

# *The French Element in Pennsylvania in the 1790s: The Francophone Immigrants' Impact*

THE FABRIC OF American society has been woven in large part with the ethnic fibers that created it. During the 1790s, the French contribution to this weave was particularly significant in Pennsylvania because unusually large numbers of French-speaking people settled in the state, especially in Philadelphia, and considerably enhanced the texture of local life and society. The French immigrants were involved in diverse activities that changed the larger communities which temporarily received them. Unlike other ethnic groups, however, and even unlike their former compatriots, the Huguenots, the French men and women who came to America during the 1790s, did not establish lasting settlements which could gradually integrate into American society in Pennsylvania. Many French immigrants returned home. A number of them, however, remained and played a permanent role in Pennsylvania society. Others stayed for several years, then moved further west or south where their descendants assimilated and contributed to different American communities. Hence, the question of ultimate influence is complex. The French undeniably exerted a strong impact during the 1790s, but their effort was curtailed by untimely departure. However, individual efforts in Pennsylvania and activities in larger communities elsewhere persisted and thereby enriched American society.

During the 1790s, as a result of the French Revolution, numerous voluntary and forced exiles sought asylum in several American eastern seaboard cities. A motley group of emigres and other refugees from France settled in Philadelphia, attracted by the capital's cosmopolitan reputation, its concentration of important American personalities, and the promise of helpful connections and potential financial rewards. From mid-1791 on, French colonists from Santo Domingo began ap-

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pearing on Pennsylvania shores, having escaped from the violence unleashed by the French National Assembly's decree granting political rights to all free-born mulattoes. By the end of 1793, the year of the greatest swell in immigration, perhaps as many as three thousand French-speaking refugees were living in Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Many more followed in succeeding years. The immigrants crowded together in a small area close to the Delaware River, living in French pensions on Second Street, in small apartments, or in single rooms nearby, quickly changing lower Philadelphia into a French-speaking colony and adding a gallic flavor to local cultural activities.

Philadelphia was not the only area in Pennsylvania to receive French-speaking immigrants during the 1790s. Smaller numbers settled in various towns across the state. Pittsburgh attracted some twenty French settlers between 1793 and 1797;<sup>2</sup> others in Pittsburgh were around only temporarily, such as the Catholic priests who stopped there for a few weeks or months on their journey west,<sup>3</sup> or the itinerant merchants who traded up and down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

<sup>1</sup> Contemporary reports confirm the importance of successive evacuations. For example young Francois-René de Chateaubriand noted the presence of Santo Domingan royalists in Philadelphia in early summer 1791, (*Mémoires d'outre-tombe*, Paris, 1925, I, 355), by November of that year, Jean de Ternant, the minister of France to the United States from mid-1791 to May 15, 1793, reported that a great many former colonists lived in Philadelphia, on May 20, 1792, he wrote that two hundred families had taken refuge in the city, (Ternant to Home Ministry, in Frederic J. Turner, ed., "Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-1797," *American Historical Association, Annual Report for the Year 1903*, II, 74, 121, 127), in July and August 1793 the numbers had swelled to one and two thousand respectively, (John H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, Philadelphia, 1949, 5), then in November, another four hundred arrived, (Elisabeth Drinker, *Extracts from the Journal of Elisabeth Drinker, 1759-1807*, Philadelphia, 1889, 213.)

<sup>2</sup> The numbers are based on a tabulation of names gathered from a variety of sources. Major Ebenezer Denny, *Military Journal* (Philadelphia, 1859), 259, Lefebvre to Mr. Laux, Pittsburgh, Jan. 21, 1795, Claude W. Unger Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, hereafter referred to as HSP, André Michaux, "Diary, 1789-96," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 26 (1889), 93, Claude M. Newlin, *Life and Writings of H.H. Brackenridge* (Princeton, 1932), 193, *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Feb. 22, June 21, Oct. 25, 1794, Jan. 21, May 30, July 4, 1795, Oct. 1, 1796, John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in the Olden Times* (Philadelphia, 1877), 132-34, Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh The Story of a City* (Pittsburgh, 1938), 163.

<sup>3</sup> George P. Donehoo, *Pennsylvania A History* (New York, 1926), IV, 1627, Leo Ruszkowski, *French Emigre Priests in the United States* (Washington, D.C., 1940), 49-50, (Letter of Father Fournier to Carroll), 27 and 54, Jean Dilhet, *Etat de l'Eglise catholique ou diocèse des Etats-Unis*, trans. and annotated by P. Brown (Washington, D.C., 1922), 196-97.

In addition, many a Pennsylvania town appears to have had its French character or characters. For instance, Dr. Seraphim lived and practiced in Pottsgrove, Dr. Charles Julian Ponchon introduced the tomato plant to the York community, Jean-François Dupuy served as an officer in the masonic lodge at Wilkes-Barre, a miniature painter and a musician settled in Lancaster, three Frenchmen were living at Middletown, and in western Pennsylvania, M. Visinier was running a French school at Washington.<sup>4</sup>

A number of Frenchmen also settled in the countryside and even on virgin lands. Two French-speaking communities were started: Asylum on the east branch of the Susquehanna, a few miles south of Towanda, established by the Marquis Louis de Noailles and Omer Talon; and New Geneva in western Pennsylvania, situated on Georges' Creek, a tributary of the Monongahela, south-west of Uniontown, started by Albert Gallatin. At its largest size (1795-96), Asylum may have attracted as many as sixty to seventy people<sup>5</sup> while the New Geneva project gathered about a dozen settlers.<sup>6</sup> Other French immigrants settled on individual family farms. Advertisements in the French gazettes published in Philadelphia and reports by contemporary French travellers tell of farms for sale or leasing and of occasional owners and

<sup>4</sup> François Alexandre Frédéric La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage dans les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, fait en 1795, 1796 et 1797* (Paris, 1799), I, 87, 93, 38-39, Simon Chaudron Papers, typescript by Peter A. Brannon, Alabama Department of Archives and History Library, Montgomery, Ala., John T. Reily, *Conewago: A Collection of Catholic Local History, Gathered from the Fields of Catholic Labor Within our Reach* (Martinsburg, W. V., 1885), 384, O. J. Harvey, "Royalty in the Wyoming Valley," Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, *Proceedings and Collections*, 16 (1918), 202, Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1882), 302.

<sup>5</sup> The number of people residing at Asylum has been tabulated from the following available records. Talleyrand in America as Financial Promoter, 1794-96 *Unpublished Letters and Memoirs*, trans. and eds., H. H. and W. J. Pugh (Washington, D. C., 1943), 29, Petition to the Board of Managers of May 1795, and Dividends paid to Stockholders for 1795 and 1796 in Martin I. J. Griffin, "Asylum: A Colony of French Catholics in Bradford County, 1794-1800," American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, *Records*, 18 (1907) 249-50, Wyalusing Township Assessment for 1796, 1799, 1800-02, in Louise W. Murray, *The Story of Some French Refugees and Their "Asylum", 1783-1800* (Athens, Pa., 1903), 152, Families at Asylum in May, 1795, in La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage*, I, 157-61.

<sup>6</sup> Several of the men did or were to marry American women.

the conditions of their holdings.<sup>7</sup> These farms were few in number and widely scattered, but in Montgomery County, a region which attracted a number of French-speaking settlers, the deed-books show several land sales performed between 1793 and 1796 by bearers of French names.

Many factors impeded the immigration and assimilation of this French group into American society. The French immigrants of the 1790s did not constitute a homogeneous entity with respect to geographical origin, or social background, or education, or political beliefs. Some had come from France, a few from the free city of Geneva, and the vast majority from the West Indies. Among them were many aristocrats and military officers, intellectuals and professional people, as well as large numbers of craftsmen, merchants, and other commoners, but few, if any, farmers. Since they were a diverse group and came from societies rent by class motivated political strife, they naturally brought to America the social prejudices and political divisions of their homelands. Consequently, even though most were refugees bound by the common experience of fleeing territories torn by violence, many continued to cling to opposing political views and interpreted the events at home in discordant ways. Political quarrels soon poisoned the atmosphere in Philadelphia, the extremists among Santo Domingans blaming one another for the advances and inroads made by the revolted slaves and the British naval forces in Santo Domingo. Royalist ex-planters looked upon British control of Santo Domingan ports with relief, hoping it signaled restoration of monarchical law and order, and hence their own reinstatement. They plotted against the French Republican policies promoted by three successive French ministers to the United States. In April 1793, Edmond Charles Genêt, the first minister, was charged with attempting to regain power over Santo Domingo by whatever means necessary, including violating the American neutrality, monitoring and circumscribing the activities of emigres and conservative refugees, keeping all French counter-revolutionaries

<sup>7</sup> *Courrier Français*, Nov. 15, 1794; Oct. 27, 1795; La Rouchefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage*, VIII, 158; I, 17-22; La Rouchefoucauld-Liancourt, *Journal de voyage en Amérique et d'un séjour à Philadelphie*, ed., J. Marchand (Baltimore, 1940), 117; Edouard Ch. Victorien Colbert, comte de Maulevrier, *Voyage à l'intérieur des Etats-Unis et du Canada*, ed. G. Chinard (Baltimore, 1935) 2 and 17; *Cazenove Journal, 1794: A record of the Journal of Theophile Cazenove Through New Jersey and Pennsylvania*, trans. and ed., R.W. Kelsey (Haverford, Pa., 1922), 85.

from reaching the West Indian islands, and spying on suspicious French characters.<sup>8</sup>

A variety of radical groups sprung up, some supporting and others opposing the French ministers' policies in forceful ways. For example, the *Colons de Saint-Domingue réfugiés aux Etats-Unis* clamored insistently for relief from the Ministry while they were sending a delegation to the National Assembly in an attempt to change the radical emancipation decree. Their efforts were countered by the *Citoyens de Couleurs de Philadelphie* who supported the French emancipation legislation as long as it applied only to themselves. In addition, members of the club of loud and unrefined *Sans-Culottes* whole-heartedly supported Genêt's colonial policies and his financial measures favoring Jacobins and discriminating against Royalists and other more conservative refugees. The radical groups and individuals took their claims to the gazettes and the streets where endless heated exchanges and demonstrations took place.<sup>9</sup>

Another important characteristic working against quick assimilation was that, in contrast to previous groups of immigrants such as the Huguenots, many of the higher-placed and educated francophone refugees of the 1790s viewed America only as a temporary refuge where they hoped to repair their battered lives and fortunes before returning home.<sup>10</sup> These refugees were ill-prepared to take in stride unexpectedly

<sup>8</sup> The high points of the quarrels are best seen in the local French press and individual diaries as well as the locally published pamphlets, such as the *Courrier politique de la France et de ses colonies* (Sept 1793-March 1794), *Journal des Révolutions* (Sept-Dec 1793), *Courrier de la France et des Colonies* (Oct 1795-March 1796), *Courrier Français* (Apr 1794-July 1798), La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt's *Journal*, Médéric Louis Elie Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Voyage aux Etats-Unis d'Amérique*, 1793-98, ed., Stewart L. Mims (New Haven, 1913), Joseph Fauchet's "Mémoire sur les Etats-Unis d'Amérique," ed. C. L. Lokke in *American Historical Association, Annual Report for the Year 1938*, I, 83-123.

<sup>9</sup> See also Frances S. Childs, *French-Refugee Life in the United States 1790-1800* (Baltimore, 1940), (141-49) for an excellent description of the heated atmosphere in some refugee circles. In fact, many people were unable to emigrate within closely-knit and well-organized groups which could provide continuity and support. Many were forced to flee haphazardly and often individually when an opportunity to escape imminent death presented itself.

<sup>10</sup> Various land and commercial schemes involving emigre members of the French aristocracy and well-to-do merchants were devised to save threatened fortunes or to maintain the standard of living. A case in point is the group of emigres exiled in England who secured letters of introduction to American financiers through Angelica Church, Alexander Hamilton's sister living in London. Harold C. Syrett et al., eds., *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York), XIV, 89, XVI, 380, XVII, 251-52.

harsh economic conditions, for the combination of unrealistic expectations, high social status, and former comfortable economic positions rendered them particularly vulnerable as immigrants.<sup>11</sup> While a few exiled Santo Dominigan planters and merchants had left the colony in time to manage a transfer of their wealth to the United States,<sup>12</sup> most of the refugees, including those from mainland France, appear to have been in precarious financial situations. Previously well-placed people lived miserably, and many of them—in particular the escapees from Santo Domingo—survived, if at all, in complete destitution.<sup>13</sup> The destitute clamored to the French ministers in Philadelphia to provide them with the means to return to their homelands.

A final yet crucial development deepened French feelings of discouragement and alienation: the gradual spread of a climate inimical to things French among various groups of United States citizens. Numerous events contributed to the unfolding of this trend. First, news of the death of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette as well as reports of increasing excesses committed by the Girondins and the Jacobins tended to dampen the widespread initial enthusiasm for the

<sup>11</sup> Many evidently believed that America would be a haven, safe from political violence, religious strife, and economic reverses, where they would feel welcome and respected. Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Perigord, "Lettres de M. de Talleyrand a Madame de Stael tirées des archives du château de Broglie," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 4 (1890), 210, Constantin Francois Chasseboeuf Volney, "Tableau du climat du sol des Etats-Unis d'Amerique," *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris, 1821), VII, 1-11, Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, 38, Liancourt to J. Bentham, March 30, 1795, American Philosophical Society, Miscellaneous Collections, J. Esprit Bonnet, *Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique a la fin du 18ième siècle* (Paris, 1802), I, xxxvii, Etienne Dumont to Gallatin, Feb. 20, 1794, Sylvestre to Gallatin, June 12, 1791, July 19, 1794, D'Ivernois to Gallatin, Oct. 14, 1794, Albert Gallatin Papers, New York Historical Society, hereafter referred to as AGP, NYHS. For more specifications, see the author's "The Pennsylvania French in the 1790s: The Story of Their Survival," Ph.D. diss., (The University of Texas, Austin, 1981), chap. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Two French observers reported the presence of such people. Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* I, 355, Jean de Ternant to Home Ministry, in Frederick J. Turner, ed., "Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States, 1791-97," *AHA, Annual Report for 1903*, II, 63, 127, 163. Simon Chaudron was one such refugee from Santo Domingo, Simon Chaudron Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History Library, Montgomery, Ala.

<sup>13</sup> The general destitution is well documented by contemporary correspondence and diaries, such as Moreau de Saint-Méry's *Voyage*, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt's *Journal*, and innumerable private letters found in the D'Orlic Rodrigue Papers, American Catholic Historical Society, Philadelphia, the John Nicholson Letterbooks, 1791-98, HSP, the Duponceau Papers Letterbooks 1792-1800, HSP, the D'Autremont Family Papers and the Letterbook of Peter Régner, 1796-1803, Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, Greenville, Del., hereafter referred to as EMHL, as well as the "Correspondence of the French Ministers to the United States," *AHA, Annual Report for 1903*, II, 85, 121, 127.

French Revolution and its ideals manifested in many quarters of American society.<sup>14</sup> Then, in April 1793, the first Minister of the French Republic, Edmond Charles Genêt, began to pressure the United States to support France in her conflict against England; his ill-advised and provoking methods provided the anti-republican and conservative elements in Washington's administration and American society with the means to discredit the intentions of the French Republic towards the United States.<sup>15</sup> Such a political climate made French assimilation awkward, if not impossible.

Furthermore, during the second half of the decade, the country was beginning to undergo a moral reawakening in which ministers and other leaders warned against French immorality and depravity.<sup>16</sup> In addition, political demonstrations in the streets of Philadelphia by extremist French groups made up of refugees from Santo Domingo of varying ideological convictions disturbed several self-proclaimed moral arbitrators of American society.<sup>17</sup> That French Republican victories were advertised, debated, and commemorated in the gazettes and at public celebrations. The encouragement and patronage of French Ministers Joseph Fauchet and Pierre Auguste Adet of such demonstrations suited the political ends of the Federalists and allied American conservatives: these were able to portray the pro-French sentiments of their liberal opponents as inspired by foreign, i.e., Jacobin, influence bent on destroying American independence, institutions, and mores.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For further details, see Howard M. Jones, *America and French Culture*, (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1927), 543-44, and Charles D. Hazen, *Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution*, (Gloucester, Mass., 1964), 253-71

<sup>15</sup> Genêt ordered the arming of English prizes as French privateers in American ports and recruited American citizens to fight in the subversive expeditions he organized against English and Spanish held territories, he also supported opponents of the Federalists, participated in radical political rallies, attacked president Washington and Christianity publicly, and threatened to appeal to the American people if his French privateers were not allowed to bring in English prizes freely. For more details, see J. S. Biddle, ed., *Autobiography of Charles Biddle, Vice President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, 1745-1821* (Philadelphia, 1883), 253, Bernard Fay, *The Revolutionary Spirit in France and America* (New York, 1966), 327-30, Alexander DeConde, *Entangling Alliance* (Durham, N.C., 1958), chapters 7-9.

<sup>16</sup> Methodist and revivalist ministers pictured the cult of Reason and the spirit of irreligiosity as being responsible for the violence in France and warned against such work of the devil in America. Friends of France were accused of sympathizing with atheism and the devil. See Fay, *The Revolutionary Spirit*, 364 ff. and Jones, *French Culture*, 389-94. For a definite change in attitude in one person and the rise of suspicion towards the French, see Elisabeth Drinker, *Extracts from the Journal of Elisabeth Drinker, 1795-1807* (Philadelphia, 1889), 193, 329, 364.

<sup>17</sup> Most damaging demonstrations were the delirious celebrations of the death of the King and of the victories of the French republican forces in Europe.

<sup>18</sup> DeConde, *Alliance*, 260-62.

Even so, a generalized turnabout in public attitudes did not occur until diplomatic relations between the United States and the French Republic moved to a breaking point and open hostilities after the XYZ Affair. When that calculated affront was announced to the general public, diplomatic, political, and moral oppositions fused into a movement of francophobia: spontaneous anti-French demonstrations were held in many towns,<sup>19</sup> Congress quickly passed the Alien and Sedition Acts (1798), and the country readied itself for war with France. Thus, over the course of a few years, a number of political and moral leaders turned American public opinion against France and the French and thereby reawakened old prejudices against French treachery and infidelity, prejudices based on fears that reached back to the era of the French and Indian War. Given these circumstances, it is no wonder that many of the francophone refugees returned to Europe and Santo Domingo.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the French immigrants did have an impact on Pennsylvania. In the North, plans for a French settlement materialized. By mid-1793, emigrés led by the Marquis de Noailles, the brother-in-law of Lafayette and a veteran of the American Revolutionary War, and Omer Talon, a former head of the French King's secret service, were purchasing large tracts of land at particularly advantageous pre-sale prices from two Pennsylvania financiers and speculators, Robert Morris and John Nicholson. Asylum, as the settlement was called, was intended to become a haven for French emigrés and refugees as well as a safe and, it was hoped, a lucrative investment to repair the badly damaged fortunes of Frenchmen and Santo Domingans. Despite the ultimate failure of the original plans, Asylum was, nevertheless, put on the map. The settlers began roads, built houses, opened stores and inns, and brought business into the area. But by the turn of the century, the settlement was abandoned, at first because of the discouragement caused by the hopelessly adverse conditions suffered by many of the refugees, and, ultimately, because of a general amnesty declared by Napoleon.

<sup>19</sup> Edward G. Everett, "Some Aspects of Pro-French Sentiment in Pennsylvania, 1790-1800," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, 43 (1960), 39-41; James M. Smith, "The Aurora and the Alien and Sedition Laws," *PMHB*, 77 (1953), 8-9; O.J. Harvey, "Royalty in the Wyoming Valley," 204-05; Colbert de Maulevrier, *Voyage*, 4, 12; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, 263.

<sup>20</sup> After the XYZ Affair, anti-French feelings were widespread enough that refugees began to make note of them and to complain about them; Moreau de Saint-Méry, *Voyage*, 263; Colbert de Maulevrier, *Voyage*, 4, 12; Mme Victor Dupont to Mme Manigault, Jan. 27, 1800, Papers of Victor Dupont, Winterthur Mss., EMHL.



The French settlers of Asylum were ill-prepared for the duress and isolation of frontier farming. Few had the physical endurance or the know-how necessary to succeed. Besides, many lost considerable sums of money because land improvements cost much more than anticipated and because all commodities, brought to the wilderness by flatboat, were more expensive than expected. In addition, the colonists cleared land at such a slow rate that they produced only meagre crops. Furthermore, projected improvements such as construction of roads, canals, and public buildings were curtailed, and dividends were discontinued because the wealthy backers experienced financial troubles and because no new buyers brought new capital. And finally, land title disputes arose when Charles Bué Boulogne drowned, carrying away evidence of legal land sales in his pocket, and Omer Talon, holding additional proof of regular transactions, failed to return from Europe. Endless promises by the American backers followed by inevitable setbacks produced such frustration and bitterness that clearly the best solution for anyone unwilling to live at subsistence level was to escape before complete ruin had set in. Many of them left as the dwindling number of settlers beginning in 1796 unequivocally shows. However, in the end, after the turn of the century, a handful of French settlers who had been unable to invest in or acquire lands originally had the opportunity to buy the abandoned farms at very low cost and to become permanent settlers of the region.<sup>21</sup>

Young Genevans, led and counseled by Albert Gallatin, set up a smaller project, not unlike Asylum, in the western section of Pennsylvania. New Geneva soon had houses, stores, mills, stills, river docks, a glassworks, and a gun factory. Like Asylum, inexperienced

<sup>21</sup> Several contemporary travellers visited Asylum and reported what they saw. Among them were La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Voyage*, I, 154-61, Talleyrand in America, 24 ff., Colbert de Maulevrier, *Voyage*, 34 ff., Isaac Weld, *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797* (New York, 1970) II, 350-51. Many extant letters are revealing as to the conditions, both human and financial, of the settlers and organizers. Many are found in John Nicholson Papers, General Correspondence, Pennsylvania History and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa., Peter Regnier Letterbook, EMHL, Asylum Co. Papers, HSP, Asylum Settlement Papers, Tioga Point Museum, Athens, Pa. Innumerable studies have been written about the Asylum settlement. A few titles are Elsie Murray, *Asylum: A French Refugee Village of 1793-1803* (Athens, Pa., 1933), Louise Murray, *French Refugees*, David Craft, "The French at Asylum," *Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Proceedings and Collections*, 5 (1900), 75-109, Robert D. Arbuckle, *Pennsylvania Speculator and Patriot: The Entrepreneurial John Nicholson* (University Park, 1975), chapter 7.

participants ran the geographically isolated settlement.<sup>22</sup> When the depression of 1796-97 struck, the operation encountered financial difficulties, and the original partnership gradually dissolved. The New Geneva settlement continued to function throughout the decade, however. By 1800, it was being run from a distance by Gallatin with the help of A. Mussard, a Genevan refugee from the West Indies; the gun factory was producing small arms, and the glassworks was functioning satisfactorily. Even though the operation eventually closed, the settlement had in the meantime attracted other Genevans to the vicinity, such as Louis Salomon and Charles Alexandre Mestrezat, who ran a successful general store in Greene County on the banks of the Monongahela across from Gallatin's establishment.<sup>23</sup>

The two original participants of the New Geneva settlement, Gallatin and his friend Jean Badollet, made substantial contributions in the public arena: Badollet was active in local politics and as a surveyor planning for the location of roads in the Laurel Hills. Gallatin went on to achieve state and national fame as a Republican representative in the Pennsylvania Legislature, in the United States Congress, and later as Secretary of the Treasury. During the Whiskey Rebellion (1794), Gallatin exerted some restraint on the rebels in western Pennsylvania and aided in averting open insurrection against the new central government.<sup>24</sup> In short, from New Geneva, French elements were interlaced into the local countryside as well as into state and national affairs.

Meanwhile, in Pittsburgh, French merchants, an inn keeper, and some French teachers brought a continental flavor with their wares and ways.<sup>25</sup> John Marie kept a tavern on several acres of cultivated grounds,

<sup>22</sup> The evolution of the settlement can be gathered from correspondence between Gallatin and his fellow Genevans and other associates in AGP, NYHS, in Henry Adams, *The Life of Albert Gallatin* (New York, 1943), and Raymond Walters, *Gallatin The Jeffersonian Financier and Diplomat* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 133 ff

<sup>23</sup> Mestrezat to Gallatin, July 3, 1798, AGP, NYHS, and John W. and James H. Jordan, eds., *Genealogical and Personal History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania* (New York, 1912), 124-125

<sup>24</sup> Russell J. Ferguson, "Albert Gallatin Western Pennsylvania Politician," in *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine*, 16 (1933) 190-193

<sup>25</sup> For further details on the French in Pittsburgh, see the following sources: André Michaux, *Travels into Kentucky, 1793-96*, vol. III of *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846*, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, Ohio, 1904-07), 149-67; *Pittsburgh Gazette*, Aug. and Sept. 1793, June 21, 1795; Dutilh et Wachsmuth, Claude W. Unger Collection, HSP; Major Denny, *Military Journal*, 21-25; Carondelet to Alcuida, March 4, 1794, AHA, *Annual Report for the Year 1896*, I, 1049; Leland D. Baldwin, *Pittsburgh, The Story of a City* (Pittsburgh, 1938), 263; Charles W. Dahlinger, *Pittsburgh A Sketch of its Early Social Life* (New York, 1916), 49

complete with flowerbeds and graveled walks, on a hill overlooking the town. A French botanist and traveller, Andre Michaux, reported that it was a good inn which had become a meeting place for friends of France and Jeffersonian republican-minded men. A few merchants sold French wines and fabrics. Some Frenchmen were lured to the area by the hope of participating in the burgeoning iron and glass industry. A small group of traders and rivermen, among them Pierre Audrain, Chevalier de Luzière, and Barthélemy Tardiveau, traded on the rivers and engaged in subversive activities. They worked for French Ministers Edmond Charles Genêt and Joseph Fauchet, trying to foment discontent among settlers further west. These francophone traders, familiar with the language, needs, and customs of French people settled in the West, contributed to linking western Pennsylvania to the Mississippi region.

While these French activities developed in central and western Pennsylvania, many merchants and craftsmen in Philadelphia quickly transformed a section of the town into a French quarter, offering a variety of French commodities and services. More than forty French merchants advertised in the gazettes between 1794 and 1798; several had restaurants and cafes open to the public, complete with terraces and gardens for the enjoyment and relaxation of their guests. They served French drinks and meals, including the newly popular ice-cream. A small army of people imported wines from the Bordeaux region, sold cheeses, prepared meats of all sorts, or produced an assortment of French candy, chocolates, and candied fruit.<sup>26</sup>

The refugees made and sold a variety of other French products. For instance, saddle makers from Santo Domingo sold French and creole saddles; gun-smiths made and repaired French arms. Goldsmiths from Santo Domingo and Geneva produced jewelry and personalized medallions and enamel work. Glass and metal engravers, stone and monument masons, miniaturists and portraitists, tapestry workers—all advertised their skills. There was even a tinsmith selling hand-made stoves, bathtubs, and bidets. Still other merchants, mostly women, imported fabrics and the latest fashion shows and models from Paris. They also provided fashionable bonnets and a variety of accessories such as feathers, flowers, and all sorts of fancy belts, some of them reversible.

<sup>26</sup> *American Star*, Mar. 1, 1794; *Courrier Français*, Jan. 13, May 1, Nov. 20, 1795; Aug. 5, 12, 19, Sept. 20, 1796; Apr. 4, 1797. Wines and foods were advertised in most issues of the *Journal des Révolutions*, the *Courrier de la France et des Colonies* and the *Courrier Français*.

Completing this fashion scene were numerous dressmakers who could turn out the latest models and washerwomen and cleaners who could bleach white silk stockings and restore other delicate items.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, French cultural activities enlivened Philadelphia and added significantly to its cosmopolitan character. One Frenchman showed an elephant for a fee, another man exhibited a balloon and undertook aerial flights, and a pyrotechnician entertained Philadelphians with his elaborate fireworks representing French republican themes. Three exhibitions of political and historical interest were shown, with one consisting of wax figures representing the French royal family and various political and military personalities. Finally, French musicians and vocalists produced eighteen concerts and operas, and dancers and actors performed even more ballets and pantomimes between late 1794 and 1798.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to these cultural legacies, the French refugees also contributed to technical, scientific, and other learned fields. While engaged in the business of making a living, several professionals rendered themselves useful to the community that had received them and thereby left their mark. Such were many of the numerous French-speaking apothecaries, dentists, and physicians who practiced in Philadelphia, several of whom advertised their products and services in the gazettes.<sup>29</sup> Two refugees in particular, Dr. David Nassy and Dr. Jean Devèze from the West Indies, made noteworthy scientific contributions during the yellow fever epidemic of 1793. Dr. Devèze, with the help of refugee nurses, cooks, and other assistants, successfully ran the Bush Hill Hospital established in a private mansion by another French immigrant, the merchant Stephen Girard. Both doctors combated the use

<sup>27</sup> Again advertisements are found in the contemporary newspapers, such as the *Courrier Français*, Oct. 19, 28, Dec. 27, 1794; Jan. 24, Feb. 13, Apr. 10, May 8, 28, 31, Jul. 15, Aug. 4, Dec. 27, 1795; May 28, Sept. 25, Oct. 28, Nov. 11, Dec. 27, 1796; May 16, June 21, Jul. 31, Nov. 7, 1797; May 12, June 14, 1798; the *American Star*, Mar. 1, 18, 1794; the *Journal des Révolutions*, Jan. 10, 27, 1794; the *Aurora*, Dec. 18, 1797; Jan. 9, 1799.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Albert Moré, Chevalier de Pontgibaud, *Mémoires du comte de Moré* (Paris, 1898), 165; *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*, Dec. 26, 1796; *American Star*, Mar. 4, 1794; *Courrier Français*, Dec. 26, 1796; Mar. 25, 1797; *Aurora*, Jul. 9, 1797. The files of the *Courrier Français* are the best record of French refugee theatre, music, and dance performances.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, *Courrier Français*, Dec. 19, 1794; Feb. 5, Mar. 24, June 21, Oct. 27, Nov. 2, 6, 1795; June 18, 27, July 4, Sept. 2, 1796; May 24, 1797; Jan. 18, Feb. 28, May 11, 1798; *Journal des Révolutions*, Jan. 6, 1794; *American Star*, Feb. 20, Mar. 6, 18, 1794; *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*, Dec. 29, 1795; Feb. 22, 1796.

of strong medicine, such as purgatives, with evidence from autopsies that such methods promoted internal deterioration. They further promoted the notion that it was better to work with rather than to combat nature in order to cure the sick.<sup>30</sup>

Several officers with previous training and active duty in the French forces shared technical military knowledge. These men received commissions to direct and supervise a number of engineering works for the incipient United States military forces.<sup>31</sup> By the end of the decade, however, as a consequence of the anti-French sentiment that resulted from the Genêt and XYZ Affairs, French military engineers appear to have been forced out of the services or to have been denied employment upon application.

Between January, 1792, and January, 1797, seventeen Frenchmen were elected members of the American Philosophical Society, and more than a dozen communications were presented by Frenchmen, including a report on the research of modern botanists, a presentation of a new method of treating effusions, a communique concerning the metric system of weights and measures adopted by the French Republic, as well as reports on meteorological observations and on experimentation on vine culture.<sup>32</sup> Eventually, the French members stopped participating, perhaps because of general apathy to their efforts.

From the point of view of the French immigrants' impact on Philadelphia's society, surely the most important areas of activity were the fields of teaching and of French book production and distribution. According to the advertisements in the newspapers, much expertise was available.<sup>33</sup> Some teachers offered fencing, dancing, and music classes; others attracted students by teaching mathematics and geography besides reading, writing, and languages; Falize and Lacour opened a

<sup>30</sup> Methods and observations are explained in detail in the following two pamphlets published in Philadelphia. David Nassy, *Observations sur la cause, la nature et le traitement de la maladie épidémique, qui règne à Philadelphie* (Philadelphia, 1793) and Jean Deveze, *Recherches et observations sur les causes et les effets de la maladie épidémique qui a régné à Philadelphie* (Philadelphia, 1794).

<sup>31</sup> People like Anne Louis de Touzard and J J Ulrich Rivard supervised and inspected Fort Mifflin, see Touzard-Stocker Papers, HSP, and Mary Johnson, "Madame Rivard's Seminary in the Gothic Mansion," *PMHB*, 104 (Jan. 1980), 8-10.

<sup>32</sup> *Early Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge* (Philadelphia, 1884).

<sup>33</sup> *Journal des Révolutions*, Jan. 10, May 1, 1794, *Courrier Français*, Oct. 1794, Feb., Oct., Nov., Dec., 1795, Oct. 1796, Sept., Oct., 1797, Feb. 1798.

drawing school where they instructed in architectural, hydraulic, and military draftsmanship, and a former engineer of bridges and roads offered to teach whatever skills were necessary to his field.

Many private French schools were established in Philadelphia throughout the decade, their number even increasing in 1798 and 1799.<sup>34</sup> All offered French, and some also English, Latin, German, and other school subjects; some were boarding schools for young ladies, teaching reading, writing, arithmetic, sewing, dancing, music, and good behavior in addition to French and English.<sup>35</sup> Numerous listings of imported textbooks—increasing throughout the decade—as well as of French grammars, readers, and conversation manuals published by Philadelphia printers, suggest the existence of a sizeable clientele eager to learn French.<sup>36</sup> Thus, even if close contact with French-speaking residents did not stimulate formal education in Pennsylvania to provide the study of French as a regular academic subject,<sup>37</sup> it is a certainty that many Philadelphians were studying French and that this number increased as the decade progressed.

The 1790s also brought a sudden rise in the number and selection of French books for sale because of efforts by individual members of the French refugee community, the work of several Anglo-American publishers, and the general francophone presence in Philadelphia. At least one hundred French-language and bilingual publications were produced in Philadelphia during the height of French-refugee activities, a seven-fold increase over the previous decade. This output included eight weekly, bi- and tri-weekly gazettes, twenty pamphlets, and

<sup>34</sup> J. C. Rousseau (*Courrier Français*, Feb. 2, 1795), a former teacher from Cap François (*Courrier Français*, Oct. 1795), Dorfeuille (*Courrier Français*, May 28, 1796), Kierrulf (*Aurora*, Jan. 2, 1797), Duplaine (*Aurora*, Jan. 4, 1797), Vallon (*Aurora*, Jan. 6, 1797), Gallet (*Aurora*, Oct. 28, 1799), and yet another French boarding-school master (*Courrier Français*, Sept. 1799). Most teachers advertised over extended periods of time.

<sup>35</sup> See for example Mme Pacaud (*Courrier Français*, Oct. 15, 1796), Mme Sewell (*Journal des Révolutions*, Jan. 10, 1794), and Mme Rousselin (*Aurora*, Oct. 28, 1798).

<sup>36</sup> Evidence of books offered by Philadelphia's booksellers, based on the contents of the extant book catalogues between 1790 and 1800, shows a gradual increase in and a widening of the scope of language-learning manuals. The author is presently writing a detailed study of this market.

<sup>37</sup> For example, the University of Pennsylvania had not offered formal instruction of French since the 1770s, and Dickinson College reneged its promise to teach modern languages. For details, see C. E. Castaneda, "Modern Language Instruction in American Colleges, 1779-1800," *The Catholic Educational Review*, 23, No. 1 (1925), 7, Ellis Oberholtzer, ed., *University of Pennsylvania* (Boston, 1901), I, 101, Charles H. Handshin, "The Teaching of Modern Languages in the United States," *U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin*, 3 (1913), 13, 22.

forty books, as well as a variety of catalogues, songs, poems, funeral speeches, and advertisements.<sup>38</sup> Several refugee printers and booksellers were active, the best known being Moreau de Saint-Méry and Pierre Parent, the latter publishing mostly political pamphlets and the *Courrier Francais*, the only French gazette which was printed continually for four years, from April, 1794, to July, 1798. Moreau de Saint-Méry published primarily non-political works, including among others his own well researched studies of Santo Domingo, a French gazette, and a prayerbook for the French refugee community. He also ran a respectable bookstore, if one judges from the large number of French books ordered and the wide selection of items offered in his catalogue of 1795.<sup>39</sup>

Spurred on by their French-refugee colleagues' examples, Anglo-American publishers and booksellers became involved in this foreign business. They produced over one-half of the French publications whose authors, compilers, or translators were primarily French and Santo Domingan refugees. Several of these booksellers put large numbers of imported French books, either in the original or in a translated version, on the Philadelphia market. These included French classical authors, past and present, wide selections of popular novels, historical and travel books, treatises of all sorts, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and the imported school books and language manuals mentioned above.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The conclusions on types of publications and size of various categories were based on a preliminary tabulation and classification made by the author with items drawn from the numerous available reference works, such as Charles Evans' *American Bibliography* (New York, 1941-49), Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney's *National Index of American Imprints Through 1800 The Short-Title Evans*, 2 vols (Worcester, Mass., 1965), and Roger P. Bristol's *Supplement to Charles Evans Bibliography* (Charlottesville, 1970). The author also plans to publish the results of this study in another paper. For a list of the francophone and bilingual gazettes published in Philadelphia during the 1790s, consult Allen J. Barthold, "The French Journalists in the United States, 1780-1800," *The Franco-American Review*, 1, No. 3 (Winter 1937), 215-230, and Samuel J. Marino, "The French Refugee Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States, 1789-1825," Ph.D. dissertation (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1962).

<sup>39</sup> A detailed annotated bibliography of Moreau de Saint-Méry's Philadelphia publications exists. See F. W. Kent, "Chez Moreau de Saint-Méry, Philadelphie," *Bibliographical Essays A Tribute to Wilberforce Eames* (Cambridge, 1924), 74-78.

<sup>40</sup> The figures based on the contents of extant booksellers' catalogues confirm to a certain point the findings of Howard M. Jones's "The Importation of French Books in Philadelphia, 1750-1800," *Modern Philology*, 32 (1934-35), 157-77, namely that great numbers of French books were imported in the 1790s. My tabulations further suggest, however, that importation decreased toward the end of the decade.

This trend abated after a few years, and, by 1798, the French book-market as a whole seems to have collapsed.<sup>41</sup> This coincided with the growing anti-French sentiment in the country at the end of the decade. However, if greatly diminished offerings of French books reached Philadelphia's markets, not all categories of such items shrunk measurably. The variety of language-learning manuals and readers actually increased at the close of the century, showing the impact the French teachers were having.

Many of the activities described above declined significantly or came to a halt towards the end of the decade. The French settlement at Asylum was gradually abandoned; the group at New Geneva disbanded; the concerts, operas, ballets, pantomimes, and circus performances by French artists stopped; local printing and importation of French materials were greatly curtailed; scholarly exchanges became less frequent, and advertisements for numerous goods and services were reduced as the years progressed. The flow of refugees who began returning home as early as 1794 gained in strength in the following years, culminating in a real exodus in 1798, when the Alien and Sedition Acts became law. Between 1794 and 1798, at least forty ships took French passengers back to Santo Domingo. Thirteen more vessels departed between mid-July and mid-August, 1798, with special permits by the President of the United States to take French persons and their possessions back to the Continent or to the West Indies.<sup>42</sup>

Not everyone left, though, as selected personal correspondence, advertisements for language schools in the Anglo-American gazettes, and the rosters of the French masonic lodges attest. Many of the Royalists did not return home until Napoleon declared general amnesty in 1802; still, many refugees remained, a number of whom were regular members of one masonic lodge, the l'Aménité, and engaged in some form of

<sup>41</sup> Dufief to Governor Kemble of New York, Philadelphia, Dec. 11, 1798, Gratz Collection, HSP. Moreau de Saint-Méry appears to have had trouble selling his books after 1796 and also in liquidating his store, see *Courrier Francais*, May, Aug., Oct., 1797, and June, 1798.

<sup>42</sup> In April 1794, several ships took refugees back to Santo Domingo, (Syrett, *Papers of Hamilton*, XVI, 309). On January 7, 1796, the *Courrier de la France et des Colonies* printed a report from a resident of Santo Domingo stating that a great number of refugees were returning home, the files of the French gazettes published departure dates for ships taking passengers to the islands. See Childs (*French Refugee Life*, 191) for a list of the boats leaving between mid-July and August 13, 1798.



trade or commerce;<sup>43</sup> others, as was seen above, opened schools and taught French and a variety of subjects.

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In the final analysis, during the 1790s the French refugees undeniably changed the texture of local life and society even if only for a few years. They also had an impact on Pennsylvania and the nation during those years. However, divided from the outset because of social and political conditions in their homelands and lured home as much by the promises of returning to the fold as they were pushed by the hardships, frustrations, and indignities suffered in America, the French refugees of the 1790s did not leave a tangible and monolithic legacy; rather, they contributed in various minor and at times contradictory ways to different sectors of the communities in which they resided.

In Philadelphia, for example, the radical and unruly political groups rendered easier the task of Federalist and other conservative leaders who wished to sever ties with France and her implicit threat of social upheavals. Or again, a number of wealthy and would-be monied planters from Santo Domingo contributed to the land boom and the inevitable depression that followed and which coincided with the times when all hopes of substantial financial transfers to the United States were shattered for them. On a more personal level, aristocratic emigrés, who associated with prominent members of Philadelphia's merchant class, helped to keep alive a contact with things French that had become fashionable since French participation in the American Revolution; and their presence helped to maintain the desire to learn French.<sup>44</sup> Then the booksellers and language teachers who advertised in the gazettes catered to a wider public that was not altogether insensitive

<sup>43</sup> Freemasons. Philadelphia. Loge française l'Aménité. *Tableau des F.F. composant la R.L. Française L'Aménité*, No. 73 (Philadelphia. 1803) located at HSP.

<sup>44</sup> Various refugees were tutoring family members of prominent families—Washington's grandson, Alexander Hamilton's children, John Nicholson's son. De La Grange to Nicholson, Dec. 22, 1798, John Nicholson Papers, General Correspondence, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pa., John Nicholson to Pillet, Nov. 16, 1795, Nicholson Letterbooks, HSP, Syrett, *Hamilton*, XVI, 426, Samuel Brech, "Recollections" *French-American Review*, 1(1948), 274.

to the offered products, according to evidence of an increasing selection of French grammars and readers. French doctors treated patients with methods that in retrospect seem quite effective, yet they elicited negative reactions from their American colleagues. French military know-how was finding its way to the incipient United States military forces for training them and strengthening the defenses of the country. In Pittsburgh, French rivermen contributed to tying western Pennsylvania to the Mississippi region. At New Geneva, Gallatin's settlement temporarily provided work for a few refugees and later for several German craftsmen who operated the glassworks. And finally at Asylum, French people's interests, efforts, and monies effected the first, necessary stage in the development of a wilderness area—an essential stepping stone from which the next generation of settlers would be able to begin its way to greater financial independence. Thus, as a group, the French refugees of the 1790s played a role in the political, economic, and cultural development of Pennsylvania.

With the exodus of 1798 and 1802, and again later with further departures occasioned by the Bourbon Restoration of 1815, the number of French immigrants dwindled much, so that even their individual influence was greatly curtailed. Nevertheless, the French presence did not vanish entirely: some individuals and families remained. For example, a few doctors continued to practice in Philadelphia and to contribute to the medical establishment. A handful of French farmers continued the work begun by the refugees at Asylum, contributing to the development of the area. A few merchants joined with Americans to provide Philadelphians with the goods and services their patrons needed. Other merchants in association with one or two partners, of whom Stephen Girard was the most successful, established or maintained a tradition of trading with cities on the southern seaboard as well as with the West Indies and Louisiana; thus, they contributed to strengthening ties with outlying regions and participated in the westward movement that began to absorb the nation. Others had preceded them in this thrust westward, such as the Ohio rivermen and the priests, who, while waiting for the river to become navigable, had temporarily ministered to the Catholics in Pittsburgh. More were to join this trek to the Mississippi region and Louisiana, attracted in part by the greater number of immigrants of French background residing in those areas and in part by greater financial opportunities. The remaining threads of

the francophone community that had had an impact in Philadelphia during the 1790s became thus interwoven, economically, socially, and geographically into the wider fabric of American society.

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