

The Union Farm: Henry Drinker's Experiment in Deriving Profit from Virtue

A member of the Quaker establishment in Philadelphia until his death at the age of seventy-five in 1809, indeed one of its most revered oligarchs, Henry Drinker is now largely recognizable as the husband of Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker. It is to her journal stretching over a period of some fifty years that scholars turn for details of Philadelphia domestic life in the second half of the eighteenth century, for an appreciation of the Quaker conscience which brought Henry Drinker and other Friends of similar persuasion to an enforced confinement in Virginia during the winter of 1777-1778, for the dirge of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, and for a glimpse of a woman of intelligence who relied on the journal to confirm her own sense of identity. Elizabeth Drinker is full of admiration for her "H.D.," but as seen through his wife's eyes, Henry Drinker appears curiously



lacking in dimension.¹ Not much more of him is visible than the impression conveyed in Joseph Sansom's silhouette of a person of character, securely installed under a broad-brimmed hat, with lips pursed, and, as old age beckons, a hint of a double chin.² If there are warts, they do not show.

Yet, though the source has been neglected, H.D. (he himself adopted this reference) is accessible as a live, sometimes crotchety, but always persevering presence in the outgoing correspondence that, during the course of a long and varied business career, his clerks meticulously copied into bound letterbooks.³ If family items and casual communications were omitted, there nevertheless fell under the rubric of business not only Drinker's concerns as a partner in the trading firm of James & Drinker, as the owner of an iron works in New Jersey, and as a substantial provider of credit, but those concerns as well of the

¹ A recent assessment of the journal and its author may be found in Elaine F. Crane's "The World of Elizabeth Drinker," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter cited as PMHB), 107 (1983) 3-24. Elizabeth Drinker's view of her husband and his good works is summed up in her entry for December 12, 1795, when she hoped that H.D., away on a trip, might pry himself loose for a moment from the duties that besieged him. She continued:

I am not acquainted with the extent of my husband's great variety of engagements, but this I know, that he is perpetually, and almost ever employed. The affairs of Society, and the public and private concerns, I believe take up ten twelfths of his time. If benevolence and beneficence will take a man to Heaven, and no doubt it goes a good way towards it, H.D. stands as good, indeed a better chance, than any I know of.

Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker, ed. Henry D. Biddle (Philadelphia, 1889), 278. The original journal is at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter cited as HSP), and when it is to be consulted rather than the abridged published version, the reference will be to *Journal* (HSP), by date of entry.

² Charles Coleman Sellers, "Joseph Sansom, Philadelphia Silhouettist," *PMHB* 88 (1964) 403, catalogues this silhouette, "drawn from memory," as Sansom's.

³ The letterbooks are in the Drinker Collection at HSP; letterbook volumes will be referred to by their inclusive years—thus, for example, L.B. (1790-1793). Three great-great-grandchildren of H.D., two brothers and a sister, were each to write about their ancestor, but in agreeing that he was upright, severe, and distant, they limited their investigation to the journal and to the letters that flowed back and forth between Henry and Elizabeth Drinker when they were separated. Cecil K. Drinker, in *Not So Long Ago—A Chronicle of Medicine and Doctors in Colonial Philadelphia* (New York, 1937), 6, thought H.D. austere and unbending; Henry S. Drinker, in *History of the Drinker Family* (privately printed, 1961), 26, could make out little of H.D. except through the lens of the journal and those letters; and Katharine Drinker Bowen, drawing on this same material in *Family Portrait* (Boston, 1970), 268, preferred Elizabeth Drinker's spirit to her husband's—"the pious, 'passive,' and mightily striving H.D."

Monthly and Yearly Meetings to which he likewise tirelessly committed his energies. In the relatively brief interval that is to become our focus—1789 to 1795, he would protest that he had retired from trade, that advancing years weighed heavily on him, and even that the call to the Monthly Meeting “to me at this time of life is spending to the Body and now as heretofore wearing to the Spirits.”⁴ The evidence in the letterbooks is, however, overwhelming of an engaged, inquisitive mind, reaching out for new prospects in a country whose wealth remained locked away in wilderness.

James & Drinker may have dissolved as a partnership, but its former junior partner hardly slackened his pace. He pursued the collection of debts at home and abroad among a roster that included deadbeats of the rank of Edmund Randolph, Aaron Burr, and Robert Morris, and while the niceties may have been preserved for them, in the case of lesser types he abandoned the salutation of “Esteemed” or “Respected Friend” for simply and pointedly, “Friend.” He sent hortatory messages to co-religionists everywhere. He did more than dabble in trade—participating now and then in the underwriting of a ship’s cargo and regularly accepting orders for pig iron or castings of various sorts made at the works in Atsion, New Jersey. But, most of all, his absorption was in his lands located in the southern tier of New York and in northeastern Pennsylvania. There he owned vast acreage which, if opened up and properly developed, would add, he believed, to that sufficiency he conceded was his own: “I would not be understood that I am not possessed of a considerable share of this World’s Goods, it having appeared to me that the denial of some Men, so favoured through the Blessing of Providence, savours of Ingratitude to the Author of all our Blessings, both temporal and Spiritual.”⁵

In this last statement, as in everything that the record reveals of him, Henry Drinker was indisputably a Quaker, guided by the principles of his religion to a result that often represented the tender marriage of

⁴ Drinker to Samuel Preston, September 1, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 353.

⁵ Drinker to Samuel Preston, December 13, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 274. At their peak Drinker’s land holdings in Pennsylvania and New York were estimated to have been 500,000 acres. Emily C. Blackman, *History of Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1873), 87.

profit and virtue.⁶ He recoiled, in his Quakerism, against excessive comment, snap-judgments, and rumor-mongering, all of which he repeatedly detected in the reports of his upstate agent, Samuel Preston; especially as a Friend, Preston needed—and received—constant instruction on these failings. He fought the demons of rum and whiskey, as when, for example, in the company of other representatives of the Meeting, he descended on Timothy Pickering, then Secretary of State. This delegation came to remind Pickering, himself no laggard in defending rectitude, of “the very evil effects which had ensued from the use of spirituous liquors among the Indians & particularly so at the times of holding Treaties with them when business of very extensive importance both to them and to the United States was to be transacted. . . .” On the eve of new negotiations with the Indians, these Friends urged the Secretary to communicate an appropriate concern to General Wayne so that the sorry spectacle might be avoided of seeing the Indians once again return home “greatly disadvantaged with. . . the business of those Treaties [concluded] when they had been almost continually in a state of intoxication.”⁷

Not indifferent to money-making, guarded in all his judgments, a blue-ribboner—to these Quaker traits another should be added: H.D. was frugal. In this regard, we may smile as on one occasion we watch him pause while his precepts momentarily collide. Drinker wrote to Preston in 1791 that a neighbor of Preston’s, Jacob Stroud, was about to leave Philadelphia for the backwoods and was taking with him “a Keg of Rum for his Hands, which I had rather they do without, but so he [Stroud] says it must be.” Since, however, Elizabeth Drinker had long

⁶ The Quaker alliance with wealth and some of the tensions it created are considered in J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York, 1973), 196-202, and Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1948), 45-62, 80-84, 113-23.

⁷ Drinker to George Bowne, December 19, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 392. Pickering hastened to assure his visitors that he had inherited from his father “a rooted and strong dislike to the use of ardent Spirits.” *Ibid.* Regarding the vices of alcohol and slavery, the Quaker attitude, as Frost has pointed out, went through the same progression and for both at almost the same times. from initial counseling of moderation in use (*parallel phenomenon*: attempt to Christianize the master-slave relationship), to temperance (*parallel*: prohibiting the importation of slaves), and finally to total abstinence (*parallel*: abolition). J. William Frost, “Years of Crisis and Separation: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1790-1860,” in John M. Moore, ed., *Friends in the Delaware Valley: Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1681-1981* (Haverford, Pa., 1981), 96-99.

desired a keg of "the best Maple Molasses" from Preston, here was an opportunity which her husband dared not lose: ". . . the Keg with the Rum when well rinsed & soak'd may serve to send it down in."⁸

Of the moral imperatives that deeply touched the Quakers of that day, the dominant one in the 1790s and for many years to follow was the control and ultimate eradication of slavery. The importation of slaves had been classified as a disownable offense in 1774; and after the Revolution, the Meeting applied increasing pressure to hasten the manumission by Friends of the few remaining slaves they owned.⁹ The economic defense of slavery as an institution peculiar to a certain region and necessary to the raising of certain crops was not, of course, lost on a businessman like Henry Drinker. He had, on the other hand, his own contrasting prescription for productivity. In a letter to an English correspondent, Drinker described at length the forge and furnace at Atsion and the rules and regulations he had laid down to govern that establishment:

One was to have nothing to do with Slaves—this perhaps will not be imitated in your Country, tho' it is devoutly to be wish'd that this unchristian practice was universally rejected. To employ no intemperate drunken Person, or at least when found to be so, turn them off. Never to oblige those to whom money was due to ask twice for it. Altho' a Store provided with Molasses, Salt, Sugar, Coffee, Tea, Cloathing, etc., was kept at the Works none were solicited or enjoined to buy. Nevertheless as

⁸ Drinker to Samuel Preston, April 29, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), p. 168. Drinker often used the variant spelling of "Strowd." It is possible that H.D. imbibed wine, beer, and cider; for him to have done so would not have been a breach of the Quaker code. The suspicion persists, however, that as close as he came to absorbing alcohol in any form was when his wife rubbed spirits of wine on his corns. *Journal (HSP)*, May 28, 1801. In retribution for overindulgence by her measurement, Elizabeth Drinker endured colic and a sleepless night after she capped an evening meal with "New table beer" and grapes. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1791.

⁹ Concerning the evolving Quaker position on slavery which led to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting's direction for disownment in 1774, see David Brian Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975), 213-54; Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven, 1950), 59-61, 100-13; Jean R. Soderlund, "Conscience, Interest, and Power: The Development of Opposition to Slavery among Quakers in the Delaware Valley, 1688-1780," Ph.D. diss. (Temple University, 1981). Notwithstanding the leadership of John Woolman and Anthony Benezet, more than one Quaker merchant was prepared during the colonial period to risk the censure of Meeting by engaging in the slave trade, or as Davis has phrased it, "their quest for profit sometimes compromised their quest for innocence." Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 237; and see also Donald D. Wax, "Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania," *PMHB* 86 (1962), 143-59.

they found they were served on reasonable terms and as low as any other would sell, their custom became secure. As to Rum, much pains has been taken to break them off from the Use of it; this has succeeded in part but not wholly, and it is the only article I make them pay a high price for, & knowing my Motives they submit to it without grumbling. The Fruits of these Regulations show the propriety of them. I have divers workmen that have continued with me from ten to twelve years. . . . While other Iron Works within a few miles have frequently suffered largely for want of hands, we have turned many away & scarcely ever knew the want of them.¹⁰

So appealing was the proposal to extract sugar from the "Saccharine Juice of the Maple Tree" that for a time this staunch Quaker shed his natural reserve and succumbed to enthusiasm. He reflected on what success in the venture would mean for him personally. No longer would he tax his conscience as he exported kettles from his iron works to plantations in the West Indies where sugar was obtained by "polluted and wicked means."¹¹ These same kettles would now be manufactured for a forest industry that could seriously undercut the slave economy of the West Indies as abundant sugar, unadulterated at its source, was produced in those promising but remote lands that Drinker owned.

Credit for this idea (it was soon to become a craze) probably belongs to Benjamin Rush. He recorded in his commonplace book on August 16, 1789, that he met in the street James Pemberton, John Parrish, and Jeremiah Parker to whom, on the spot, he proposed launching an association that would purchase five hundred barrels of maple sugar every year "in order to encourage the manufacturing of that article in Pennsylvania, and thereby to lessen or destroy the consumption of West India sugar, and thus indirectly to destroy negro slavery." To put their

¹⁰ Drinker to Richard Blackledge, Esq., October 4, 1786, L.B. (1786-1790), 82. Located in Washington Township, Burlington County, the iron works at Atsion were about twelve miles from Medford and seventeen miles from Mount Holly. Drinker had an ownership interest in Atsion for thirty-three years. His wife confided to her diary on May 20, 1805, that, obliged by circumstances to sell, H.D. would likely be "a considerable loser"; six weeks later she predicted (accurately, as it turned out) that the purchase would prove "a troublesome bargain" for the new owner. *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, 395-96 and n. 1; and see Charles S. Boyer, *Early Forges and Furnaces in New Jersey* (Philadelphia, 1931), 167-74.

¹¹ Drinker to William Cooper, March 29, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 280. That H.D. did export sugar kettles or "boilers" to the West Indies is established in his letter to Robert Bowne, dated August 14, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 379-80.

plans in motion, the four of them agreed to gather the following Tuesday. A few minutes later, while still seized by this inspiration, Rush encountered Tench Coxe, who he also reported "was charmed with the idea."¹²

Drinker's involvement dates from the very next day when he wrote to Robert Morris in New York that he too had been stopped in the street by Dr. Rush and Tench Coxe. In the space of twenty-four hours, these acquaintances of Drinker and Morris had picked up momentum: they were actively promoting agreements "into which many Families in the City have cheerfully come, to encourage the manufacture of Sugar from the Maple Tree—most families engaging to take for their own consumption about 200 lbs. each & it is supposed that at least 500 Subscriptions of this sort will be readily got—so as to make it known that a sure Market. . . may be had."¹³ Though Morris replied that he wished the promoters well, he was not so quickly persuaded, and in a strange reversal of roles, it was Morris, the unbridled speculator, who cautioned Drinker, usually the embodiment of cautiousness, that "the success will depend upon the quality [because] Price agreements and subscriptions don't hold long unless supported by convenience or interest."¹⁴

While Benjamin Rush was captivated by the theory of it all, H.D. was convinced that he had the precise instruments within his control to make the proposal work. For some weeks in August, 1789, an advertisement appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* announcing that Henry Drinker would offer for sale at his store on Water Street "a Variety of Iron Castings"—pots, skillets, sash weights, etc.—which he planned to discontinue manufacturing at Atsion. But, significantly, this notice also stated his intention to keep in stock "kettles of a proper form

¹² Benjamin Rush, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush: His "Travels Through Life" together with his Commonplace Book for 1789-1813*, ed. George W. Corner (Princeton, 1948), 177. The three Quakers first approached in this idealistic expedition were natural allies for Rush, but Tench Coxe somewhat less assuredly so. In another context, H.D. was to say of him: "As to Tench Coxe I have little Dependance [*sic*] on his doing anything to the purpose, tho' he frequently professes himself disposed to do divers things." Drinker to Samuel Stanton, November 3, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 241.

¹³ Drinker to Robert Morris, August 17, 1789 (preparatory copy), Henry S. Drinker Papers, HSP.

¹⁴ Robert Morris to Drinker, August 23, 1789, Henry S. Drinker Papers, HSP.

and size for the making of sugar from the Maple Tree.”¹⁵ Moreover, Drinker’s agent, Samuel Preston, was in place on the Delaware River, just south of the New York boundary, where he was opening up a settlement called Stockport, which although later a thriving village, has vanished from today’s map of Wayne County. That winter of 1789-1790, Henry Drinker on his own initiative had Preston concentrate his efforts on the sugaring process, with the result that in June of 1790 he handed Robert Morris for delivery to the President of the United States in New York a box of maple sugar Preston had made and sent down from Stockport. In the covering letter to Morris, H.D. expressed the thought, in a style effusive for him, that Washington might be “pleased to see a specimen of this article which will bear examination & that in his exalted Station he will be disposed to countenance & encourage what promises to become a subject of great national importance.” If the undertaking was “now in a State of Infancy,” yet “there is the highest probability this business. . . will advance rapidly.” Very little could stand in the way: “Should the People find. . . a handsome compensation for their Labour, of which there is scarcely a doubt, what a scene does it open before us.”¹⁶

Morris punctually discharged the commission. The President wrote back two days later, acknowledging his pleasure that this sample was “of so good a quality.” Washington’s few sentences amounted to an endorsement that would have entitled Drinker to identify himself as maple-sugar maker by appointment to the President: “. . . and being persuaded that considerable benefit may be derived to our country, from a due prosecution of this promising object of industry, I wish every success to its cultivation. . . .”¹⁷

H.D. could not conceal his delight. Another letter went off to Morris in which he enlarged on the determination he had come to “in the last Fall & Winter, at a heavy expense, under many difficulties & disadvantages in a new unsettled country, to make tryal of some new

¹⁵ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, August 5, 19, and 26, 1789 (Nos. 3088, 3090, and 3091).

¹⁶ Drinker to Robert Morris, June 16, 1790, L.B. (1790-1793), 36-37.

¹⁷ Washington’s reply to Drinker, dated June 18, 1790, is printed in Drinker, *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, 222 n.; and in Phineas G. Goodrich, *History of Wayne County* (Honesdale, Pa., 1880), 224-25, where it appears incorporated in a letter of Drinker to Preston dated July 1, 1790; in that letter which is not entered in the letterbooks, Drinker writes, “So thee see how I am advanced to a correspondence with the King of America.”

modes." But "this tryal has answered my most sanguine expectations." What now needed to be done was to distribute among the settlers "some plain directions & information," as he had found them "little qualified either by acquired or natural abilities to improve on the habits & customs they have heretofore been in respecting the use of the Sap of the Maple Tree, the granulating & refining the Syrup etc." To answer this deficiency, "a small pamphlet has been compiled" which, in forwarding six copies to Morris "for his own and his Friends' perusal," Drinker praised as "guarded against exaggeration" and "cautiously worded as to the process & utensils to be used."¹⁸

Remarks on the Manufacturing of Maple Sugar; with Directions for its Future Improvement is attributed on the title page to a "Society of Gentlemen, in Philadelphia," but in its how-to-do-it aspect, this slight document owes much to Henry Drinker.¹⁹ The reader is introduced to the recent discovery that a sufficient number of maple trees exist in the States of New York and Pennsylvania "to supply the whole of the United States [with sugar]." That fact was "in some measure problematical till within even two or three months past, when the arrival of several chests, in the city of Philadelphia, made last spring on the Delaware, removed every doubt." It was learned through experiments at Stockport begun in the previous February that "four, active industrious men, well provided with materials, and conveniences proper for carrying on the business, may turn out in a common season. . . *forty hundred weight of good sugar.*" The glossary of "necessary Utensils and Materials" appended to the pamphlet may be accepted as further proof of H.D.'s contribution for the first article mentioned is "*KETTLES*: sixteen, of about fifteen gallons each."²⁰

Benjamin Rush undertook a much more pretentious treatment of this subject in the form of a letter addressed to Thomas Jefferson but in fact delivered as an address to the American Philosophical Society of which

¹⁸ Drinker to Robert Morris, July 5, 1790, L.B. (1790-1793), 42-43.

¹⁹ In the preparation of this pamphlet (printed by the Philadelphia firm of James & Johnson), H.D. likely collaborated with another employee of his in upstate Pennsylvania, John Hilborn, who was in charge at Harmony, a settlement on the northern branch of the Susquehanna River which, slightly smaller than Stockport, was joined to it by a portage road. Hilborn, it seemed, had impressive credentials in the sugar-making business. Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 225; and see Drinker to John Kinsey, September 14, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 402.

²⁰ *Remarks on the Manufacturing of Maple Sugar*, 4-8.

Drinker, Rush, and Jefferson were all members.²¹ Jefferson was certainly an appropriate choice for this message if, as Rush claimed in a footnote to the published version, "Mr. Jefferson uses no other sugar in his family, than that which is obtained from the sugar maple tree."²² Furthermore, within two weeks after Washington had received the box of maple sugar from Drinker by way of Morris, his Secretary of State was hailing the potential of maple sugar manufacturing in a communication sent abroad. Burdened as Jefferson was by ambivalent feelings concerning slavery, his words produce even greater confusion about his allegiance to the cause of equal rights for all persons. The maple tree in wondrous fashion, he wrote, "yeilds a sugar equal to the best from the cane, yeilds it in great quantity, and with no other labour than what the women and girls can bestow. . . . What a blessing to substitute a sugar which requires only the labour of children, for that which it is said renders the slavery of the blacks necessary."²³

Rush did not stop at an explanation of how maple sugar was made. All the quirkiness of this physician in spite of himself is displayed in the arguments and analysis he develops in support of this fledgling industry. Maple sugar is better in quality than West India sugar because it is prepared "in a season when not a single insect exists to feed upon it" and by those who, unlike the slaves, "have been educated in the habits of cleanliness."²⁴ How did Henry Drinker react, one wonders, as he listened, at the meeting of the Philosophical Society, to Rush's sales pitch that "a pleasant summer beer" could be brewed from maple molasses and, worse still, that the "sap of the maple is. . . capable of

²¹ Rush read his paper on August 19, 1791, and it was published in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Held at Philadelphia, for Promoting Useful Knowledge* 3 (1793), 64-78. It also came out in a separate pamphlet edition, *An Account of the Sugar Maple-Tree* (Philadelphia: R. Artken & Son, 1792), which was intended for wider distribution (and to which reference will hereafter be made).

²² Rush, *An Account of the Sugar Maple-Tree*, 14 n.

²³ Jefferson to Benjamin Vaughan, June 27, 1790, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd et al. (Princeton, 1950-), XVI, 578. For the contradiction that was Jefferson on slavery, see Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, 164-84.

²⁴ Rush, *An Account of the Sugar Maple-Tree*, 9. This theme of cleanliness, atavistic in its implications, persisted in promotional literature. Thus, in 1819, British emigrants were coaxed to settle in an enclave in the adjoining Susquehanna County where they might for "great profit" produce maple sugar, "knowing that it is clean, which, it is probable, is infrequently far from being the case with that which is made by the slaves of the West Indies, or indeed, by slaves anywhere." C.B. Johnson, *Letters from the British Settlement in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1819), 49.

affording a spirit" even if Rush added the pious hope that "this precious juice will never be prostituted by our citizens to this ignoble purpose"?²⁵ Sugar turned out, in Rush's estimation, to be a universal cure. Ounce for ounce, it packed "the greatest quantity of nourishment. . . of any substance in nature." It was "one of the best preventatives that has ever been discovered of diseases which are produced by worms." It warded off the plague and "malignant fevers of all kinds." It provided "many agreeable remedies" for "disorders of the breast" and was useful "in weaknesses and acrid defluxions upon other parts of the bodies"—as proved by Benjamin Franklin's own experience in finding greater relief from the pain of the stone "by taking about half a pint of syrup, prepared by boiling a little brown sugar in water, just before he went to bed, than he did from a dose of opium." That sugar might injure the teeth was an old wives' tale, the good doctor said, that "now has so few advocates, that it does not deserve a serious refutation."²⁶

The sugar harvest in the spring of 1791, which yielded more frustration than it did maple sugar, should have served as a warning. About 1600 sugar boilers or kettles had been made at the works at Atsion; of these Drinker noted with satisfaction in January of 1791 that 1200 "have been dispersed in the Country amongst persons engaged & entering into this business. . . ."²⁷ At that same time in January he pushed Preston to leave Philadelphia for Stockport, "much desiring he may be on the spot before the Sugar season commences, as that object deserves in my opinion the closest and unremitted attention. . . ."²⁸ Yet winter did not release its grip on northeastern Pennsylvania until late April, and just when the sugaring was to have started, upwards of three feet of snow lay on the ground. "It is our duty," H.D. philosophized, "to submit in humble acquiescence with the dispensations of Providence as to the Seasons, which in unscrutable wisdom are ordered no doubt for the best & wisest purposes."²⁹

²⁵ Rush, *An Account of the Sugar Maple-Tree*, 10 No sooner had Rush made the suggestion than he repented it sugar would combat the tendency to drink "for I have observed a relish for sugar in diet to be seldom accompanied by a love for strong drink " *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

²⁷ Drinker to George Joy, January 24, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 135

²⁸ Drinker to John Hilborn, January 26, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 137

²⁹ Drinker to William Cooper, March 16 and April 14, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 159, 164-65.

Notwithstanding this setback for Henry Drinker, the maple sugar boom continued unabated in 1791. Judge William Cooper, the founder of Cooperstown, New York, and the father of James Fenimore Cooper, saw his stock rise sharply as word spread that he was shipping a great quantity of sugar to market in an admittedly bad year "when the trees would not run."³⁰ In May Drinker applied to Cooper for samples since he had exhausted his own supply and Preston could not replenish it: "If any Man in America or elsewhere has a right to a preference in this matter, surely it is H.D."³¹ A week later Drinker comes as close as he ever would to bragging when he dropped the names of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom in recent encounters had made clear to him their "high expectations from the new scene opening for acquiring of wealth out of our Wilderness, whence thro' the bounty of Providence, the saccharine juices heretofore extracted in the West Indies can be abundantly procured." Breakfasting with Jefferson on May 13, he learned that the Secretary of State and James Madison were "about to set off in a day or two on tour through an extensive Sugar Maple Country."³²

By good fortune we have a contemporary account of Stockport in the summer of 1791, written by a Hollander, John Lincklaen, who had landed in the United States a year earlier and who, armed with a letter of introduction from Alexander Hamilton to William Cooper, was now to

³⁰ Arthur Noble to William Cooper, May 7, 1791, in James Fenimore Cooper [a later author of that name], *The Legends and Traditions of a Northern Country* (New York, 1921), 140. It is a close call whether Cooper, instead of Rush, was the instigator of the maple sugar craze. The figures were first developed on Cooper's authority that, with estimated annual consumption of sugar amounting to 42,084,140 pounds throughout the United States, it would take only 526,000 acres of maple trees to meet the need—each acre conservatively said to support twenty trees that would yield four pounds of sugar per tree in a single year's harvest. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, September 9, 1789 (No. 3093).

³¹ Drinker to William Cooper, May 6, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 173-74.

³² Drinker to George Joy, May 14, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 177. We must conjecture that Joy in London was excessively impressed by Drinker's connections, for in December H.D. writes back that his path in life does not "naturally lead to an assimilation with Great Men." It was a departure from his practice, he insisted, that he met with Hamilton "over a dish of tea" and breakfasted with Jefferson "at his particular request." Drinker to George Joy, December 14, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 252. Jefferson, when he had breakfast with Drinker, was on the verge of an extended and leisurely trip that he and Madison would take through New York and the New England states during the course of which the ever-curious Jefferson would investigate Indian dialects, maple sugaring, and the Hessian Fly. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, XX, 434-53 (editorial note).

journey through Pennsylvania and New York in order to investigate for the Dutch capitalists he represented the commercial feasibility of making sugar from the sap of the maple tree. In the afternoon of August 17, 1791, Lincklaen and his companions arrived at Samuel Preston's in Stockport. "Samuel Preston, Quaker, and manager of Mr. Drinker's land, received us very politely in his log house, & gave us bacon & good chocolate." The settlement consisted of two sawmills and a grist mill where Preston ground flour for about fifty families living within a fifteen-mile radius of Stockport. Preston employed "from 20 to 30 workmen both for his Mills & for cutting roads of communication." Lincklaen was quite taken with his host as "an intelligent and active man," but Preston supplied little information of value about "the Mapple [*sic*] Tree"; he said that he had been prevented by the depth of the snow from getting to Stockport during the sugar-making season just past. As Lincklaen looked around him, "I was unable to see that in this neighborhood there were trees sufficient to support an extended settlement."³³

Perhaps others also perceived Stockport as an unfavorable site, because when the time came in the following year to establish the Union Farm, it was at a location seven miles lower on the Delaware, along the Little Equinunk Creek in what is now Manchester Township, Wayne County. The organization of the Union Farm (or, in the full unfolding of its name, the "Society for promoting the Manufacture of Sugar from the Sugar-Maple Tree, and furthering the interest of Agriculture in Pennsylvania") did not occur until another summer had almost passed.³⁴ Drinker wrote to Preston on August 9, 1792: "I have thrown some hints together intended to show the beneficial effects which might result from the establishment of a Company somewhat like that thou had in view." With the cash flowing in one direction only, upstream to Stockport, it was H.D. and, to a lesser extent, Preston as a co-owner of

³³ John Lincklaen, *Travels in the Years 1791 and 1792 in Pennsylvania, New York and Vermont*, ed. and trans. Helen Lincklaen Fairchild (New York, 1897), 48-50. Hamilton's letter of introduction to Cooper, dated August 3, 1791, is in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold C. Syrett *et al.* (New York, 1961-1979), IX, 8.

³⁴ In spite of its corporate insignia and obvious business purpose, the Society, coming into existence at the dawn of the modern corporate era, was not formally chartered as a corporation. It did issue printed certificates to its shareholders, as in the case of James Wilson whose certificate confirms the formidable name. Certificate dated March 8, 1793, Wilson Papers, HSP, vol. III, 37.

many of these tracts on the Delaware who stood mainly to enjoy the "beneficial effects" of having others contribute to the enterprise. Benjamin Rush, George Clymer, and Clymer's brother-in-law, Samuel Meredith, were immediately sold on the proposition. Drinker then turned to Robert Morris and John Nicholson, "but they were both in the Country." Noting that a meeting of interested persons had been called, he decided he had better rein Preston in, "I would not have thee build too much or be over sanguine."³⁵

Just a month later, a subscription for sixty shares of stock at fifty pounds each was formally opened, the purpose being to raise enough to purchase from Drinker and Preston 3,120 acres at ten shillings per acre while providing start-up capital in a roughly equivalent amount for the Union Farm.³⁶ Thus, "we [Drinker and Preston] may make the necessary improvements without advancing our own money & by this means greatly increase the value of the Estate of the lands we have near it." In this same message to Preston, H.D. also wrote that he had "some expectations that John Kinsey will agree to Superintend the improvement of a practical Farm & the Sugar Manufactory at this place." With awareness growing that the next sugar season would soon be in jeopardy, the remaining arrangements could not be delayed.³⁷ At the very moment when the finishing touches were being put to the Society's constitution, Drinker would urge Preston to make haste in "opening a road from the Delaware to the Sugar Camp & . . . building a log Dwelling House & Other Houses in preparation for the Sugar business." On September 18, the subscribers had "a large Meeting" in which H.D. "had hard fighting to keep clear of the President's Chair. . . . [A]t my earnest request they released me. . . and chose Timothy Pickering Esq., myself Treasurer, Samuel M. Fox Secretary, & Saml. Pleasants & Saml. Hodgdon Managers"—who constituted a

³⁵ L.B. (1790-1793), 375-76. Drinker may have had in mind the failure in the spring of 1791 by John Field, later a shareholder in the Union Farm, "to collect the money subscribed towards the Sugar Scheme," as to which H.D. then had "some doubts whether [the effort] had not better be suspended or omitted, as the subscription is so short of what might be expected" Drinker to William Cooper, March 16, 1791, L.B. (1790-1793), 159.

³⁶ The eight original warrantee names listed in Goodrich, *History of Wayne County*, 226, permit us, with reference to the Torrey map of Wayne County (1872), to locate the "Sugar Tract" on both banks of the Little Equinunk Creek. See *Atlas of Wayne Co. Pennsylvania From Recent and Actual Surveys and Records*, comp. F.W. Beers (New York, 1872), 5, 9.

³⁷ Drinker to Samuel Preston, September 8, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 399-400.

governing body of five, out of a group of eventually more than thirty subscribers among whom were numbered many of Philadelphia's first citizens.³⁸ Kinsey accepted employment at the salary of £100 a year plus expenses and departed in October for the Union Farm—impelled onward by Drinker's exhortation that "future lively exertions to improve & forward that concern will depend greatly on an encouraging outset the next Season."³⁹

The recently elected treasurer of the Society did his part. He instructed Robert Bowne in New York City, a member of a network of helpful correspondents with whom Drinker regularly exchanged favors, to inquire for "our new Sugar Company" about the shipment up the Hudson of sugar kettles, potash kettles, and pork to Eusopus (the old name for Kingston) "& from thence to be sent across to Stockport on the Delaware in Waggon or in Sleighs."⁴⁰ He worried about the quality of the pork, given "the distance it is going & the expense of Carriage. . . . A disappointment in the goodness would subject me to blame both of the Consumers & the Company here."⁴¹

Troubles began to accumulate right after Kinsey arrived at the Union Farm. Winter set in with that special intensity that would repeatedly dishearten even the best-prepared settlers coming to the region; accommodations so hastily contrived could have been little more than primitive; and supplies promised from New York, to move by water and overland route, were missing. Of Kinsey, Drinker confided to Preston, "I observe in divers instances he looks at the worst side of things." But surely the want of money should not distract him as a problem since (here the needle was inserted so that Preston might feel it) the "opportunities of drawing on me are so frequent that I think he need not alarm himself as to a Scarcity of Cash."⁴² In spite of "many discouragements & heavy expenses," H.D. called upon Kinsey, in a letter

³⁸ Drinker to Samuel Preston, September 17 [with notes added on 18 and 19], 1792, L B (1790-1793), 405, 408. The subscribers are identified in Drinker, *Extracts From the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, 221 n

³⁹ Drinker to John Kinsey, September 19, 1792, L B (1790-1793), 409, Drinker to Samuel Preston, October 25, 1792, L.B (1790-1793), 437 Kinsey, like Preston and Hilborn before him, would appear to have been recruited by Drinker from the ranks of the Buckingham Meeting in Bucks County.

⁴⁰ Drinker to Robert Bowne, October 4, 1792, L.B (1790-1793), 414-15

⁴¹ Drinker to Robert Bowne, October 15, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 426.

⁴² Drinker to Samuel Preston, November 26, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 462-64

written the same day, to share the hope "that the worst is over and that things will gradually wear a more pleasing aspect."⁴³

Christmas at home with his family was the remedy for Kinsey, intended to revive his spirits and to restore his sense of purpose. In the New Year, Drinker alerted his friend, Jacob Stroud, whose farm at what is now Stroudsburg served as the point of departure for travelers entering the backwoods, that Kinsey would leave at the end of January or the beginning of February on his way back to the Union Farm "provided the ground is then so covered with Snow as to admit his traveling at that time with Sleds." The plan, he outlined to Stroud, was to recruit "in thy neighborhood. . . 15 or 20 hands to be employed during the season during which the sap of the Sugar tree is usually collected."⁴⁴

The return trip was a harrowing experience for Kinsey, accompanied by his wife and young child. Though Drinker sympathized with their ordeal, he could not refrain from some second-guessing: "Had you pursued the route first proposed up and near the Delaware, it had to be the most eligible appearance. I don't mean to find fault, concluding you endeavour'd for the best." In a reassuring vein, he suggested that this lonely outpost at the Union Farm might look forward to closer neighbors in the days ahead because H.D. was actively negotiating the sale of lands in the vicinity of Stockport. The interested purchasers were German families "living in the Northern parts of this City and the Liberties, some of them received Members, all sober people who attend our Meetings and appear to be convinced of our principles, who have it in view to settle together in the Country."⁴⁵

For more than one reason, 1793 was to be a disastrous year. Bad luck in every form—the late start, delays in getting there, inexperience in sugar-making, the weather, despair—all of these conspired to limit Kinsey and his crew to the feeblest of efforts in March. The consequent disappointment in Philadelphia was tangible. "It was mortifying to me and much so to some of the Managers," H.D. complained to Kinsey, "to find so little had been done in [the] making of Sugar, which in the worst of Seasons they had no apprehensions would have proved so

⁴³ Drinker to John Kinsey, November 26, 1792, L.B. (1790-1793), 466-47.

⁴⁴ Drinker to Jacob Stroud, January 9, 1793, L.B. (1790-1793), 488.

⁴⁵ Drinker to John Kinsey, March 12, 1793, L.B. (1790-1793), 508-09.

trifling.”⁴⁶ Still later he referred to “the contemptable quantity . . . which thou hast now sent down” as worth only a fraction of the expenses incurred for provisions and wages. “This letter is wrote to know if thou canst furnish me with anything plausible to say as I am frequently questioned on the matter—and am really at a loss and distressed to make replies.”⁴⁷

By June, however, H.D. had regained perspective, enough at least to direct a fair part of his attention to Stockport and his representative there. He thought he had found a cook for Preston in a man “very handy and ingenious,” but he admitted to “some doubts of his Character & Fitness,” misgivings confirmed by Preston who vetoed the candidate.⁴⁸ Three of the rafts of timber that Preston sent down the river went adrift before reaching Philadelphia, and Drinker declined to manage this business further unless agreements were made in advance “with some persons about Wells Falls, Trenton or Whitesheet bay to take our lumber.”⁴⁹ And once more, Preston’s extravagant style required correction:

I this day rec’d a letter from thee dated the 6th day of the present month, by which it would seem as if thy mind was greatly agitated. It is not the first time I have known S.P. get very warm and his imagination heated on Subjects, which on more cool deliberation must have appear’d to him unreasonable if not improper, and tho’ a deficiency in decency and good manners is not so evident in this as in some of his former letters—yet my advice is as heretofore that he would keep cool and judge nothing before the time.⁵⁰

Kinsey asked for guidance about leasing portions of the Union Farm to those who could not afford to purchase land outright. The Managers would not object, Drinker answered, to “Leasing to the right kind of people. . . remembering the Leases must not extend to a longer term than our Constitution. . . now about 9 years. . . It would be well if they would covenant to assist the Company in the Sugar Seasons, which

⁴⁶ Drinker to John Kinsey, April 17, 1793, L.B. (1790-1793), 518

⁴⁷ Drinker to John Kinsey, May 9, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 2.

⁴⁸ Drinker to Samuel Preston, June 11, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), p. 19, see also Drinker to Samuel Preston, July 7, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 38.

⁴⁹ Drinker to Samuel Preston, June 20, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 28-29.

⁵⁰ Drinker to Samuel Preston, June 22, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 30

however is a matter not absolutely to be insisted on."⁵¹ These instructions were supplemented five days later: "Among the conditions it may be prudent to make with persons. . . disposed to lease parts of the Union Tract, it would be right to engage their planting round their Fences or clear'd land young sugar trees at convenient distances."⁵²

At this point in the middle of the summer a gap appears in the letterbooks which continues for more than three months, a mute witness to the yellow fever epidemic and its impact on H.D.'s process of careful planning for the Union Farm. He would resume his correspondence with Preston and Kinsey in November, as soon as he and his family had returned to the City from eight miles away in Germantown, where they had taken refuge during this "alarming and serious time."⁵³ He was forced to admit that things generally had been "put so much out of joint by my long absence" that he scarcely knew where to begin.⁵⁴ In the "multiplicity of engagements which have thronged upon me," he was prevented from calling a meeting of the Managers of the Union Farm which his own self-interest would otherwise have inclined him to do—"My large advances for that concern is a strong inducement to such a step."⁵⁵

The Managers did finally meet at the end of the year in Drinker's house, and this meeting was followed two days later in the Harp & Crown Tavern by a general assembly of the shareholders. Distrustful from the first of his own abilities as superintendent of the Sugar Manufactory for which he had no prior training, Kinsey apparently

⁵¹ Drinker to John Kinsey, July 2, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 37.

⁵² Drinker to John Kinsey, July 7, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 40.

⁵³ On August 23, Elizabeth Drinker wrote: "A Fever prevails in the City, particularly in Water St. between Race and Arch Sts., of ye malignant kind; numbers have died of it. . . 'Tis really an alarming and serious time." *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, 189. H.D., ignoring advice to the contrary, sometimes went into the City, as on September 25-26 when his absence there at the height of the fever so affected the Drinkers' landlord in Germantown "as to keep him all night awake." *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁴ Drinker to Samuel Preston, November 20, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 71-72. For want of any professionally qualified person, Preston had been drafted as "head Physician of the new Northern Country." It was no doubt with the doctoring of the past few months in Philadelphia still a fresh memory that, in this same letter, H.D. congratulated Preston on ranking "with propriety among those 'who kills by License & who cures by chance.'" He nonetheless advised Preston in his unaccredited status to merit the confidence of his neighbors by moving "with great care & circumspection so as merely to aid and assist nature & not oppress & torture her."

⁵⁵ Drinker to John Kinsey, December 18, 1793, L.B. (1793-1796), 91-92.

sought permission to pursue conventional farming on land he would clear along the Little Equinunk "so as to raise from its produce sufficient to support Man & Beast & avoid the necessity of purchasing at a heavy expence those supplies." It was impossible for those who had invested in the Union Farm to turn down such a practical suggestion even if they remained attached to the basic goal. In indicating approval, Drinker informed Kinsey that "They nevertheless appear desirous an effort be made so far as thou canst [to] procure hands to aid thee therein in making sugar next season."⁵⁶

Kinsey was a better judge of his own capacities than Henry Drinker. He just was not cut out for this assignment. Moreover, his wife could not endure the solitude and rigors of life in this distant corner of the state. As the sugaring season drew near, word filtered back to H.D. that both of them were depressed by their condition and that Mrs. Kinsey had become physically ill as well. When he had pointed out Kinsey "as a suitable manager of the Union," it was not to impose on him a heavy burden, H.D. wrote, but in the certain conviction that it was "for thy benefit and advantage." The affliction being more than understandable discouragement, H.D. recognized it as "too delicate a matter for me to enter into." Instead, he resorted to a prayer which one suspects this stern Quaker, so little vulnerable to weakness, had used in other hard cases of anguish, "that thyself & weakly wife might be so sustained against the open or secret machinations of an unwearied Enemy as to avoid all improper discontent with the allotments of Providence."⁵⁷

Whatever maple sugar Kinsey did succeed in sending down in that spring of 1794, the meager results no longer justified any continuance of the "sanguine expectations" Drinker had had when he prevailed on Robert Morris, four years before, to take the box of maple sugar to the President. The painful lessons of the Union Farm now crept into Drinker's correspondence. As he congratulated Joseph Leaper in London on the increased "importation of Sugar from the East Indies into your Kingdom. . .[which] merits Cherishing and the Religious Countenance and Encouragement of those amongst our Brethren in Christian profession," Drinker admitted that, "with respect to the Sugar produced from the Maple Tree," also an antidote to the slavery of

⁵⁶ Drinker to John Kinsey, January 8, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 104-05.

⁵⁷ Drinker to John Kinsey, February 15, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 129.

the sugar plantation, "it will require time and the aid of Legislative Bodies. . . to ripen this Manufacture." The practice of frontier families in supplying "Sugar and Molasses from the Maple in a very coarse way and with little regard to the process and the improved modes. . . accounts for the forbidding appearance of most that is brought to Market."⁵⁸

Besides the Union Farm, the maple sugar business had another failure in 1794. The wealthy Dutchmen associated in the Holland Land Company had been lured into a similar venture, but in some respects more ambitious in scope, north of Utica at Oldenbarneveld where Gerrit Boon, a sugar refiner by trade who had accompanied John Lincklaen to the United States, was placed in charge. Out of the immense holding of the Holland Land Company, Boon chose a seventeen-acre tract with a slope which, since he disdained the customary method of collecting sap in buckets, he planned to utilize in carrying the running sap by gravity to a large vat at the foot of the hill. After hiring twenty-four wood-choppers and establishing a sawmill to produce the lumber needed to construct the houses for the crew, Boon began operations at first thaw in 1794. Every tree was linked by a system of troughs that drained into the central reservoir, and for awhile, the scheme seemed to work admirably. Alternating sun and frost, however, warped the thin walls of the conduits so that most of the sap escaped into the ground. The proprietors in Holland, having lost some \$15,000, had no stomach for a second try; the sugarbush lands were sold and the books of the enterprise closed for good on November 30, 1794, all in so decisive a fashion that the shareholders of the Union Farm had to take note.⁵⁹

Kinsey's health preoccupied H.D. year long. After an "extreme illness," Kinsey appeared on the mend in the summer, only to suffer a

⁵⁸ Drinker to Joseph Leaper, June 27, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 182-83.

⁵⁹ Paul Demund Evans, *The Holland Land Company* (Buffalo, 1924), 14-15, 63-66. An expert on the production of potash, writing to Benjamin Rush, from Wilkes-Barre, proposed a similar system of interlocking canals or spouts which would drain into a central vat of 100 gallons. His description of the manufacture of maple sugar in country conditions, involving troughs to convey the sap that often split and sugar burnt by fire blown against the sides of the boilers, makes highly suspect the claim of cleanliness for the product that did eventually reach market. Samuel Hopkins to Benjamin Rush, June 4, 1794, Manuscript Correspondence of Dr. Benjamin Rush, Library Company of Philadelphia (HSP Collections), XXI, 117.

return to "a low discouraging way."⁶⁰ His wife, about whom H.D. had obvious reservations, spared no detail in her letters, but even when his employer discounted "the tender solicitude of an affectionate wife," her communications were such "as to leave me and my Friends here anxiously thoughtful respecting thee." So, "in Brotherly freedom," he informed Kinsey that the Managers might relieve him of this agency at the Union Farm, not because of "any censure or disapprobation of thy conduct but merely as a prudential consideration necessary to take place." Nothing should happen quickly in this regard; it would require time and care to "fix on a suitable successor."⁶¹ Kinsey was enjoined to exercise "great watchfulness. . .to avoid all exposures which may be injurious to thy feeble frame."⁶² In December, Drinker tactfully prepared Kinsey for the next meeting of the Managers when "they will I expect see with myself that a more robust Constitution would be better fitted for the services required."⁶³

Far from resisting this gentle dismissal, Kinsey showed every inclination to leave as soon as a replacement could be found. This turned out to be no easy task, and for a time it seemed that Kinsey would be forced to stay on indefinitely. Only four people attended the advertised annual meeting of the shareholders when officers were to be elected for the coming year. "[S]uch is the inattention of the Contributors," H.D. wryly observed, "which may arise in a considerable degree from the prevailing sentiment that the concern is likely to be a losing and discouraging affair." Drinker's "oppressed Purse must bear all—for the Company will hardly agree to an additional Levy. . . . Few of the concerned give themselves any trouble or thought about the matter."⁶⁴

To promote the sale or lease of the Union Farm, Kinsey produced a detailed description for H.D. of the improvements that had been made: a log dwelling house, one and a half stories in height, measuring twenty-six by twenty feet, with two fireplaces and a good slab kitchen; a smith's shop; a stable and a hay loft; a cattle shed; a smoke house; a corn

⁶⁰ Drinker to Samuel Preston, July 22 and November 1, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 200-01, 243.

⁶¹ Drinker to John Kinsey, November 4, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 62.

⁶² Drinker to John Kinsey, November 25, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 268.

⁶³ Drinker to John Kinsey, December 9, 1794, L.B. (1793-1796), 272-73.

⁶⁴ Drinker to John Kinsey, January 9, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 280.

crib; forty acres of cleared land sowed with wheat and timothy grass; an orchard of fifty grafted trees planted the previous spring; an excellent sawmill; and two other houses near the mill.⁶⁵ Kinsey then pressed Drinker to accept Benjamin Willets as the new superintendent of the Union Farm. H.D. was indignant: Willets at a wage of £100 a year — “Can it be supposed that the Managers would be so stupid as to go on in such enormous expences. . .?”⁶⁶ Kinsey lingered into May when Preston had to step in until “some suitable Person or Family can be engaged to manage the Farm.”⁶⁷ Patience and capital had, however, been exhausted, and on November 9, 1795, the Managers at last decided to recommend to the shareholders that it was “inexpedient further to prosecute the plan,” that all operations must cease, and that the property, together with the utensils and sugar-making equipment, should be put up for sale without delay. Still, the proposed terms of sale were to be such as “will just about leave them whole”; the minimum of thirty shillings an acre struck H.D. “in a few years” as being reasonable, “but whether this price can in the present day be obtained remains to be seen.” The necessary consent of the shareholders was given, but with the condition reaffirmed that “no sale be made. . . for any sum less than will reimburse to us our contributions to the Society’s stock and pay all its debts.”⁶⁸

* * * *

The seasons in pummeling succession enveloped a deserted Union Farm. It retreated steadily from view as fields surrendered to forest and the rude structures built by Kinsey and his crew collapsed; in a few years nothing remained but the crumbling walls of the sawmill and the vestiges of the millrace on Little Equinunk Creek.⁶⁹ Until his death,

⁶⁵ Drinker to Thomas Wright, March 17, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 296-98.

⁶⁶ Drinker to John Kinsey, April 18, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 304.

⁶⁷ Drinker to Samuel Preston, July 15, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 342.

⁶⁸ Drinker to Samuel Preston, November 11 and 20, 1795, L.B. (1793-1796), 372 and 374. The proposal of the Managers as endorsed by each of the shareholders under date of November 9, 1795, is found in Philadelphia Miscellaneous Collection, HSP, Box 6a.

⁶⁹ Alfred Mathews, *History of Wayne, Pike and Monroe Counties, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1886), 631.

Henry Drinker continued to pay the real estate taxes, as his executors would do thereafter. No one stepped forward to purchase the property for a sum sufficient to discharge the mounting debt owed Drinker and his estate—much less to permit the shareholders to recover their investment as they had stipulated. Finally, in 1831, H.D.'s surviving executor, acting on the advice of counsel, sought the passage of special legislation authorizing the sale of the Union Farm at the best price obtainable, free and clear of the claims of the shareholders.⁷⁰ The Pennsylvania legislature obliged,⁷¹ and in November, 1833, the property, having been offered for sale at public auction, was bid in at a nominal amount and immediately reconveyed to Henry Drinker's estate in settlement of the debt.⁷²

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⁷⁰ Thomas Stewardson to Horace Binney, July 19, 1831, with Binney's reply appended, dated July 21, 1831, Henry S. Drinker Papers, HSP. Stewardson, as the surviving executor, calculated that the total debt against the Union Farm was then about \$14,000. Record title to the property had never left Henry Drinker, but as Binney recognized, the equitable interest of each shareholder to the extent of his fractional contribution to capital might constitute an encumbrance inhibiting the sale.

⁷¹ *Pennsylvania Session Laws*, Act of March 30, 1833 (No. 65), 110-11.

⁷² Deed from Thomas Stewardson to James C. Biddle (Stewardson's agent at the sale), dated January 8, 1834, and deed from James C. Biddle and his wife back to Stewardson, dated February 3, 1834, as recorded on February 8, 1834, in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Wayne County in Deed Book No. 8, p. 279, and Deed Book No. 8, p. 280, respectively. See Mathews, *History of Wayne, Pike and Monroe Counties*, 631.

