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*William Irvine and the Complexities  
of Manhood and Fatherhood  
in the Pennsylvania Backcountry*

WILLIAM IRVINE WROTE to his eldest son, Callender, in 1793: "I hope to see you a respectable man, if so I shall die much more happy than I otherwise should, not on your account alone, but that, in you[,] your Brothers and sisters may have a second Father."<sup>1</sup> For the fifty-two-year-old Irvine, one of backcountry Pennsylvania's more distinguished military and political leaders, and a devoted husband and father, respectable manhood was the goal for which all men, especially his eldest son, should strive. Respectable men, after all, were distinguished from their peers. As individuals of uncommon independence, integrity, and civility, they were accorded coveted positions in the top ranks of the American male hierarchy. Respectable men, Irvine suggested, earned sufficient esteem to

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<sup>1</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, May 25, 1793, Brigadier General William Irvine Papers, 11:101, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. (hereafter, Irvine Papers, HSP).

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benefit on their "account[s] alone." Yet, while becoming a respectable man distinguished a worthy man from others, and celebrated him as an individual of merit and distinction, it also linked him inexorably to his peers and family. Respectable men did not and could not exist in isolation. Because respectability and manhood were and are socially determined attributes, respectable men were always "connected" men. They were connected to their male peers, who assessed their worth. And, more important to Irvine, they were connected to their families, whose intergenerational obligations they strove to fulfill throughout their lives. Indeed, respectable men possessed the independence, maturity and foresight necessary to assume what historian Mark Kann calls the duties of "provisioning" and "protecting posterity."<sup>2</sup> They embraced key leadership positions in their families, and were eager to serve as "second Father[s]" to their siblings. As Irvine's words also hint, achieving respectable manhood was by no means assured. He could only "hope" his son would fulfill his dreams. And as Irvine knew from his own experiences pursuing manhood in America, becoming a respectable man was a challenging task. The goal was clear. The path by which to get there was not. Achieving respectable manhood demanded self-discipline, hard work, and perseverance. Yet, as he knew only too well, it also depended on good fortune, and involved much compromise and adaptation.

Using William Irvine's life as a case study, this essay explores how one man—an eighteenth-century Scots-Irish immigrant, an early settler of the backcountry town of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a military and political leader during and after the American Revolution, and a loving husband and father as well—struggled to define his own path to respectable manhood. On one level, Irvine's story functions as a universal human tale of a man struggling to define his self-identity while simultaneously striving to be a good person, a loving husband, and a caring father. On a deeper level, however, Irvine's American experiences offer unique insights into the varying functions of manhood in early America. Irvine's quest for identity in an American context reveals how manhood could serve as a vehicle for assimilation to a new land and culture. By striving to be a man, Irvine also worked to become an

<sup>2</sup> Mark E. Kann, *A Republic of Men: The American Founders, Gendered Language, and Patriarchal Politics* (New York, 1998), 15–16, 79, 84–96. See also Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven, 1999), 16, 99–110. According to Wilson, acting as provider was an essential part of being a man in colonial New England. Men were judged by their usefulness and serviceableness to their families and communities.



American. As a man from the Old World who adapted successfully to the New, Irvine's American experiences demonstrate how some eighteenth-century male migrants pursued manhood as one way to craft new identities for themselves as men and as Americans too.<sup>3</sup> More important, Irvine's experiences reveal the myriad ways that manhood remained a negotiated and highly individualized concept in early America. Manhood, scholars recognize, is defined through a dynamic set of gender ideals and conventions that are specific to time, place, class, and culture. Early American manhood is no longer portrayed by scholars as a monolithic, patriarchal absolute. Instead of one-dimensional "communal men," "genteel patriarchs," or "heroic artisans," scholars have offered more complex and nuanced portraits of early American men as "anxious patriarchs" struggling to gain and maintain control of their plantations, as risk-taking merchants trying to reconcile their inner and outer selves, or as politicians struggling to adapt their career ambitions to suit their commitment to the companionate ideal. Definitions of manhood in early America, scholars now believe, not only varied over time and space, but from individual to individual. Although there were, as Mark Kann suggests, certain "hegemonic norms" of manhood, especially applicable to men of the middling and better sort, many of the ideals that shaped these norms and the accompanying conventions that expressed them were contested.<sup>4</sup> Even more important, few men ever lived

<sup>3</sup> Irvine was not unique in this respect. See, for example, Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill, 1996). Brown's work addresses how masculinity was made American in colonial Virginia through the interaction of Indians and Europeans, blacks and whites. Manhood, she asserts, was adapted from Europe into an American context.

<sup>4</sup> Kann, *A Republic of Men*, 1. The most recent and most complex treatments of early American manhood include: Brown, *Good Wives*; Toby Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of American History* (hereafter, *JAHH*) 81 (1994), 51-80; Anya Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic: Elizabeth and William Wirt and the Companionate Ideal* (Baltimore, 1998); Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*. See also Konstantin Dierks, "Letter Writing, Masculinity, and American Men of Science, 1750-1800," *Pennsylvania History, Supplement: Explorations in Early American Culture* 65 (1998), 167-98; David Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca, 1989), 78-89; John Mayfield, "The Soul of a Man!: William Gilmore Simms and the Myths of Southern Manhood," *Journal of the Early Republic* 15 (1995), 477-500; Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Lowcountry* (New York, 1995).

Other studies of American men, though valuable, tend to offer more one-dimensional portraits because their authors are more interested in looking at developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These works include: Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York,

up to these norms completely. At issue here is how individual men coped with the gap that arose when expectations did not conform to the realities of their daily experience. For some men, feelings of anxiety, frustration, guilt, and even expressions of misogynistic anger were the result. Others, by contrast, worked to reconcile this gap by gradually forging an adapted version of manhood, one that better suited their lives, personal circumstances, and the shifting demands different life stages present. For these men, manhood could be rendered flexible, and its conventions adjusted—within certain limits. William Irvine was one of these men. This essay explores the degree to which Irvine, like others of his early American male counterparts, sought to reconcile the gender ideals of his day with his life—including his ambitions, duties, relationships and all of the opportunities and constraints that governed them at each stage in his life.<sup>5</sup> Irvine, as we will see, did not contest the ideals of manhood; he embraced them. He wanted to be a respectable man. He sought recognition from his peers. He desperately wanted to be an effective and loving patriarch to his family. Yet, as an immigrant, a backcountry settler, a military and political leader, a husband and father, he could not craft his manhood—and hence his identity—freely. For him, achieving manhood ultimately meant defining it in his own way. Manliness, and especially the kind of respectable manliness to which Irvine aspired, was forged through compromise and adaptation.

1993), chaps. 1, 2; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York, 1996), chap. 1; E. Anthony Rotundo, "American Fatherhood: A Historical Perspective," *American Behavioral Scientist* 29 (1985), 7–23; and Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993), chap. 1. According to these authors, early American men were guided by seemingly uncomplicated conceptions of their own identities. They appeared to be waiting idly for the market revolution to transform them into the "individual" or "self-made men" of the present day.

<sup>5</sup> For examples of men responding with frustration and anxiety, see Brown, *Good Wives*. For the misogynistic response, see Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1992), 86–90. William Irvine was not alone in seeking to modify gender ideals to suit his personal needs and circumstances. As Patricia Cleary describes in her essay, "Making Men and Women in the 1770s: Culture, Class, and Commerce in the Anglo-American World," in *A Shared Experience: Men, Women and the History of Gender*, ed. Laura McCall and Donald Yacovone (New York, 1998), 98–118, the Scottish Murray family also "sought to modify prescribed models of behavior to fit their economic situation." The Murphys had "genteel aspirations," but insufficient income to match. Thus, they emulated but never fully imitated the gender ideals of their elite counterparts. Both Irvine and the Murphys seemed to take a practical approach to the construction of gender identity, which was perhaps an outgrowth of their shared heritage as Scots.



Individual men, Irvine's life experiences suggest, had to negotiate their own pathways toward this shared and sometimes shifting goal.

This story begins with William Irvine's arrival in America. He was at once a typical and a not-so-typical eighteenth-century backwoods migrant. Born in Ulster province, Ireland, in 1741, Irvine, like many of his Ulster compatriots (and many others from the British Isles), migrated to America as a young, single adult in the early 1760s. Upon arrival, he moved west, joining the small but growing enclave of Ulster-Irish settlers in the frontier village of Carlisle, situated in Pennsylvania's then-westernmost county of Cumberland. Once there, Irvine, like the flood of other European migrants who poured into America at midcentury, faced many challenges.<sup>6</sup> Among the most pressing was the need to fashion a new identity for himself as both an American colonist and a man. Migration, after all, demanded adaptation. Adaptation of this kind is, fundamentally, an adjustment of one's identity—including one's gendered sense of self—to suit one's new culture, and its values and customs. For William Irvine and others like him, this identity shift involved a reinvention of sorts. Definitions of American identity—and by extension, manhood too—were increasingly slippery as the eighteenth century progressed and as the Enlightenment, the American Revolution, and the rise of capitalism impacted the social order. Even so, certain long-standing expectations of what it meant to be a man continued to prevail, holding manhood together during these turbulent times. These expectations, though perhaps less firm than they had been earlier in the century, played an especially strong role in shaping the kind of respectable manhood to which William Irvine aspired. "Real" early American men were idealized as brave, independent, and virtuous masters of their public and private domains. They conquered peoples, lands, and markets. They won the esteem of their peers and served the public. They owned property and controlled households of dependents. At its essence, manhood was about possessing and expressing power—over things, over others, over self. It was a performance. Perhaps

<sup>6</sup> For information about William Irvine, see Gertrude Bosler Biddle, *Notable Women of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1942), 94–96; C. W. Butterfield, ed., *Washington-Irvine Correspondence* (Madison, Wisc., 1882), 65–70; *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. Irvine, William; Nicholas Wainwright, *The Irvine Story* (Philadelphia, 1964), 2–11. For a more general portrait of immigration at midcentury, see Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1986; reprint, 1988).

most important, manhood was won only by those who put down firm American roots. One had to have an identity as an American to have an identity as a man—especially a respectable man.<sup>7</sup> For William Irvine, a newly arrived immigrant and young adult who had conquered nothing, owned no property, and possessed no American family, these expectations curtailed his ability to choose his new identity freely. What's more, Irvine's Scots-Irish ethnicity and his Presbyterian religion marked him as an outsider in the English dominated cultural worlds of colonial America. Finally, like so many of his fellow Ulster-Irish migrants, Irvine resided in a small frontier village, far removed from the colony's power bases in and near Philadelphia. Simply put, William Irvine was an outsider. He remained on the cultural and geographical margins of colonial Pennsylvania.

Yet in other ways, Irvine was an atypical immigrant, and his atypicality gave him a better chance than many of his immigrant peers to overcome his status as an outsider and to fashion himself into an American man. In an era when most migrants arrived in America as bound or enslaved laborers, Irvine's status as a free man was unusual. So too was his family background and education. He came from a well-to-do Scottish family in Ulster. He had attended Trinity College, Dublin, had trained as a physician, and had served as a surgeon in the British Navy during the Seven Years' War. Although still a young, single man, William Irvine was also a seasoned professional whose education and military experience showed he was not unaccustomed to discipline, hard work, and self-sacrifice. Indeed, unlike many migrants, whose lack of economic means, skills, and education meant they entered the lowest rungs of the colonial social order upon their arrival in America,

<sup>7</sup> I draw here from an extensive and often overlapping literature on gender, the backcountry, and socio-economic culture in early America. These works include: Brown, *Good Wives*, 319–20; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1992; reprint, 1993); Ditz, "Shipwrecked"; John Mack Faragher, *Daniel Boone: The Life and Legend of an American Pioneer* (New York, 1992); Jack Greene, "Independence, Improvement, and Authority: Toward a Framework for Understanding the Histories of the Southern Backcountry During the Era of the American Revolution," in *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Ronald Hoffman, Thad Tate, and Peter Albert (Charlottesville, 1985), 2–36; Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*; Kimmel, *Manhood in America*; Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance*, 72–78; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 72; David G. Pugh, *Sons of Liberty: The Masculine Mind in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport, Conn., 1983); Rotundo, *Manhood in America*; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier* (Chapel Hill, 1990); Daniel Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly* (hereafter, *WMQ*) 47 (1990), 3–29.



Irvine's economic status, education, military experience, and, most likely, his values too, placed him solidly among the colony's middling sorts. He had advantages few immigrants possessed.<sup>8</sup> Yet, his elevated Old World status also brought New World burdens, for his expectations of achievement were no doubt greater than many of his less advantaged neighbors. It was unlikely that William Irvine would be content to remain an outsider for long.

Although little is known about Irvine's journey from Ulster to Carlisle in the 1760s, we do know that, once arrived, he joined a frontier town undergoing rapid change. Following its founding in 1751, Carlisle, aided by the eager attention of Thomas Penn, colony officials, and a host of Philadelphia merchants and ambitious Cumberland County pioneers, evolved quickly into an important "middleplace" in Pennsylvania. By the 1760s, the town of several hundred inhabitants functioned as a local marketplace for its rural hinterland. Through an extensive network of exchange that linked European merchants with rural producers, town merchants brought imported goods west from Philadelphia and exchanged them for cash or country produce. More important, on the regional level, as the Pennsylvania frontier extended itself westward toward the Ohio Valley, Carlisle was increasingly the place in the colony where east met west. Situated in the Cumberland Valley, west of the Susquehanna River, some 120 miles from Philadelphia, and by the 1760s at the convergence of the "Great Road" from Philadelphia and the Forbes Road to Pittsburgh, Carlisle was an important midpoint in the trade of goods, furs, and skins—as well as the accompanying cross-transmission of cultures—between Philadelphia merchants and the Indian peoples of the Ohio Valley. Finally, it also functioned as one of the eighteenth century's most significant gateways for migration to newly opening settlements in the West and Upper South. Carlisle, it was clear, was a crossroads place.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For more information about the context of eighteenth-century migrants and the limited range of opportunities they faced, see Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, esp. chaps. 5–6, 10; Susan E. Klepp and Billy G. Smith, eds., *The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, an Indentured Servant* (University Park, Pa., 1992), see esp. editor's introduction, 17–36; Michael Zuckerman and others, "Deference or Defiance in Eighteenth-Century America? A Round Table," *JAH* 85 (1998), 13–97.

<sup>9</sup> For information about colonial Carlisle, see George P. Donehoo, *A History of the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania* (2 vols., Harrisburg, 1930), 1:259; Milton E. and Lenore E. Flower, *This is Carlisle: A History of a Pennsylvania Town* (Harrisburg, 1944), 2–30; Frederic A. Godcharles, *Chronicles of Central Pennsylvania*, (4 vols., New York, 1944), 2:94–95; *History of Cumberland and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania* (Chicago, 1886), 4–37, 66–70, 208–62; I. Daniel Rupp, *The History and Topography of Dauphin, Cumberland, Franklin, Bedford, Adams, and Perry Counties* (Lancaster City,

William Irvine thus began his American life in a geographical and cultural border zone between east and west, frontcountry and frontier. While space, both real and metaphorical, distanced Carlisle's residents from their longer settled eastern counterparts and likely allowed European-derived class and cultural boundaries to remain more fluid—at least initially—these distances were shrinking over time, as colonial society, its economic tentacles, and its cultural norms, gained deeper hold among the more established residents of the backcountry. For backcountry men, and especially immigrants like William Irvine, distance, fluidity, and their demise only further complexified the process of creating an identity. Poised between two worlds, backcountry men had to reconcile the values of the East with those of the West. Fluid boundaries may have offered pioneers greater freedom in self-fashioning. But as the frontier moved westward and the backcountry matured, later arrivals to the backcountry, like Irvine, faced greater pressure to make their identities as men conform more closely to the values and customs of a more established colonial America.

Within the region, ethno-religious factors likely eased immigrants' transitions from Old to New Worlds and probably aided local men in negotiating the boundaries of the shifting cultural world they inhabited. By the 1760s, Carlisle was home to a growing community of Ulster-Irish peoples, most of whom were of Scottish ancestry and Presbyterians. Although a good number of English and German peoples, as well as a few Dutch, French, and Indian peoples, resided there, Ulster-Irish settlers predominated during the town's first decades. Scholars, in fact, have long regarded Cumberland County as one of the "cradles" of Ulster-Irish settlement in eighteenth-century America.<sup>10</sup> Old World kin and/or

1846). For more about its economic and geographic role in the colony, see James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1972); Judith A. Ridner, "A Handsomely Improved Place": Economic, Social, and Gender-Role Development in a Backcountry Town, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1750-1810," (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1994).

<sup>10</sup> E. Estyn Evans, "The Scotch-Irish: Their Cultural Adaptation and Heritage in the American Old West," in *Essays in Scotch-Irish History*, ed. E. R. R. Green (London, 1969), 70-71, 75; Wayland F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Hamden, 1962), 59-64, notes that the Cumberland Valley "became the headquarters of the Scotch-Irish not only in Pennsylvania but in America as well" (59). See also David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York, 1989), 442-44, 633-42. He identifies south-central Pennsylvania as an important home to immigrants from the British borderlands. Fischer notes Carlisle's connection to a place of the same name in the English borderlands. See also James G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Chapel Hill,



friendship connections clearly united many of Carlisle's settlers. Thus, aside from an older brother, who resided a few miles outside town, Irvine likely found that a good number of his new neighbors were not strangers. Once there, aided by the rudimentary ethno-religious support network surrounding him, and likely boosted by his elevated status in the Old World, Irvine worked his way up through Carlisle's social ranks. He established himself as a professional, serving as one of only two physicians practicing in or near the town before the 1770s. Local tax records, which place Irvine in the top twenty percent of the town's taxpayers by the late 1760s, suggest too that he achieved modest economic success—at least by backcountry standards.<sup>11</sup> In less than a decade, he joined the ranks of the limited number of professionals who operated in the backcountry and carved out a reasonably stable economic niche for himself. In the eighteenth century, this was a significant feat that many other immigrants failed ever to achieve.

Even so, Irvine's commitment to his new life in America remained uncertain. While he had a profession and an income, he still lacked a definitive American identity. He played no apparent role in the public, political workings of Carlisle, for instance. Furthermore, as a bachelor, he had no family of his own, no lineage to preserve, and, aside from his brother, no firm connections to or beyond the backcountry. In colonial America where, as Gordon Wood explains, patronage, connections, and the trappings of a monarchical social order ultimately determined one's status and identity as an individual—even in the interior—William Irvine remained a misfit of sorts, caught in a double bind.<sup>12</sup> While his family background and education

1962), 186–200. The assessments of these authors are born out by local tax lists, which include many Scots, Irish, and Scots-Irish surnames during the colonial period. See Cumberland County Tax Rates, Carlisle, 1753–1776, Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, Pa. (hereafter, CCHS). For information about the Presbyterian community in and around Carlisle, see Guy S. Klett, *Presbyterians in Colonial Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1937), 69–86.

<sup>11</sup> Godcharles, *Chronicles of Central Pennsylvania*, 2:456; Samuel T. Wiley, ed., *Biographical and Portrait Cyclopaedia of the Nineteenth Congressional District Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1897), 109–110. Dr. William Irvine appears on Carlisle's 1768 tax list with taxable property valued at £4.13.4, which however small, placed him among the top twenty percent of the town's taxpayers. By 1779 the married General William Irvine had moved up into the top ten percent, where he remained in 1795. See Cumberland County Tax Rates, Carlisle, 1768, 1779, 1795, CCHS (microfilm).

<sup>12</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992), chaps. 1–5. For the manhood side of this issue, see Kann, *A Republic of Men*, chap. 4. For an extensive discussion of the ways in which connections and patronage influenced the social and political order in and around Carlisle, see Robert G. Crist, "John Armstrong: Proprietor's Man," (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1981).

bestowed him with a more genteel sensibility that was at odds with many of his more rustic backcountry neighbors, he was also an immigrant, a Scots-Irish Presbyterian, and a bachelor, and therefore lacked the requisite connections needed to establish himself as a man, much less a leader, in the backcountry. Feelings of frustration or homesickness were the apparent result. In 1772, one of Irvine's Carlisle friends noted his desire to "go to Sea and afterward settle in Ireland" again. Soon thereafter, however, the possibility of returning to Europe became "an entire uncertainty" when Irvine married Ann Callender, the eldest daughter and first-born child of the well-known and well-connected fur trader, land speculator, merchant, and Seven Years' War militia captain, Robert Callender.<sup>13</sup>

William Irvine's marriage to Ann Callender marked a turning point in his life. It transformed his identity and brought him several steps closer to achieving manhood in an American context. In the ensuing years, Irvine, the unattached physician of Carlisle, a man who had wavered in his desire to remain in America, became a husband, a son-in-law, and soon thereafter a father—the patriarch of an American family. Over the course of several decades, the Irvines had ten children, with four sons and four daughters surviving into adulthood. Upon his marriage to Ann, Irvine bound himself to one of Cumberland County's most prominent families. As a key figure in the Callender clan, Irvine gained an American family identity that conferred on him the patriarchal status and American-based kin connections he needed to make his way as a man of standing both in the backcountry specifically and in America more generally. The Callender family offered a solid foundation on which to construct his new identity. At the same time, however, upon his marriage, William relinquished the personal autonomy he had had as a single man and an immigrant, and willingly inherited new, collective, and intergenerational responsibilities to an American-based kin network. The married Irvine was no longer a first-generation pioneer forging his way alone in the backcountry. Rather, by embarking on a new stage in the life cycle, he joined a colonial world where family name, personal connections, and the politics of patronage so often determined one's social standing—even in the backcountry. Indeed, Irvine gained status as a colonist and respect as a man by assuming the demanding duties of a second-

<sup>13</sup> John Armstrong to James Armstrong, April 30, 1772, Founders Collection, Dickinson College Archives, Carlisle, Pa. (hereafter, DCA). See also Biddle, *Notable Women of Pennsylvania*, 94–95; Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 2–11.



generation patriarch—by becoming the head of an extensive and multigenerational household. While law bound Ann to him upon their marriage, duty and obligation bound William as a dependent to the Callender family's past and future legacies. The Callender's identity as a family and Irvine's identity as a man had merged.<sup>14</sup>

William had chosen his new American family wisely. Ann's father, Robert, was, by all indications, an ambitious frontiersman who had carved out a reputation for himself as one of the leading men in the colony's backcountry by the 1760s. Robert Callender was a prominent landowner, miller, and merchant in Cumberland County. He was one of the first settlers of Carlisle. He was also a militia captain during the Seven Years' War, and played a key role in the expedition against the Delaware at Kittanning in 1756. Furthermore, as a well-known fur and skin trader in his own right, and as a business partner of George Croghan, the "King" of the traders, Callender often worked closely with colony officials and was, by all appearances, an astute cultivator of patronage from the proprietary government of Thomas Penn. He had earned trust, won respect, and thereby overcome the stigma and suspicion attached to most traders in the colony.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, he was an important power broker in central Pennsylvania. As Colonel Henry Bouquet observed, Callender was "the most suitable man in America" to serve as wagon master for the Forbes expedition. He possessed

<sup>14</sup> Ditz, "Shipwrecked," 51–80; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 37–91.

<sup>15</sup> Although Robert Callender played a pivotal role in the early history of Cumberland County and the Pennsylvania frontier more generally, specific information about him is difficult to find because he left no comprehensive collection of personal papers. His local taxable property is well documented on Cumberland County tax lists from the 1750s to the 1770s. Letters and reports written by him or about him, which are scattered throughout the *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania* (10 vols., Harrisburg, 1851–52) from the 1740s to the 1760s (vols. 4–9), suggest he was a man of connections who commanded considerable respect from provincial officials in Philadelphia. His western trade and speculative ventures are better documented in the Fort Pitt Trading Post Daybook, Western Pennsylvania Historical Society, Pittsburgh, Pa., and in the correspondence of merchants Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan, microfilm, David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, Pa., originals at Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg. See especially Baynton, Wharton, and Morgan Correspondence, reel 3, where it is clear that Callender worked for the firm and as one of its rivals. For more information about him, see Albert T. Volweiler, *George Croghan and the Westward Movement, 1741–1782* (Cleveland, 1926), 261–77; James P. Myers, Jr., "Pennsylvania's Awakening: The Kittanning Raid of 1756," *Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999), 399–420; Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 11–12. For a discussion of the suspicion and mistrust with which Pennsylvanians viewed most traders, see James H. Merrell, *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier* (New York, 1999), 74–83.

the "energy" as well as the extensive "knowledge of the country" needed to do his job well.<sup>16</sup>

On one level then, Robert Callender's life epitomized a frontier version of eighteenth-century American manhood. In the style of frontiersmen like Daniel Boone (who also began his life in the Pennsylvania interior), Callender was a brave, bold, and ambitious pioneer who asserted his manhood by seeking liberty and what scholars call "independence" or "manly freedom" by hunting, by claiming, clearing, and conquering land, by engaging in speculative commercial ventures with the Indians and merchants in Philadelphia, and, finally, by establishing his own household of dependents.<sup>17</sup> Yet, Callender also showed signs of embracing a less coarse, more respectable manhood more in keeping with the shifting culture of an increasingly mature backcountry. Although he continued to venture westward to the Ohio Valley to trade with the Indians into the 1770s, his domestic life in and near Carlisle took on many of the trappings of genteel respectability. His residence outside town was outfitted with luxury goods from fancy tea and coffee wares to fabrics and comfortable furnishings. He owned eight slaves. His children, including Irvine's wife Ann, were educated in Philadelphia. And in keeping with the Anglicization of the colonies at

<sup>16</sup> Col. Henry Bouquet to Gen. John Forbes, June 21, 1758, *The Papers of Henry Bouquet*, ed. S. K. Stevens, Donald H. Kent, and Autumn Leonard (6 vols., Harrisburg, 1972), 2:122.

<sup>17</sup> Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, 497–98, confirms a rather Turnerian view of the eighteenth-century American frontier as a destination for immigrant "gamblers" and "risk takers" who were "strengthened against danger by an unspoken desire for an open future"; Faragher, *Daniel Boone*, 21, confirms this view as well, stating: "The woods were a man's world." His work includes extensive discussions of how Boone gained his identity through exploring, hunting, and defending the American interior. See also, Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore, 1996), chaps. 1–3; Joan E. Cashin, *A Family Venture: Men and Women on the Southern Frontier* (New York, 1991; reprint, 1994), 32–44, 61–72, 102–108; Elliott J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985), 18–43; Kann, *A Republic of Men*, 2; Michael S. Kimmel, "The Cult of Masculinity: American Social Character and the Legacy of the Cowboy," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (New York, 1987), 238–39; Pugh, *Sons of Liberty*, 15–21.

For more comprehensive discussions of the concepts of "competence" and "independence" and how they apply to both the history of the frontier and rural America more generally, see, among others, Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780–1860* (Ithaca, 1990), 21–38; Greene, "Independence, Improvement, and Authority," 31; Alan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville, 1992), 75–77; and "Households and Markets: Toward a New Synthesis of American Agrarian History," *WMQ* 50 (1993), 342–55; Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*, 1–10.



midcentury, he was an Anglican. Although his manhood was not fixed, and although he had by no means achieved stunning financial success in all of his enterprises, Callender had won himself a reputation as a man of courage, authority, connections—and even some measure of gentility—in Pennsylvania by the 1760s.<sup>18</sup> His identity as a man, though shifting, seemed secure. He was a conqueror, a businessman, a husband, a father, and, in certain respects, a gentleman as well. He had set the standards by which Irvine, as the family's new patriarch, had to live.

Yet, as William Irvine discovered, manhood, its definition, and the duties associated with it, shifted with each generation. Whereas his father-in-law, Robert, the pioneer, was supposed to be, in the words of Michael Kimmel, "fierce and brave" and "willing to venture into unknown territory" to "tame it for its less-than-masculine inhabitants," William Irvine, as the Callender family's second-generation patriarch, could no longer express his manliness simply by exploring, exploiting, and defending the wilderness.<sup>19</sup> He—and later his son—faced different challenges as he worked to preserve, consolidate, and enhance the Callender-Irvine family's gains and propel them into the future. Thus, because maintaining and enlarging "independence" demanded different talents than did hacking a survival out of the forest, second and third generation backcountry patriarchs had to define manhood in ways different from their fathers and predecessors. They had to act as gender brokers, as men who negotiated the gaps between generations, between West and East, and between varying and sometimes competing definitions of manhood. For William Irvine in particular, brokering this gap meant finally and fully reconciling the frontier version of manhood embraced by his father-in-law with the kind of respectable manhood deemed ideal in a more established colonial world. Whereas Robert Callender could be both trader and gentleman, his new son-in-law William Irvine could not. He had to push himself into a broader and simultaneously more selective fraternity of respectable men, and he had to secure an even firmer future for his heirs. For Irvine, these pursuits were made even more difficult by the challenges of adapting his identity to suit his new American context.

<sup>18</sup> "Inventory of the Estate of Capt. Robt. Callender, Decd.," Dec. 4, 1776, Cumberland County Estate Inventories, microfilm reel 3, CCHS; Biddle, *Notable Women of Pennsylvania*, 94–95. For more about the domestic context of gentility, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 61–99, 110–127, 227–237.

<sup>19</sup> Kimmel, "The Cult of Masculinity," 238–39.

Irvine clearly took his new responsibilities seriously, especially after the death of his fifty-year-old father-in-law in 1776. In the age-graded hierarchy of father-son authority in colonial America, the "death order" had accorded William a sudden promotion to the position of the Callender family's patriarch. As the only male executor of Callender's estate who resided locally, and as the spouse of Callender's first-born child, Irvine bore primary responsibility for overseeing the maintenance of his mother-in-law and her children, settling estate debts, as well as selling and distributing his father-in-law's extensive landed and personal estate among his heirs—including a sizable bequest of property and cash to his wife Ann.<sup>20</sup>

At the same time that his authority in the Callender family rose, William's career path shifted noticeably as he embarked on a more aggressive and seemingly overt effort to win recognition as a leader in the backcountry and beyond. In a series of moves that echoed but also substantially broadened the career path of his father-in-law, Irvine abandoned his practice as a physician, and taking advantage of the vacuum in leadership created by the American Revolution, the demise of the proprietary establishment, and the end of Quaker dominance in Pennsylvania, became first a military leader in the new, national army, and after the war, a politician, bureaucrat, and speculator in western lands and trade. He became, in short, an important public figure. Between 1776 and his death in 1804, Irvine served first as a colonel and later as a brigadier general in the Continental Army (including a stint as commanding officer of Fort Pitt from 1781 to 1783). He was appointed surveyor of Pennsylvania's donation lands, was elected as a delegate to Congress in 1786 and 1793, was one of the commissioners appointed to settle the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794, and, finally, in 1800, he was appointed superintendent of military stores, an important office that gave him access to Indian affairs and speculative enterprises in the West. Furthermore, at the time of his death, he was also president of the Pennsylvania Society of the Cincinnati.<sup>21</sup>

Because military service, politics, and ventures in the market were among

<sup>20</sup> Will of Robert Callender, July 26, 1776, Will Book B, 235–39, Cumberland County Will Books, Cumberland County Courthouse, Carlisle, Pa. (hereafter, CCCH). Irvine was the only male executor who lived locally. Also named were Robert's widow, Francis, his other son-in-law, merchant William Neill of Baltimore, and his brother-in-law Matthew Slough of Lancaster.

<sup>21</sup> DAB, s.v. "Irvine, William"; James G. Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (6 vols., New York, 1900), 3:358. For more detailed information, see Butterfield, *Washington-Irvine Correspondence*, 65–70.



the principal public arenas where eighteenth-century men won the respect of their peers, Irvine's career path, and the recognition it earned him over time, must be seen as both a measure of his success in adapting to America and as an expression of his manhood in the making.<sup>22</sup> Irvine's pursuit of manhood went beyond that of his father-in-law. With lands cleared, households established, and Indians driven westward from Cumberland County by the 1770s, manhood was won in different, and often more gentlemanly, ways. And Irvine did just that. As his career progressed, he bridged the gaps between the military, political, and economic worlds of East and West in Pennsylvania. His correspondence reveals how he operated with apparent ease in the social-cultural worlds of not only Carlisle, but Philadelphia, New York City, Pittsburgh, and points beyond. He won the recognition of peers in the East and West through political office-holding and numerous public appointments. The variety of his economic enterprises, from surveying and land speculation to trade in flour down the Mississippi, reveal his active engagement in economic worlds that extended far beyond Carlisle.<sup>23</sup> Irvine's public identity transcended the backcountry. By the end of his life, his pursuit of manhood had won him a coveted position of public influence on the national stage. He was a true man among men.

The pursuit of manhood, however, also had a more private side. Marriage made William Irvine a patriarch and conferred on him other, more personal responsibilities that were equally important to asserting his identity as a man. Upon his union with Ann, Irvine, as a husband and a father, assumed control of a growing household of dependents, which included his wife and children, as well as several servants and at least one slave. For an eighteenth-century man, such family responsibilities demanded lots of hands-on management. Men were expected to assume authority in their households, just as in their communities. Masculine mastery extended to persons as well as battlefields, political arenas, and markets. Indeed, a man expressed self-

<sup>22</sup> Ditz, "Shipwrecked," 51-80; Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic*, 69; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 37-91.

<sup>23</sup> The Irvine Papers, HSP, are a rich source of information about William Irvine's life, his career, his family, and the social worlds he inhabited. In September 1790, Irvine entered into a partnership with John and Charles Wilkens of Pittsburgh "to carry on a special trade and business in buying and selling." Most of their speculations involved flour and whiskey sales in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. For details, see Irvine Papers, 10:69, 75, 80, HSP. For information about the context of William Irvine's role in the development of the Erie triangle, see Carl B. Lechner, "The Erie Triangle: The Final Link Between Philadelphia and the Great Lakes," *PMHB* 116 (1992), 59-85.

control by governing not only himself, but his family too.<sup>24</sup> In Irvine's case, his authority as patriarch was likely enhanced by several factors. First, circumstantial evidence suggests that William and Ann's marriage was perhaps an arranged union. The marriages of both Ann and her younger sister, Isabella—two of three daughters from Robert Callender's first marriage—coincide almost exactly with their father's marriage to his second wife. To aid his new wife in her transition into their family, and to ensure she would have no competition as female head of their household, Callender may have encouraged his daughters to marry—perhaps even orchestrating these unions.<sup>25</sup> It is therefore possible that William and Ann did not begin their relationship as the kind of companionate couple deemed ideal at midcentury.<sup>26</sup> Compounding this situation was the significant difference in their ages. At the time of their marriage, William was thirty-three and Ann only sixteen. Thus, an age gap of some seventeen years separated them generationally and further bolstered William's authority in their household.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Brown, *Good Wives*, chap. 10; Ditz, "Shipwrecked," 51–80; Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance*, 72–78; McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 37–91; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, chap. 1; Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 87; Wood, *Radicalism*, 43–56.

<sup>25</sup> Biddle, *Notable Women of Pennsylvania*, 94; Wainwright, *The Irvine Story*, 11–12. Ann's mother, Mary Scull, evidently died in 1765. Her father, Robert, married his second wife, Francis Gibson, in the early to mid-1770s. At just about the time his new wife assumed authority over the Callender household, Ann married William Irvine and her sister Isabella married William Neill of Baltimore—thus allowing Robert and Francis Callender to begin life anew.

<sup>26</sup> Many historians have detailed the dramatic change in the structure of the family in the mid-eighteenth century, as patriarchal authority eroded and the "imperial" family was replaced by a more loving and sentimental, or companionate nuclear unit. For more information, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority* (New York, 1982), 10–35, 123–35; Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*, 11; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellog, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York, 1988), 17–23; Joseph H. Pleck, "American Fathering in Historical Perspective," in *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (Beverly Hills, 1987), 83–97; Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York, 1984), 23–31; Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 26; Daniel Blake Smith, *Inside the Great House: Planter Family Life in Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake Society* (Ithaca, 1980).

Some historians have also noted that the companionate marriage was highly idealized and did not often correspond with reality. See, for example, Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic*, 2, 161–62; Merrill Smith, *Breaking the Bonds: Marital Discord in Pennsylvania* (New York, 1991), 50.

<sup>27</sup> According to Fischer, *Albion's Seed*, 675, William's and Ann's ages at their marriage were not typical of most backcountry inhabitants. He says: "In no other region . . . did both sexes marry so early. Nowhere else were the ages of males and females so nearly the same." Men were in their early twenties, women about nineteen. Jane Turner Censer, *North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800–1860* (Baton Rouge, 1984), 91–92, argues first marriages with an age gap as large as the Irvines' are often signs of strong parental control—thus reinforcing the possibility that the marriage was arranged.



And if Irvine's letters home during the Revolution are any indication, Ann's youth, especially in the early years of their marriage, sometimes provoked a paternal response from him. While he always prefaced his words with tender remarks, his letters often also conveyed instructions phrased more like fatherly counsel than friendly advice. In 1782, after hearing that Ann "had recovered of the Quinsey" [tonsillitis], he chided her that "you know my love—or ought to know by this time by woefull [sic] experiences how carefull [sic] you should be to avoid catching Cold."<sup>28</sup> Later that same year, he wrote her with "directions" regarding their son Callender's medical problems. Speaking with authority as a physician, as well as a husband and father, he warned her: "do not neglect to attend to that matter and do not think any thing too hard for him to undergo—now is the time." And in the same letter, in response to an unexpected trip Ann had taken (likely to visit her sister in Baltimore), he noted: "you see for once how complisant [sic] I am,"—hinting that it was more typical for him to have a greater say in the whereabouts of his young wife and their growing family.<sup>29</sup> William, it appeared, was accustomed to being in charge. While historian Lisa Wilson reminds us that colonial men's domestic lives were framed by a "kind of relational and fluctuating patriarchal power," the circumstances of William's and Ann's marriage sometimes tipped this delicate balance of power decidedly in William's favor—even while he was absent from home.<sup>30</sup>

By all appearances then, with his career as a Continental army officer established and his role as patriarch confirmed, William Irvine seemed an accomplished master of his public and private domains by the 1780s. The first-generation immigrant had reinvented himself as an American patriot and a man. Beneath this facade, however, Irvine's manhood was much more ambiguous, and remained very much a work in progress. Manhood, he discovered, was not just pursued, but negotiated. Being a man meant more than simply conforming to American social conventions. Rather, it meant brokering one's way through the complex and often shifting maze of ideals and realities that shaped one's daily life. And for William Irvine, despite all outward appearances to the contrary, the result was an adapted manhood—a kind of vernacular expression of what it really meant to be a man in early

<sup>28</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, April 30, 1782, Irvine Papers, HSP, 5:92.

<sup>29</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, Sept. 10, 1782, *ibid.*, 6:123.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 10.

America.

In many respects, William Irvine was not quite the man his roles as military leader and backcountry patriarch suggested. Dependence, not independence, characterized many of his relationships—especially with his family. Early American men were expected to oversee households of dependents as a way to prove their manliness. Having wives, children, servants, and/or slaves was supposed to win men freedom, not restraint. For Irvine, however, the reverse was true. His “manly freedom” was decidedly compromised in his own household because, as a recent immigrant, he remained so bound to his wife’s family identity for his own. This dependence on the Callender family was manifested in a variety of small, but symbolic ways as William and Ann began to have children in the 1770s. Their first child, a son born in 1774, as we know, was named Callender; William was the name reserved for their second son. This naming pattern was unusual. According to Stephen Frank, before the Revolution three-fifths of all first-born sons were named for their fathers.<sup>31</sup> William and Ann’s name choice, by contrast, bestowed an explicit matrilineal connection upon their eldest son—a connection of considerable significance. Names are symbolic labels that express parental aspirations. The men of colonial New England, for example, “honored a relative with a namesake,” according to Lisa Wilson, because the person “so honored had characteristics a father wanted the child to possess.”<sup>32</sup> In this case, therefore, such use of a maternal surname was likely meant as an explicit sign of honor toward Ann’s father; a testimony of a continuing bond to her family line.<sup>33</sup> Young Callender was expected to live up to the legacy of the Callender family’s frontier heritage—a heritage forged by his grandfather Robert and only sustained and expanded by his father William.

Aside from Irvine’s dependence on the Callender family identity, there are hints that William was financially dependent on them as well. In 1782, while William was at Fort Pitt, Ann was in Carlisle preparing herself for a

<sup>31</sup> Stephen M. Frank, *Life With Father: Parenthood and Masculinity in the Nineteenth-Century American North* (Baltimore, 1998), 109.

<sup>32</sup> Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 121.

<sup>33</sup> Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1982), 120–22. As Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 12, remarked: “So highly did General Irvine regard his father-in-law that he named his first child for him.” Fischer, *Albion’s Seed*, 684–86, notes that naming eldest sons after grandfathers was a common practice in the backcountry. Yet, all the examples he cites follow the father’s line—not the mother’s.



trip to her sister's family in Baltimore. Despairing that she "could not be seen" there until she "laid out a great deal of money" on herself, William warned her, only half jokingly, that unpaid debts might cause the sheriff to come looking for her. "And what is still worse," Irvine remarked, was that "I doubt you will get very little relief from me, I rather think I shall stand in need of relief from you."<sup>34</sup> Ann, his remarks suggest, not only enjoyed a degree of financial independence separate from him, her wealth was greater than his own. Indeed, although evidence of Ann's financial status is spotty, it appears that through most of their marriage she possessed a separate estate inherited from her father. Evidence of this estate is most visible in her will of 1822. In this document, aside from disposing of the "landed property" she inherited from her "late Husband" William, Ann also left her children bequests from extensive property holdings in Natchez, the Illinois and Wabash claim, and the Indiana claim; all these lands "derived," as she wrote, "from my Father the late Robert Callender."<sup>35</sup> Yet, from other records, we know that the property mentioned in her will could not have been all that she inherited from her father in 1776. She also received some kind of substantial cash payment, for most of Robert Callender's local property was sold after his death and the money was divided equally among his heirs.<sup>36</sup> Although exactly how much land and cash Ann inherited remains unclear, the fact that she had a separate estate at all demonstrates that Robert Callender, himself the product of the often volatile economic worlds of the Pennsylvania interior, was concerned about ensuring a more secure and separate economic future for his eldest child. Whether that was because he distrusted his new son-in-law, we will never know. What we do know, however, is that Callender's generous bequest to his daughter impacted her

<sup>34</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, Oct. 4, 1782, Irvine Papers, 7:22, HSP.

<sup>35</sup> Will of Ann Irvine, April, [?], 1822, Philadelphia Wills, 1824, file #22, Philadelphia City Archives. Although Ann clearly had substantial property holdings at her death, the extent and value of these lands remains unclear. Furthermore, spotty records make it difficult to know exactly how much property and cash she inherited originally from her father. Although Robert Callender had many financial ups and downs during his career, his estate inventory (which is incomplete because of missing and damaged pages) lists a large number of outstanding debts (often sizable) owed the estate. His will lists extensive property holdings in Pennsylvania and elsewhere in America. In 1795, twenty years after Callender's death, William Irvine, one of the executors, came before the Cumberland County Orphan's Court to report that the balance of the estate stood at £1351.7.4. See Cumberland County Orphan's Court, Dec. 3, 1795, Docket #3, 170-71, CCCH.

<sup>36</sup> Will of Robert Callender, July 26, 1776, Will Book B, 235-39, Cumberland County Will Books, CCCH.

marriage and his son-in-law's manhood. Ann's financial independence, especially when contrasted with William's financial dependence, was a circumstance with which any man would have difficulty reconciling himself. William was no exception. Although he seemed to take his dependence mostly in stride, and sometimes even made light of his plight, there were times when he found coping especially difficult. In 1803, for example, when his son Callender, then an adult, approached his father about participating in a speculative scheme to improve the "harbour tract" they owned on Lake Erie, William reported regretfully that he had "not a cent to spare." By contrast, Ann, with her own property, was eager to help. As William reported, "if she can sell her out lots . . . she will Join you in the Speculation." Indeed, she will "furnish you (& she says she will) with all the money to lay out on improving part of the harbour tract."<sup>37</sup> With William's hands tied financially, an interesting role reversal took place as Ann interceded as the family's principal financial patriarch.

On a more personal level, the intense love William felt for his wife and children bred an emotional dependence that impacted him on a personal level. Unlike other men of his age, such as Maryland-born attorney William Wirt, who placed his career above his wife and family, or the Virginia planter William Byrd, who assailed his dependence on women with expressions of patriarchal rage, William Irvine, much in the style of his colonial New England counterparts, attempted to make career and family operate in tandem.<sup>38</sup> He strove, in other words, to reconcile what "manly freedom" he possessed with the senses of duty and obligation he had to wife and family. This desire to balance, rather than struggle against these different facets of his life seemed rooted in the intense love he felt for his wife and children. Despite all of the "traditional" aspects of the Irvines' marriage, love was an unmistakably central component of their union. William never hesitated to express the passion and longing he felt for his wife, even in the earliest years of their marriage. For example, in 1777, while away during the Revolution, William wrote that he "never longed so much to see you & my dear little one's in my life—I look every day for an answer

<sup>37</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, June 8, 1803; July 8, 1803, Irvine Papers, HSP, 16:4;16:6.

<sup>38</sup> For discussions of men who put career above wife and family, see Dierks, "Letter Writing," 168–80; Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic*, 69, 119. For Byrd's and Jefferson's expressions of rage, see Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage*, 80–90.



to my last [letter]."<sup>39</sup> In 1780, he "long[ed] much to hear from my love."<sup>40</sup> In 1781, he "wish[ed]" he "could appoint a day to be with you."<sup>41</sup> And as the Revolution drew to a close in 1782, he assured Ann that he could "farther ascertain [sic] with great truth, that you are not more Anxious to see me than I am to see you."<sup>42</sup> He did "not intend to live another year apart, whether in, or out of service."<sup>43</sup> While outwardly Brig. Gen. William Irvine in 1782 was the stoic and courageous military commander of Fort Pitt, in his letters he revealed an emotional vulnerability very much in keeping with the ideals of the companionate family. For him, as for many other men, marriage brought intense feelings of love and friendship for his wife.<sup>44</sup> Being with his wife and family was extremely important to him. Although there is no evidence that he sacrificed career opportunities for them, William nonetheless struggled throughout his life to keep these two sides of his life in equilibrium. And he did so with relatively little anxiety or frustration. When career took him east to Philadelphia, he remained true to his pledge of 1782 and moved Ann and their children with him. Other times, as in 1802, when preparing to "set out" for Virginia on business, he planned, as he told his son, to take "your mother [his wife Ann] & the two little boys along."<sup>45</sup> And when business forced him to travel alone, he lamented the distance between them. While traveling in the 1780s, he reported to his wife that when he "came in and found none of our little noisy folks, all dismal I felt." Indeed, "I think I shall not in the future be disturbed at the noise of my dear little prattlers—nor restrain them in any innocent amusements."<sup>46</sup> Being a man meant exerting control over others and over self. Passions were to be kept in check. Yet, as Irvine and others found, these ideals had to be adapted to fit the love that governed his domestic world. Being a man, in short, meant reconciling career with

<sup>39</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, Dec. 22, 1777, Irvine Papers, HSP, 2:63.

<sup>40</sup> William to Ann, Jan. 14, 1780, *ibid.*, 3:25.

<sup>41</sup> William to Ann, Dec. 29, 1781, *ibid.*, 5:31.

<sup>42</sup> William to Ann, June 29, 1782, *ibid.*, 6:37.

<sup>43</sup> William to Ann, Oct. 4, 1782, *ibid.*, 7:22.

<sup>44</sup> According to Lisa Wilson, "A Marriage 'Well-Ordered': Love, Power, and Partnership in Colonial New England," in *A Shared Experience*, eds. McCall and Yacovone, 78–97, Irvine was not unusual in this regard. Love and longing were essential components of most colonial marriages.

<sup>45</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, June 7, 1802, Irvine Papers, HSP, 15:77.

<sup>46</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, n.d. (prob. post-1783), Founders Collection, DCA.

family.<sup>47</sup>

If his correspondence offers any indication, fatherhood—and not career or marriage—presented William Irvine with his greatest challenges as a man. Fatherhood, after all, was an important measure of manhood in the eighteenth century. It was yet another kind of public performance judged by one's peers.<sup>48</sup> Yet, for Irvine, fatherhood, like marriage, also had a more intimate, emotional side. His children were extremely important to him. He loved them intensely. And he wanted desperately to be a worthy father. As he once stated, "it would offer me unspeakable pleasure always to indulge my dear Children in every thing proper, all my views and pursuits are bent on their future happiness."<sup>49</sup> Yet, parenting—especially of his eldest son Callender—also presented him with a new set of demands and frustrations. Like most fathers then or now, Irvine relished having children. He, like other men, "took pleasure," in the words of Stephen Frank, in "seeing them develop into variations of" his "own image." He also had high expectations that his children—and especially his eldest son Callender—would grow to become his "personal legacy."<sup>50</sup> Callender, in particular, was to be a "respectable man." And being respectable meant being self-disciplined, independent, and judged worthy by one's peers. It also meant being ready to assume family responsibilities by serving as a "second father" to one's siblings. Yet, when Callender, like so many other young men of his time, rebelled as a young adult and sought to claim his independence by establishing his own, separate identity as an individual and a man, Irvine was

<sup>47</sup> Jabour, *Marriage in the Early Republic*, 161–62. Before the 1830s, Jabour argues, couples entered marriage with the promise that their relationships would be mutual, reciprocal, and exclusive. After the 1830s, divisions hardened and separate spheres evolved. See also Dierks, "Letter Writing," 180–92. His examination of Jeremy Belknap discusses how some men of science too sought to balance the sentimental attachment they felt for their family with the rational demands of their careers as men.

<sup>48</sup> For example, Frank, *Life With Father*, 36, notes that parenthood "was the linchpin of mature manhood and womanhood alike, a social position that both sexes needed to occupy in order to achieve mature gender identities." See also Kann, *A Republic of Men*, 84–96; Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, chap. 5.

<sup>49</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, June 8, 1789, Irvine Papers, HSP, 10:29.

<sup>50</sup> Frank, *Life With Father*, 84. There is an extensive and growing literature on fatherhood. My discussions in this section have been informed by such works as Censer, *North Carolina Planters*; Griswold, *Fatherhood in America*; Pleck, "American Fathering," 84–85; Rotundo, "American Fatherhood," 7–23; Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 115–36.



forced to do more than simply lead by example.<sup>51</sup> Instead, he had to articulate his definition of manhood and confront how his own shortcomings as a man would impact his children.

As Callender approached adulthood, education and choice of career were the two most divisive issues separating father and son. These issues were especially troubling for William, because they put his son's future—as well as his own reputation as a man—at stake. Manhood, he knew, was crafted, not simply adopted. It depended most upon one's character and talent, as well as one's family, but it was also shaped by education, career choice, hard work, and persistence—by individual action. Young men, in short, had to forge their own identities within the constraints that governed their lives. And obtaining a proper education was the first, critical hurdle a young man faced, for as William explained, it put it in one's "power to lay the foundation, o[f] a good, or bad character" for the rest of one's life.<sup>52</sup> Education was crucial to becoming a man—especially a respectable man. As William also "assured" another son, "no talents or genius are sufficient to cut a lasting figure without steady application."<sup>53</sup> Self-discipline was also essential—and education helped instill it.

For a father like William Irvine, who was intent on fashioning his eldest son into a "lasting figure," nothing was more troubling than to learn in 1793 that Callender, then a student at Dickinson College in Carlisle, was missing his lectures due to an undisclosed illness. From Philadelphia, an angry and frustrated William reminded his son: "I am extremely anxious that you should take a degree." Urging Callender to continue, he observed: "it [taking a degree] is of more consequence to young Men than you are aware of [and] it would be spitefull [sic] to drop it now after coming so near the point—and vastly galling to me, who of late have been so much flattered with accounts of your talents."<sup>54</sup>

Clearly upset that Callender was not taking his education more seriously, William was also troubled by his son's noticeable lack of fortitude, which he

<sup>51</sup> According to descriptions offered by Anya Jabour, "Masculinity and Adolescence in Antebellum America: Robert Wirt at West Point, 1820–1821," *Journal of Family History* 23 (1998), 393–417, William Wirt faced many similar dilemmas when dealing with his son, Robert.

<sup>52</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, Sept. 6, n.d. (most likely written between 1791 and 1794 when Callender was a student at Dickinson College and his father was in Philadelphia), Founders Collection, DCA.

<sup>53</sup> William Irvine to William Irvine, Jr., Sept. 16, 1803, Irvine Papers, HSP, 16:14.

<sup>54</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, Feb. 22, 1793, *ibid.*, 11:74.

knew did not suit a man-in-training. Indeed, no matter what the condition of his health, William expected Callender to continue his education. What's more, his son's actions were a personal affront, for they wounded William's pride and rebuffed his efforts to socialize Callender into the world of men. But, as Irvine's words also imply, there was more at stake here than just the personal. In a new American nation where family connections mattered less, and achievement mattered more, education was an even more critical component of creating identity, for it not only confirmed class rank, it was also a vehicle through which men could pursue a higher and more secure rank.<sup>55</sup> Education thus offered the real possibility that Callender's future—and by implication the family's legacy too—might be more certain than William's own had ever been. Indeed, in the shifting cultural worlds of post-revolutionary America, taking a degree was important because it was a measure of intellectual and social achievement others could not easily contest. It was a sign of status and respectability. In response to his son's actions, Irvine thus offered words of caution that allow unusual insight into his vision of the masculine world that lay ahead. As he saw it, the adult male world was a competitive realm, where men who "envy you of a good name" would try "to betray you into thei[r] manners and habits." Echoing the concerns expressed within the male merchant culture of eighteenth-century Philadelphia, William Irvine—the Scots-Irish immigrant outsider who had made "a good name" for himself and worked his way into the military-political power circles of Pennsylvania and the new nation—described a world that was simultaneously competitive and communal. "The Eyes of the public[.]" he observed, "so far as the influence of Carlisle extends, will be upon you, more with a desire (at least of some) to find out cause of complaint, & defamation than to extol your good . . . Qualities."<sup>56</sup> According to Irvine, Callender must be a strong, self-willed, and vigilant individual of "good name" and solid character, because he, as a man, would face a threatening world where he would be judged by the often harsh critics who composed his community of peers. Education, by implication then, offered Callender one important measure of security he needed to withstand such attacks.

Although father and son weathered this crisis and Callender finally

<sup>55</sup> Cleary, "Making Men and Women," 100; Frank, *Life With Father*, 153.

<sup>56</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, Sept. 6, n.d., Founders Collection, DCA; Ditz, "Shipwrecked," 51-80.



graduated from Dickinson in 1794, this was not the last episode of tension.<sup>57</sup> Another turning point occurred in 1795 when Callender expressed serious doubts about his career choice while reading law with an attorney in Philadelphia. After hearing from his son of his uncertainty, William reminded his son, "labor you must—you have no resource by which you can indulge" and warned, that while he would "do all I can for you," Callender had to handle the situation in a manner that would safeguard his reputation—as well as his father's good name—among his male colleagues in Philadelphia and Carlisle. Here too, sounding remarkably like the male merchants of Philadelphia at midcentury, Irvine stressed the need for his son to appear as master of his own condition. "[S]ay nothing on the subject to any but me" the elder Irvine warned, "do not expose instability—if you are ultimately to relinquish the business, I would rather have it said, that it was my pleasure, than, that you did not like it."<sup>58</sup> Fearing that such "instability" would unman his son, he hoped that Callender would choose instead to preserve his reputation by remaining silent. Irvine interpreted his son's doubts in highly charged personal terms. Quitting the law, he feared, would be seen by other men as a sign of character defect or moral shortcoming in his son. His son's actions would also reflect negatively on him as his father.<sup>59</sup> And here William's fears may have been justified. According to Michael Grossberg, the law was on its way to becoming the ultimate "man's profession" at this time. As such, the bar was governed by an increasingly tight fraternity of men who hailed responsibility and ridiculed failure. As a father who clearly sympathized with such values, Irvine reckoned a man had to be cautious. One won the respect of other men, he knew, by governing one's reputation and one's self first and foremost.<sup>60</sup>

Several days later, the concerned father wrote again "to express a hope that a very moderate share of deliberation will bring you to think more

<sup>57</sup> George Leffinwell Reed, ed., *Alumni Record: Dickinson College* (Carlisle, Pa., 1905), 43.

<sup>58</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, April 5, 1795, Irvine Papers, HSP, 13:23. This time William did not prevail and Callender evidently left the law. See also Ditz, "Shipwrecked," 51–80.

<sup>59</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, April 5, 1795, Irvine Papers, HSP, 13:23.

<sup>60</sup> Michael Grossberg, "Institutionalizing Masculinity: The Law as Masculine Profession," in *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, eds. Mark Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago, 1990), 100, 153. Irvine seemed to reflect these concerns. As he observed in 1804, because there was "a way to manage" one man, "as well as all men," one had to be "cautious, be a spectator & Join not warmly in any party till tis absolutely necessary, mind your own business." See William Irvine to Callender Irvine, May 24, 1804, *ibid.*, 16:37.

favorably of the business [law]." Frustrated by his eldest son's "impetuous" behavior, because it so contrasted with his own guarded style and represented a rejection of his will, Irvine wrote sarcastically, "I presume you must have thought of some other business," although "what it can be I am at a loss to conjecture." He then went on to offer Callender some frank advice on what he saw as the truly limited range of "learned professions" open to him as the son of a respected—but not wealthy—physician, military commander, and political leader whose American roots remained in the backcountry. He wrote:

If you had a fortune and was religiously inclined, you might spend part of it, in three or four years study, & more of it afterwards as an itinerant preacher—as to making a living by it, that is out of the question. Physic is[,] I think[,] a more agreeable study than either law or Divinity[,] but the practice is laborious, high trust, unhealthy[,] and not very profitable, a bare existence is all that most can make—it also ties a man down to a spot more than any other business:—as to merchandizing—I suppose you have no Idea of that[;] you know I can not [sic] give you a Capital—perhaps you may humble yourself to stand behind a Counter in a little shop—doubtless very good men have & some make well out—I grant that any business at which a man can make an independent living is reputable and fair, and all have a right to choose the line of life they like best, if it can be accomplished.<sup>61</sup>

There were, in other words, restraints on Callender's choices, which were the outgrowth of expectations related to family circumstances, manly ideals, and class standing. As the son of a middling family, Callender would not earn his living by physical labor, he would be a professional. The dilemma he faced was in deciding which profession to choose. Here, however, the possibilities were limited by the ideals of manhood. Because a man's goal was to "make an independent living," some professions were preferable to others because they offered greater degrees of financial security. The ministry, for example, was "out of the question." Even medicine, William's original career, was not ideal because it was "not very profitable" and deprived one of mobility. Most important, because William could not offer his son a "Capital," Callender's career choice was constrained. As William warned his son, he had to be realistic by choosing a career that could be "accomplished."

<sup>61</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, April 9, 1795, Founders Collection, DCA.



Although Irvine remained skeptical, thinking "you [Callender] will change your mind once more & labor at the old business" of law, his words suggest some willingness to cope with his son's rebellion by letting him craft his own destiny. Addressing his son as a man, and not a boy, Irvine encouraged Callender to take responsibility as any man would and to propose "any decent[,] rational project" he had in mind, assuring him that he would "most certainly give way" in the interest of his son's "happiness." Willing to "suspend Judging" and "think as little on the subject as possible til[l] I get your proposals," he hoped that his son would "pray to God to grant you true light & knowledge, & direct your way" in the choice of an appropriate and acceptable profession.<sup>62</sup>

As Irvine's advice to his son suggests, a man was supposed to plan his education, his career—his destiny. He had to take charge of those details of identity creation within his grasp. Even though the options were limited, a young man had to fix himself on a "rational project" and move forward. Indeed, as Irvine explained to his second son in 1803, it was "a good general rule, to be cautious, circumspect, [and] of course slow, in forming schemes or plans for action, but when once formed be equally guarded against giving them up."<sup>63</sup> William spoke here from experience. After all, despite many compromises, he had negotiated an identity for himself as an American and a man—and had a name, career, and family to prove it. Persistence, however, was imperative to success. As an exasperated William exclaimed to his son: "Good God, do have a little patience and temper—it will not do for you to appear as if every thing dear to you depended on a moment!"<sup>64</sup>

On one level, Irvine's desire to see his eldest son become an educated professional man was no different than the aspirations expressed by most fathers then or today. He wanted his son to enjoy success; he also wanted him to become the kind of man who would make him proud. Yet, the

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> William Irvine to William Irvine Jr., Nov. 27, 1803, Irvine Family Papers, box 1, HSP. William, too, attended Dickinson College, but did not graduate as part of the class of 1798. He did, however, go on to become an attorney, first going northwest to Erie and later returning to Carlisle, see Reed, *Alumni Record, Dickinson College*, 49.

<sup>64</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, April 9, 1795, Founders Collection, DCA. William seemed almost chronically annoyed by his son's ill use of time. In 1792 he warned Callender that "time now ill or idly spent is never to be reclaimed." See William Irvine to Callender Irvine, Nov. 28, 1792, Irvine Papers, HSP, 11:43. In 1795, when Callender sought to leave the law, Irvine lamented that: "The time you have lossed [sic] is most to be regretted, as it is barely possible that [it] can ever be retrieved." See William Irvine to Callender Irvine, April 9, 1795, Founders Collection, DCA.

urgency and intensity with which William approached these matters is intriguing, and likely reflects some of his own frustrations as a man. Ushering his son Callender into adulthood forced William to confront his own shortcomings as a man in America. Irvine's manhood, after all, was an adapted version of the ideal. His identity was derived from his public achievements—which won him respect—as well as from the constraints—economic and emotional—that governed his daily life. Dependence, not independence, marked many aspects of his condition. And when it came to raising his children, William's lack of financial independence in particular limited their life choices dramatically. William Irvine certainly had a good name. His marriage into the Callender family and his leadership roles during and after the Revolution assured him the recognition of his peers. He owned property. And through continued hard work he could provide for his family. Yet, as an aging man and a father of several children maturing to adulthood, he lacked the kind of financial resources needed to secure his children positions as members of America's most privileged classes. And because the family's posterity remained uncertain, Irvine's own manhood remained precarious in part. In response, Irvine did the best he could to guide Callender and his other sons toward adulthood by sharing with them those resources he did possess. At the same time, he reconciled himself that his daughters, like the eldest Nancy, "must trust to her beauty and parts to get her a husband with land."<sup>65</sup> Most important, despite frustrations, he never gave up working for his family. And probably the most valuable thing Irvine offered his children, especially his sons, was the benefit of his connections. Whenever possible in the 1790s, William used his contacts to win his sons career appointments and gain them access to potentially profitable speculative ventures in the west—avenues where they might achieve greater success than he had. For Callender in particular, after leaving the law and drifting about for a time, William won him first an appointment as a surveyor's assistant, then an army captaincy, and later an appointment as a supplier to American Indian agents in the West. William also provided his son with a landed estate, a farm named Brokenstraw, located in present-day Warren County.<sup>66</sup>

Irvine never abandoned his roots in the backcountry. Just as he, as an

<sup>65</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, May 21, 1782, Irvine Papers, HSP, 5:114.

<sup>66</sup> Appleton's *Cyclopedia*, 358; Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 12–13.



immigrant in the 1760s, had forged his American destiny in the interior—much as his father-in-law had done before him—so too did he continue to hope that his children could find eventual security in America's expanding frontier. Being rooted, he knew, could secure one's name and family identity—even if one was a newcomer. Mobility, however, still seemed essential to providing long-term financial independence for the family. His children had to be taught to respond to opportunities where and when they arose. William worked hard until his death to make that possible for his children. As William reported to his wife in 1790, he was encouraged by being "much solicited by some influential persons of the Western Country" because he "wish[ed] to keep good terms in that country." He knew "at least some of our Children must reside & make their way" there. While "Money added to their own talents, would be the sure game"—the way to secure their class status and family identity most firmly—he also recognized that "I shall now never have money enough to be sufficient to carry them entirely above every obstacle." Speculating wishfully, he wondered if "perhaps a little property, good education—and much good fame left them, may be better than all money (provided they improve it)."<sup>67</sup> He seemed to know, however, that this notion was not entirely true, for just as his manhood included compromises, so too did his legacy to his children.<sup>68</sup>

In the end, what exactly did William Irvine mean when he spoke to his son about becoming a respectable man? As his own life experiences suggest, respectable men had careers, families, and favorable reputations. Their identities conformed, in most respects, to the dominant gender ideals of the day. William's own life, particularly his lack of economic independence, also demonstrates that men could be respectable without achieving total financial independence. Indeed, in the real world of eighteenth-century America, men did not simply emulate, they created their manhood by adapting ideals to suit realities. Perhaps most important, they acculturated themselves—and their identities—to the on-going compromises such adaptation demanded. As Irvine's experiences prove, respectable men could be Scots-Irish immigrants. They could have their roots in the backcountry. They could love their wives and children intensely. And they could expect, as Irvine did, that

<sup>67</sup> William Irvine to Ann Irvine, June 5, 1790, Newbold-Irvine Papers, HSP, box 5, folder 6.

<sup>68</sup> According to Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 12, upon his death in 1804, Irvine left his family some \$6000 of outstanding debts.

upon their deaths their sons—by then respectable men in their own right—would step in to act as second fathers to their siblings, no matter how great the challenge. Irvine did not dwell on his shortcomings. Instead, accepting his manhood as a work-in-progress, he focused on doing the best he could for his family, for their well being seemed the greatest affirmation of his self-worth. And although relations between William and his family were not always smooth or predictable, when they went well his wife and children made him immensely happy. Indeed, in 1803, upon receiving news of the birth of Callender's first child, a son named William Armstrong Irvine, a proud grandfather reported: "You can not conceive how much Joy appeared in the countenance [*sic*] of all the family, on it being announced, that Wm Irvine Junr[.] had appeared safe and sound—at Erie." Happy to celebrate the birth of his grandchild and namesake, Irvine seemed finally at peace with his eldest son, and remarkably at ease with himself. He closed his letter of congratulations that day with an affirmation of family unity: "All Join in love to you . . . and send kisses to the young stranger."<sup>69</sup> For William Irvine, a "dear and worthy" but never wealthy man who was nearing the end of his own life journey in 1803, it was time to let his eldest son assume his rightful position in the generational hierarchy of the Callender-Irvine family.<sup>70</sup> Callender and his new son would carry the family's legacy into the future. Perhaps they would succeed where Irvine had failed.

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<sup>69</sup> William Irvine to Callender Irvine, Oct. 14, 1803, Irvine Papers, HSP, 16:19. See also Wainwright, *Irvine Story*, 12–13.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Watkinson to William Irvine Jr., July 30, 1804, Irvine Family Papers, box 1, HSP. Watkinson reported: "I have to announce to you with the Keenest anguish that your dear and worthy Father is no more."