.

Jacob Demuth,
TOBACCONIST,
 BEGS leave to inform his friends & the public
 in general, that he has the following
SNUFFS
 In bottles, ready for delivery to customer's orders,
 to wit :
No. 1, Ruppee, Maceboy and
Scotch SNUFFS,
 Which he hereby offers for sale, wholesale and
 retail, at his father's, (Christian Demuth's) old
 stand, in East King-street, Lancaster.
 March 4, 397-6222

Fig. 2: In 1818 Jacob Demuth advertised in the *Lancaster Journal* that he had taken over his father's business. Notice the printer's error in writing Christian instead of Christopher. Available online at Franklin & Marshall Digital Collections, <http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/FranklinMarshall/default.aspx#panel=home>.

This seems to have been a satisfactory business strategy. By 1800 Demuth had earned enough income to purchase investment properties in Lancaster, and his total real estate holdings were valued at \$6,472—the eleventh-highest assessment of the 850 taxpayers in the borough—putting him in the top 5 percent of property owners. His King Street property alone was worth \$2,066—well above the average town property value of \$730. By this time, Demuth was one of eight tobacconists in Lancaster, two others of whom were also making and selling snuff, but in terms of real estate, Demuth far outstripped his peers. The nearest competitor was Peter Shindle, who owned property worth just over \$1,000, while the other tobacconists owned considerably less property than Shindle.⁷³

Real estate acquisitions are just one indication of Demuth's increasing success and business acumen. By the early 1800s, he was planning to expand the business and build a larger facility. Sometime between 1801, when he started acquiring materials, and 1815, when it appears on the

⁷³ US Direct Tax, 1798, microfilm, LCHS; Richard E. Stevens, comp. and ed., "Lancaster, PA 1800 Tax List," Datasets for Download, last modified Oct. 1, 2009, <http://www.math.udel.edu/~rstevens/datasets.html>. Advertisements in the *Lancaster Journal*, June 10, 1797, show that Peter Shindle and John Gallagher also sold snuff.

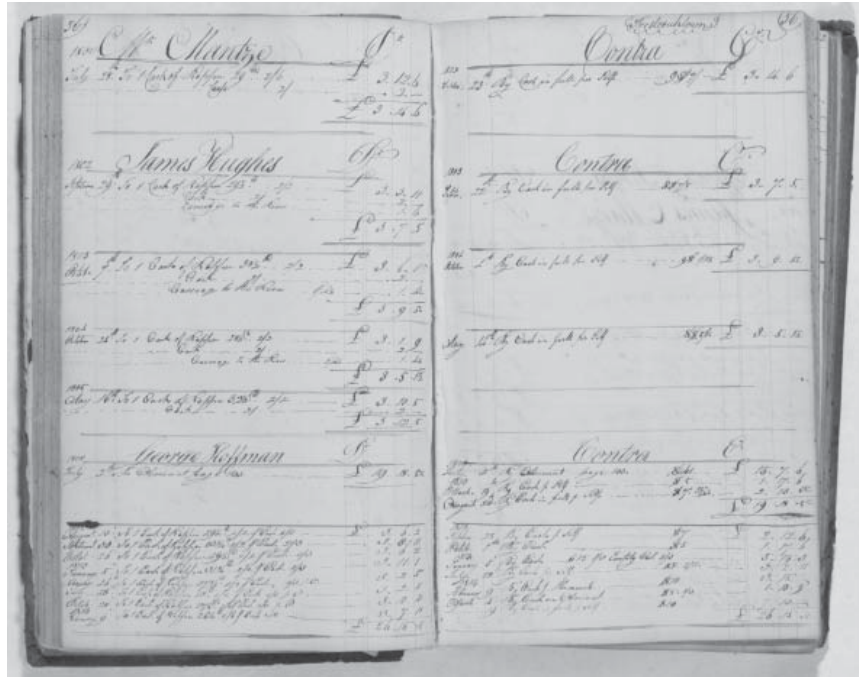


Fig. 3: Demuth kept track of customers' purchases and payments by recording them as debits ("Dr") and credits ("Contra") in his ledger. Jacob Demuth Ledger, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Lancaster direct tax list, Demuth erected a large brick factory behind his home. This was a smart investment, for it protected his equipment and inventory from fire better than the old wooden shop while signaling a message of stability and success to the community. Significantly, he was the only tobacconist in town with such a grand building.⁷⁴

Demuth's ledger, housed in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, provides additional insight into his business operation, production, transportation methods, and role in the regional tobacco commodity web (fig. 3). Unfortunately, the ledger does not capture information about the retail ("walk-in") side of his business, since small cash transactions typically went unrecorded in this era. However, it does provide information on his whole-

⁷⁴ From 1801 through 1805, Demuth purchased 4,680 feet of boards and 31,000 shingles from Joseph Poole and John Mathioud. Because he paid for the materials partly with snuff, the transactions appear in Jacob Demuth Ledger, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Lancaster City Direct Tax, 1815, photocopy, LCHS.

sale business, which was done on a short-term credit basis, and includes customers' names, geographic location, itemized purchases (debits), and payments (credits).⁷⁵

The ledger also shows that about the same time the new factory was going up, Demuth changed his supplier and the type of product he used to make snuff. From 1796 through 1802, his source of tobacco was Jacob Busser of New Holland, Pennsylvania. Busser sold Demuth rolls of plug tobacco in amounts ranging from twenty-five to seventy-five pounds each month, along with smaller amounts of pigtail tobacco. Plug is dried and flavored tobacco that has been formed in a press; pigtail tobacco has been twisted on a wheel and cut into convenient lengths. Both could be used for chewing or smoking, but plug could be grated, using a manual rasp or mill, into snuff.⁷⁶

The source of Busser's tobacco is not stated, but it does not seem he was growing it himself. A writer in the *Lancaster Journal* in 1827 noted that "a number of persons in this county have turned their attention to the raising of Tobacco," and historians generally cite this as the first mention of what would become an important commercial crop in the area.⁷⁷ Busser was not a farmer; tax records describe him as a "tobacconist," and he owned too little land—just one and one-half acres—to farm.⁷⁸ He probably bought tobacco in leaf form in Philadelphia, processed it, and sold it to Demuth, who in turn made some of it into snuff that he sold back to Busser.

Busser disappeared from Demuth's records by 1804, but even before that, in 1802, Demuth began buying tobacco from the Philadelphia partnership of Tunis & Annesley (after 1809, Tunis & Way), which remained his only supplier thereafter. While general storekeepers benefitted from patronizing many different firms to find the right selection of goods at the best price, as a tobacconist, Demuth's main interest was in building a long-term relationship with a reliable merchant who could meet his needs for tobacco and related items.⁷⁹ Tunis & Annesley operated a fleet

⁷⁵ Jacob Demuth Ledger, HSP. There are two inscriptions inside the ledger: "Begun Lancaster November 30, 1796 by Jacob Demuth," and, on the next page, "Begun by Christoph Demuth and son 1796." Unless otherwise noted, all information about his business hereafter comes from the ledger. It is quite possible that other Demuth records are among the holdings of the Demuth Foundation, Lancaster, but this collection is not open for scholarly use.

⁷⁶ Edward Tunis, *Colonial Craftsmen and the Beginning of American Industry* (Baltimore, 1965), 52.

⁷⁷ "Lancaster County Tobacco," *Lancaster Journal*, Mar. 30, 1827.

⁷⁸ Tax returns, Earl Township, Lancaster County, microfilm, LCHS. By 1806 Busser was no longer listed on the county tax records.

⁷⁹ By comparison, Samuel Rex typically patronized various Philadelphia businesses to stock his general store. Wenger, *Country Storekeeper*, 123–25.

of sloops that sailed between Philadelphia and such southern ports as Norfolk, Petersburg, Richmond, Alexandria, Georgetown, Washington, and Baltimore, and tobacco was an important part of their trade.⁸⁰ The tobacco Demuth bought from the firm was different from the tobacco he bought from Busser. It was in leaf form—pressed into hogsheads (large barrels) each weighing over one thousand pounds, but not processed further, as Busser's was. Some was identified as deriving from "Kentucky" or "James River," but the origin of most was not specified. This change, in conjunction with the erection of the factory, indicates that Demuth drastically altered his method of production. Converting plug tobacco into snuff could have been accomplished by simply grinding it in a small, hand-operated mill. In his new structure, however, Demuth had enough space to accommodate enormous hogsheads and to carry out the complex, time-consuming process needed to convert large quantities of leaf tobacco into snuff.⁸¹

There were various ways to grind snuff and power a mill. The 1795 federal report on snuff mills states that Pennsylvania's six snuff mills included "eleven mortars in mills worked by water," one pestle "in mills not worked by hand," and one mill worked by stampers and grinders.⁸² While it is not certain that Demuth's first mill (presumably a small, hand-operated type) is even represented in this assessment, the report suggests the type of equipment he might have installed when he upgraded. It is clear, though, that he did not use water to run the mill, since there was no stream near his property. Logic suggests that he turned to a common alternative at the time: animal power. Indeed, according to family lore, the mill was run by "small donkeys [that] walked in a basement circular treadmill."⁸³

Demuth's records show that he charged two shillings, six pence per pound for his snuff—six pence more than his competitor Peter Shindle

⁸⁰ See, for example, "For Alexandria & Georgetown, The sloop *Patty*," *Philadelphia Gazette & Universal Daily Advertiser*, June 1, 1797; "For Norfolk, Petersburg and Richmond: The schooner *Liberty*," *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*, Oct. 10, 1806.

⁸¹ This typically involved chopping up the leaves, wetting them with a salt solution, and allowing the mixture to ferment for several weeks. Then the product was dried, ground, and sieved; flavoring might be added before the snuff was re-sieved and put aside to age. Carter Litchfield et al., *The Bethlehem Oil Mill, 1745–1934: German Technology in Early Pennsylvania* (Kemblesville, PA, 1984), 63–66. Jacob Demuth's probate inventory included oil of roses, lavender, lemon, and bergamot, all of which could have been used to flavor snuff. Demuth family file, LCHS.

⁸² "Statement of the Revenue arising on Mills and Machinery used in the manufacture of Snuff." Under the category "pestles in mills worked by hand," there is nothing listed for Pennsylvania, although Maryland and South Carolina each had two.

⁸³ Gerald S. Lestz, *Tobacco, Pro & Con: A New Look at an Old Subject* (Lancaster, PA, 1989), 5.

asked.⁸⁴ Whether Demuth's recipe and technique were better than Shindle's or if he was more skilled at marketing, offered better deals for transporting tobacco, or was catering to a different type of clientele is not clear, but he did not lack patronage. In his community study of Lancaster, Jerome Wood described the late eighteenth-century town as "an emporium for the wide hinterland embracing western Pennsylvania and Maryland, as well as the upper portion of the Valley of Virginia."⁸⁵ Demuth's business dealings demonstrate that this pattern continued into the nineteenth century. His trade was remarkable both for its volume and for its wide geographic reach, extending 250 miles from Lancaster and well into the southern tobacco-growing regions. Of sixty-five customers for whom he recorded locations, over 25 percent came from outside Pennsylvania: twelve were from Maryland (Baltimore, Hagerstown, and Frederick), four were from Virginia (Winchester and Richmond), and two were from Georgetown, "City of Washington." Within Pennsylvania, Demuth attracted customers from as far away as Harrisburg, Hummelstown, Reading, Pittsburgh, and Bedford, as well as many Lancaster County locations.

Most wholesale customers were male tavern keepers or grocers, but storekeepers Susanna Thompson, Mary Black, and Catherine "Citey" Fishbach of Carlisle, Widow Warner of Lititz, Widow Wickersham of Harrisburg, and Widow Mary Long of Lancaster were frequent clients. Dr. George Dawson, who, "having received a Medical Education in Europe," specialized in patent medicines as well as general merchandise, also traveled from Carlisle to buy snuff.⁸⁶ Lancaster druggist Charles Heinitch bought snuff for resale and was one of the few customers who delayed paying his bill for so long that Demuth charged him interest.⁸⁷ Some of Demuth's customers had been with the shop a long time; for example, merchant Benjamin Ogle

⁸⁴ The difference shows up in the daybooks of storekeeper Samuel Rex, who patronized both men, and it was the case even before Demuth built the new factory. Rex recorded his purchases from Demuth in his daybook 1, Historic Schaefferstown, Inc. (HSI), and daybook 2, reel 1: AB5, Leon E. Lewis Microfilm Collection (LEL), Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Library, Winterthur, DE. His purchases from Shindle appear in daybook 5, reel 1: AB7, LEL; daybook 17, reel 1: AB12, LEL; daybook 18, HSI; and daybooks 19 and 21 (#417, box 1, Downs Collection, Winterthur). For a list of Rex's daybooks and their current locations, see Wenger, *Country Storekeeper*, Appendix F.

⁸⁵ Wood, *Conestoga Crossroads*, 93–94.

⁸⁶ Dawson advertised his store offerings and recently acquired medical education in the *Carlisle (PA) Gazette*, Dec. 11, 1800, and June 6, 1804.

⁸⁷ After one year, Demuth charged Heinitch three pounds of interest on a fifty-pound debt. Samuel Rex typically allowed his clients one year before charging interest, but city firms preferred a shorter cycle. Wenger, *Country Storekeeper*, 137.

and tavern keeper Jacob Miller of Frederick-Town, Maryland, had previously done business with Hartaffel.⁸⁸

Demuth sold cigars, chewing tobacco, pipes, and other tobacco-related accoutrements, all obtained from Tunis's firm, but his main product was a coarse variety of snuff known as rappee.⁸⁹ Regular customers purchased rappee and other products on credit every month or so, typically paying for a previous order or settling their accounts when they picked up their newest order. Payments came in promptly enough that Demuth seldom had to add interest on their accounts. Customers occasionally sent their payments by mail, sometimes tearing a note in half and sending the two pieces separately. John and Abraham Miller, for instance, were credited in September 1811 "by ½ of a hundred dollar note" and again on October 12 "by ½ of a hundred dollar note."

General storekeepers welcomed payment in country goods, which they could resell in their shops, but Demuth specialized in one product, tobacco, and thus rarely accepted merchandise in exchange. Having no need for additional products to resell, he preferred cash, even if he had to wait a few months for it to arrive. However, it made good business sense for Demuth to take goods in payment if he needed them for his own use, and he recorded these items as customer credits in his ledger. For example, between 1797 and 1813, Lancaster grocer John Gundaker & Co. bought rappee regularly and received credit from Demuth for "sundry goods," which he and his family presumably used in their home. From 1797 to 1802, James Baxter bought snuff and paid Demuth with forty-eight bushels of oats, a necessity to feed the animals powering the mill. Likewise, when Demuth was building the new factory, he purchased lumber and shingles from Joseph Poole and John Mathioud, both of Columbia, Pennsylvania, and paid them with cash and snuff. Between 1814 and 1817, the Lancaster partnership of Ober & Kline bought rappee and cigars and received credit from Demuth for goods that included a keg of salt and one gross of almanacs. This was a rare instance of Demuth buying something other than tobacco products

⁸⁸ Their outstanding debts appear in his probate inventory, Hartaffel family file, LCHS. Ogle advertised his general and dry goods store in the *Frederick (MD) Political Intelligencer* from 1801 to 1803. By 1805 the store and other properties were put up for sale to cover his debts (*Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, Sept. 2, 1805); on Oct. 18, 1805, a notice ran in the *Frederick (MD) Republican Advocate* declaring Ogle "an insolvent debtor." In the July 2, 1805, *Frederick (MD) Hornet*, Jacob Miller announced he had taken over the tavern "opposite Mr. Francis Mantz's Store." Mantz was also a Demuth customer.

⁸⁹ Other types of snuff are Maccoboy, a moist and heavily scented product, and Scotch, which is dry, strong, finely ground, and "virtually unflavored." Heiman, *Tobacco and Americans*, 65.

for resale in his shop, likely because almanacs were extremely popular and would have found ready buyers.⁹⁰

Tobacco historians routinely describe snuff as being packed and sold in crocks.⁹¹ Later in the nineteenth century, the Demuth shop sold snuff in stoneware crocks with the inscription “Demuth’s Celebrated Snuff.” These are now collectors’ items. In the early years, however, Demuth packed rappee in wooden casks that held twenty-five to sixty pounds each. He added an extra charge of two shillings for each container, but customers could bring the casks back to be refilled. One buyer, John Samuel Miller of Frederick, had his snuff packed into sacks rather than casks, perhaps because they were lighter to transport. Miller was a good customer; in 1802–3 alone, he bought over five thousand pounds of snuff.

Customers who, like Miller, hailed from Maryland may have arrived by the stage that ran twice a week between Frederick, York, and Lancaster. Stage lines also ran from Harrisburg and Carlisle.⁹² If customers did not have the means to transport their purchases, they arranged with Demuth to have goods shipped to a location of their choice, such as Philadelphia or Baltimore, where they could then be transported by water or overland to their final destinations. In a typical transaction, in 1802 when J. & J. Fackler of Richmond purchased seventy-nine pounds of snuff, the proprietors arranged to have Jacob Lundy haul it to Philadelphia for an additional charge of seven shillings, eight pence.⁹³ They settled their account by mailing Demuth \$120 and sending another \$59 back with Lundy. Other customers, including Miller, paid Demuth to have snuff purchases carried to Columbia and then ferried across the Susquehanna River to Wrightsville. At that point Demuth’s services ended, but carters would have been available to move the goods the rest of the way to Frederick, Hagerstown, or Winchester. Customer William Scott was one of the owners of the Frederick-Lancaster stage line, and he occasionally delivered cash or goods for Demuth. Transportation seems to have been Scott’s specialty. In 1803 he advertised his stage line

⁹⁰ As I argue elsewhere, this was not “barter,” but a sophisticated business transaction in which each product entered in the ledger carried a specific market value. See Wenger, *Country Storekeeper*, 66.

⁹¹ Hahn, *Making Tobacco Bright*, 57.

⁹² “Stages,” *Fredericktown (MD) Political Intelligencer*, June 17, 1803; Henry Shepler informed the public that the old line of the stage between Lancaster, Harrisburg, Carlisle, and Shippensburg would continue; “Henry Shepler, Inn-holder, and Proprietor of the Old Line of Lancaster & Harrisburgh Stages at the Sign of the Golden Lyon . . .” *Kline’s Carlisle Weekly Gazette*, June 6, 1804.

⁹³ The dry goods dealers dissolved their partnership in 1803. John Fackler left the business, but Jacob continued to sell goods. “Dissolution of Partnership,” *Virginia Argus*, Nov. 3, 1802; Dec. 3, 1803.

and announced he had moved to the ferry house at Wrightsville, where he provided ferriage and sold goods to travelers.⁹⁴

Given his insistence on a fair wage in Bethlehem, it is significant that Demuth paid himself an annual salary. The amount he drew ranged from \$133 (or £50) in 1801–4 and increased steadily thereafter. By 1811–13, his ledger reveals that he was earning \$600 a year, paid quarterly.⁹⁵ A period publication by D. B. Warden found that in Pennsylvania between 1815–18, the “average expense for a family for living was \$1 a week.” If this figure is at all accurate, Demuth was paying himself quite well.⁹⁶

The volume of Demuth’s business is evident in the quantity of tobacco he bought (table 1). From 1803 to 1814, he purchased an average of 17,140 pounds of tobacco each year from Tunis’s firm.⁹⁷ By comparison, the Bethlehem snuff mill, built just as Demuth was leaving, ground just between 500 and 1,500 pounds of tobacco annually in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and about 5,000 pounds a year from 1814 to 1821.⁹⁸ Demuth’s purchases plummeted following President Thomas Jefferson’s disastrous Embargo of 1807 and slipped dramatically in 1810–11, when troubled relations with England and France interrupted supply chains, but rebounded dramatically during the War of 1812, as Americans became more reliant on their own manufacturing capabilities.

Demuth successfully weathered the economic downturn caused by the embargo, perhaps because local demand for tobacco products kept the shop afloat, perhaps because he had amassed sufficient wealth by this point to get by on fewer sales. But by 1816 he was well into his seventies and ready to relinquish the business to his son. From July to September, he advertised in the *Lancaster Journal* requesting immediate payments of outstanding debts to Jacob.⁹⁹ However, after leaving business, Demuth did

⁹⁴“Winter Establishment of the Frederick-Town, York and Lancaster Line of Stages,” *Fredericktown (MD) Political Intelligencer*, Dec. 30, 1803.

⁹⁵It was typical of businessmen in this period to mix currencies in record keeping. Demuth generally used pounds, shillings, and pence as his currency of account, but he recorded his transactions with Tunis in dollars, suggesting that the city firm had adopted the new decimal system more rapidly than inland businesses such as Demuth’s. Jacob Demuth Ledger, HSP.

⁹⁶D. W. Warden, *Statistical, Political and Historical Account of the United States: From the Period of Their First Colonization to the Present Day*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh, UK, 1819), 35, cited in US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *History of Wages in the United States of America from Colonial Times to 1928* (Washington, DC, 1934), 24–25.

⁹⁷These figures do not include his purchases of plug, pigtail, and Scotch snuff.

⁹⁸Litchfield, *Bethlehem Oil Mill*, 63–66.

⁹⁹“Notice,” *Lancaster Journal*, July 31–Sept. 4, 1816.

Table 1: Christopher Demuth's Purchases of Tobacco, 1803–14

	Hogsheads of tobacco purchased from Tunis & Co.	Total weight of tobacco (in lbs.)	Total spent on purchases from Tunis (including pipes, Scotch snuff, plug & leaf tobacco)	Value in 2015 purchasing power
1803	16	18,577	\$1,602.29	\$34,600
1804	9	11,133	\$1,055.57	\$21,800
1805	17	23,023	\$2,041.19	\$42,500
1806	18	24,173	\$2,033.85	\$40,700
1807	16	21,264	\$2,199.75	\$46,500
1808	11	14,176	\$1,223.24	\$23,800
1809	15	11,417	\$2,016.06	\$40,000
1810	3	4,666	\$519.33	\$10,300
1811	3	4,625	\$422.51	\$7,860
1812	18	25,375	\$2,296.84	\$42,200
1813	18	24,344	\$2,317.56	\$35,500
1814	18	22,917	\$4,121.17	\$57,400
Total	162	205,684	\$21,849.36	\$368,560.00
Yearly average	13.5	17,140.33	\$1,820.78	\$30,713.33

Source: Jacob Demuth Ledger, HSP; 2015 purchasing power determined with <https://measuringworth.com>.

not enjoy a long or comfortable retirement. In December 1816, a stroke left him partially paralyzed, and he died September 7, 1818, at the age of seventy-nine.¹⁰⁰ Reporting on his death, the *Lancaster Journal* described him as “an old and respectable citizen.” A similar notice appeared in the German-language *Reading Adler*, demonstrating his prominence in both English and German-speaking communities.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Demuth's memoir details his failing health. Memoir (*Lebenslauf*) Collection, MAB.

¹⁰¹ Mortuary notice for Christopher Demuth, *Reading (PA) Adler*, Sept. 9, 1818.

Demuth's Bethlehem experience as a single brother, although seemingly contrary to his later life as a prosperous urban businessman, set the stage for that transition. Living and working in Bethlehem furnished Demuth with valuable artisanal skills that enabled him both to transition into a new career and to erect his own factory. Furthermore, he benefited from observing the entrepreneurial attitude of the Bethlehem elders in reaching out to non-Moravian customers and realizing profits, and he emulated this behavior when he went into business for himself. The transition from the General Economy and the two-tier system of paying craftsmen (along, possibly, with the knowledge that he was earning less in Bethlehem than outsider craftsmen) further fueled Demuth's ambition; he longed to receive a better wage and freely choose where and for whom he worked. Irritated by and yet drawn to the Moravian practices, moving to Lancaster relieved him of the close oversight of the Bethlehem elders while still allowing him to enjoy the security of belonging to a Moravian congregation. Although the move out of Bethlehem was not entirely of his own volition, it was he who made the smart choice of Lancaster, which was already a busy commercial node at the center of a network of highways. To be sure, he benefitted from some good fortune after he moved there, including marriage into an artisan's household and the untimely death of the brother-in-law who would otherwise have inherited Hartaffel's business, but much of the credit for his success goes to Demuth himself and to his Bethlehem experience.

While many businesses failed during this time period, Demuth survived by using a number of strategies. At a time when product branding was in its infancy, and with only word of mouth and onsite advertising, he became so well known that his snuff commanded a premium price, and his reputation and trade extended well beyond Lancaster. He was a shrewd businessman who, as was typical practice at the time, extended short-term credit, but when it was time for customers to pay their tabs, he preferred they do it in cash. On the other hand, when Demuth needed a particular item for his home or business and could purchase it by extending store credit, he did so. Recognizing the demand for his product, he expanded his operation and installed more powerful equipment than any of his local competitors had. He cultivated good relationships with his sole supplier of tobacco and with regular customers, many of whom stayed with the firm for years and whose creditworthiness he could generally rely on. He provided transportation arrangements that facilitated purchases for his

long-distance clients, and he diversified his investments by plowing business profits into real estate.

Mindful of his early years in a nontraditional community, Demuth was concerned not only with running his own shop and factory but also with his family's stability and future. He involved his sons and son-in-law in the business, and he bequeathed each of his three surviving children, Jacob, John, and Mary Eberman, two brick houses, along with other city properties, upon his death.¹⁰² Over the next two hundred years, income from the Demuth Tobacco Shop provided the wherewithal for the family to achieve greater social and economic standing, according to Christopher's great-great-grandson Charles Demuth the financial security and leisure to pursue an internationally celebrated career in painting. As tastes in tobacco changed, the family expanded into cigar and chewing tobacco production and discontinued snuff making, while the shop itself became a popular gathering place for locals. Demuth's descendants operated the business until the 1980s, when the last operator of the shop sold the building and business to the nonprofit Demuth Foundation.¹⁰³

Beyond the tale of his compelling personal and religious journey, Demuth's story offers rare insight into early trade practices and manufacturing and shows the importance of tobacco to early American consumers and the national economy. It also reveals the key economic and social role that Pennsylvania manufacturers played in tobacco production and distribution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, even before the crop was grown commercially in the state. Demuth's long-distance sales demonstrate the complexity of market relations in this early period, decades before the so-called market revolution emerged. His dealings also illustrate the primacy of Lancaster as a commercial and industrial center, with merchants and industrialists ideally situated to serve customers in the upper South and throughout Pennsylvania and to disperse goods by a variety of transportation methods throughout those regions. Finally, this case study of Demuth's tobacco business highlights a surprisingly complex and interconnected network of agriculture, manufacture, distribution, and consumption. As part of this circular commodity web, Philadelphia merchants purchased slave-grown tobacco by the hogshead, transported it to

¹⁰² Demuth's son John was also a tobacconist, and son-in-law John Eberman drove the wagon that brought tobacco from Philadelphia. The contributions of family women are not clear, but they may have sewn the sacks that Demuth occasionally packed snuff in and waited on shop customers.

¹⁰³ See Wenger, "Christopher Demuth"; Lestz, *Charles Demuth and Friends*, 9–11; Fahlman and Barry, *Chimneys and Towers*, 119–22.

the North, and distributed it to manufacturers such as Demuth. Demuth, in turn, processed and ground the tobacco into snuff, which he wholesaled to customers locally and throughout Pennsylvania. Ironically, he also sold his signature rappee to merchants from Virginia and Maryland, completing the commodity circle by returning tobacco in a highly processed form to customers living in tobacco-growing states.

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