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A 300-YEAR HISTORY

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To
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to use the state militia, the Executive Council, headed by its president John Dickinson, refused. The disaffected troops eventually set a twenty-minute time limit for the surrounded Congress to assure redress of their grievances; but the time limit passed without violence, and when the congressmen mustered courage simply to walk out through the milling troops, they met nothing worse than insults, though by then the soldiers had been drinking freely. The troops returned to the Barracks, still mutinously inclined.

On June 22 and 23 Congress continued to insist that the state use force to compel the mutinous soldiers to accept the command of their officers, and although it coupled this demand with a threat to leave the city, the Executive Council still refused. The council was negotiating with the troops, who by now appeared to be peaceably disposed, and it feared that the use of militia would create even worse disorder. The soldiers finally subsided, finding discharge and going home even more important than firm assurances of pay, though their disorders, following close on the threat of an officers' coup at Newburgh, New York, reinforced traditional American and English suspicions of military power and helped assure Congress's virtually complete dissolution of the Continental Army in 1784.¹⁷⁰

But Congress, meanwhile, would not wait to see the results of the state's negotiations with the soldiers. On June 24 Boudinot signed a proclamation summoning the delegates to meet at Princeton, New Jersey, two days later. Although the stated reason for the move was the refusal of the Executive Council to suppress troops still in "open revolt,"¹⁷¹ many congressmen were eager to leave Philadelphia for reasons that did not appear in the proclamation. Weeks before the mutiny Oliver Ellsworth, delegate from Connecticut, reported that it was "generally agreed that Congress should remove to a place of less expense, less avocation and less influence than are to be expected in a commercial and opulent city."¹⁷²

Philadelphia and Congress had endured the hard realities of war together, and each had contributed much to the other. Their abrupt and angry parting was unfortunate for all concerned, but the war was over and the city had served its purpose.

The Federal City

1783-1800

by Richard G. Miller

... the mechanic labors under the double difficulty of the impracticability of obtaining money to carry on his business and the profusion of foreign goods which prevent the sale of such articles as he could finish.

— A Philadelphia artisan

... the men [of Philadelphia] are almost always immersed in their business affairs and in political intrigue.

— FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA

The room became full before I left it, and the circle very brilliant. How could it be otherwise, when the dazzling Mrs. Bingham and her beautiful sisters were there; the Misses Allen, and Misses Chew; in short a constellation of beauties?

— ABIGAIL ADAMS¹

Philadelphia ushered in its first postwar Christmas season with festivities honoring a secular messiah. On the afternoon of December 8, 1783, Gen. George Washington approached the city on his way from New York, just liberated from British occupation, heading toward Annapolis, where he would resign his commission to the Confederation Congress and go home to Mount Vernon.

John Dickinson, president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, Robert Morris, Maj.-Gen. Arthur St. Clair, Maj.-Gen. Edward Hand, many other Philadelphia dignitaries, and the Light Horse Troop of the city rode out to meet Washington at Frankford and escort him into town. When he arrived at Philadelphia, the church bells rang out, cannon fired a thirteen-gun salute, and even a Dutch ship at anchor in the harbor joined in the celebratory firing of guns. Cheering citizens crowded the streets.²

It was Washington's first experience of so adulatory a welcome; many more were to come, of course, including many in Philadelphia. The signing of the peace treaty in Paris in September and the British evacuation of New York had assured both American independence and the general's own place

as the first of the charismatic founder-figures of the modern new nations, the hero whom all subsequent nation-builders would strive to emulate. Even after Lord Cornwallis's surrender to him at Yorktown, Washington had passed through Philadelphia in the autumn of 1781 without arousing the sort of emotions that now burst forth, because then the war had not yet been certainly won and Washington's role in history was not yet quite certain either. From the welcome to Philadelphia in December 1783 onward, however, Washington would become accustomed to receiving adulation almost as a living god. His savoring of that role, furthermore, would continue to take place largely in Philadelphia; the years of the general's greatest glory through the remainder of the century were to be bound together with one of Philadelphia's eras of greatest civic glory, as national capital and presidential residence of the immortal Washington. Together for almost the next twenty years the city and the general were to share each other's pride and also each other's troubles and vexations.

I

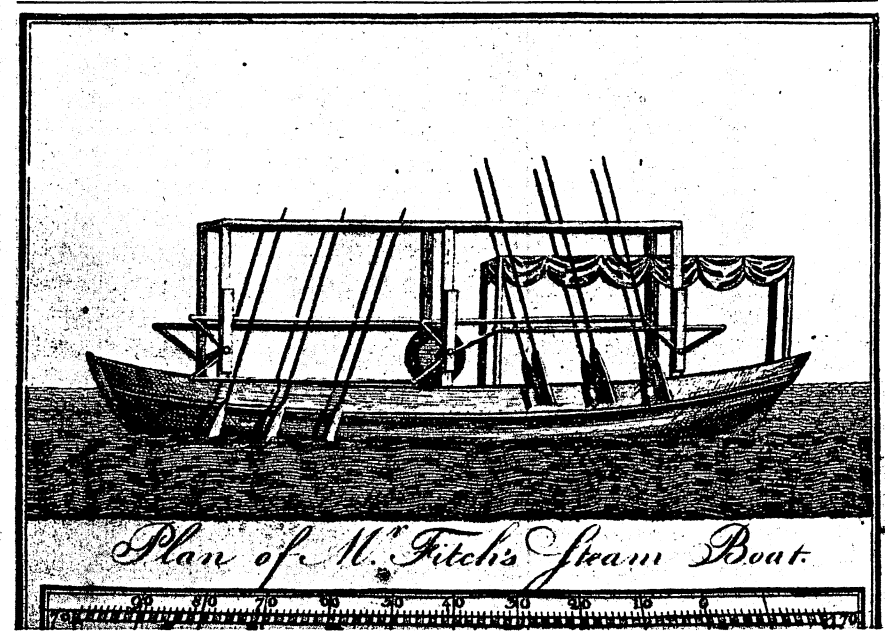
Not yet quite accustomed to the part of a demigod, Washington was uncharacteristically effusive when he spoke to the General Assembly of Pennsylvania in the State House on December 9 to thank the legislators and the city for their approbation. Usually the most careful of accountants in presenting his lists of expenses to Congress for payment, he was flustered enough on this visit to the Confederation financial offices still located in Philadelphia to omit his customary stipulation requiring "lawful money" when he drew a warrant for £217 owed him; as a result he was paid in depreciated Pennsylvania currency and had to claim redress later.³

Perhaps he was also too distracted to look around carefully enough to see that troubles and vexations aplenty disturbed Philadelphia in the immediate wake of the war. Other visitors in 1783 found the city looking as if it had survived a fearful storm. Peeling paint and broken windows on houses and shops bespoke years of wartime neglect. The slightest rainfall turned broken pavements to mud. Public buildings that had housed soldiers and horses still reeked of human and animal waste.

The Philadelphia economy, so recently forced to redirect itself from maritime commerce to the manufacture of war materials, now had to reverse itself. The demand for military supplies naturally collapsed; instead the city's military depots held a large surplus of army equipage to be disposed of at reduced prices if at all. Wars always leave surpluses, no matter how desperate the shortages while the fighting is going on.

The British blockade, to be sure, no longer restricted passage of the Delaware, and the British Navigation Acts also no longer directly bound Philadelphia commerce. On the other hand in colonial times the Navigation Acts had probably been as much a help as a hindrance, permitting Philadelphia ships and merchants to share with other British vessels and subjects in a monopoly of the internal commerce of the British Empire. Now the familiar

ports of the British West Indies were closed to Philadelphia ships. New trading partners would have to be found, while in the meantime the coming of peace also brought cheap British goods flooding into the Philadelphia market, often dispensed by agents of British exporters who bypassed Philadelphia merchants, and competing ruinously with local manufactures. In the postwar economic dislocation wages fell, artisans and laborers were thrown out of work, and industry stagnated. Shipbuilding was especially hard hit; as late as 1786 only thirteen ships were built in Philadelphia.⁴



Plan of Mr. Fitch's Steam Boat, engraved for the *Columbian Magazine* (1786). John Fitch founded a company in Philadelphia to build the first steamboat in 1786.

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Departed along with the economic stimuli of the war were the Confederation Congress and the business its members and hangers-on had brought to keepers of taverns and boardinghouses, to printers, and to a host of other tradesmen. It may be that the welcome shown Washington was all the more fervent in the hope it would demonstrate that the mutiny against Congress the previous June, precipitating the national legislature's exodus, had in no way reflected the sentiments of the city. But the Confederation Congress stayed away. For the present all efforts to coax it back were unavailing. The efforts were compromised, moreover, by a quality of halfheartedness, reflect-

ing in part the political malaise with which Pennsylvania state factionalism of the 1780s infected the city.

II

In the midst of the Revolution, Pennsylvania had adopted a state constitution in 1776 that granted the franchise to almost every male over twenty-one who paid taxes. It abolished Philadelphia's city charter—the state Assembly assumed control of city affairs—and it established a single-house legislature subject to annual elections.⁵ The adoption of the 1776 constitution had ejected the colonial merchant upper class from political leadership and replaced them with radical Whigs, or Constitutionalists.

Dr. James Hutchinson, Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant (a lawyer), Blair McClenaghan (a merchant), and George Bryan (another lawyer) led the supporters of the constitution of 1776 in Philadelphia. These leaders of the Constitutionalists were themselves generally well-to-do merchants and professional men, but for the most part they were a rising business and professional group, standing apart from the old upper class and perceiving greater opportunity in a new political and social order than in stability and retention of the old order. The Constitutionalists had won approval of the new constitution from many of the city's skilled workingmen, its artisans. The artisans had assumed that with independence would come freedom from British competition.

After 1780, however, the Constitutionalists never achieved as much political success in Philadelphia as in the western areas of the state. In the city Constitutionalists lost the Assembly elections from 1780 to 1783, won in 1784, and lost all but one of the remaining elections until the parties of the 1780s broke apart with the adoption of another new state constitution in 1790. The Constitutionalist victory in 1784 occurred because that year the Anti-Constitutionalists or Republicans happened to conduct a poorly organized campaign. After 1784 the Constitutionalists failed more and more surely, because as the Revolution receded into the past they could no longer rely on cries of "Tory" or "traitor" and the anti-British emotions that these labels invoked. Eventually they also hastened their own decline by opposing the federal Constitution in 1787.⁶

Opposition to the constitution of 1776 came from many nouveau riche as well as from the colonial upper class. Exploitation of wartime economic opportunities had propelled into social as well as business prominence men such as Robert Morris, financier to Congress; Thomas Fitzsimons, Irish immigrant merchant and with Morris a co-founder of the Bank of North America; Thomas McKean, lawyer and former radical leader of Delaware politics who now had a house in Philadelphia, played the political game in both Pennsylvania and Delaware, and opposed the Pennsylvania constitution even though he was chief justice under it; Israel Israel, wealthy merchant and by avocation keeper of the popular Cross Keys Inn at Fourth and Chestnut; John Swanwick, another rising merchant, notable for his political ambition; and Dr. Benjamin Rush, who had played a major role in the local revolution of 1776

and the writing of the constitution but had grown disgruntled with the Constitutionalists' extremism. Ambitious men such as these worked with the old upper class to bring about the defeat of the Constitutionalists. Their new coalition engaged in a bitter political struggle with the supporters of the democratic constitution. Their goals were to recapture and solidify the political power lost by the upper class in 1776 and to win a new, far less radical state constitution. To develop a political organization, this faction had to adopt some of the democratic ideals unleashed by the Revolution in order to win the broad-based support necessary to defeat the Constitutionalists.⁷

Republicans feared the democratic constitution of Pennsylvania, believing that its single-house legislature unchecked by any other authority was susceptible to corruption by demagogues. The urban upper class had little confidence in the ability of common citizens to govern themselves unless guided by the natural leaders of society. More specifically, the Republicans saw the Constitutionalists as opposed to government aid to business. Issues such as banking reforms, protective tariff duties for American manufactures, encouragement of trade, and protection of private property were basic to the economic lifeblood of the merchant, lawyer, and artisan of Philadelphia, and the Republican members of those groups did not believe the Constitutionalists showed adequate regard for these issues.⁸

In particular, the Republicans sought to reincorporate the city of Philadelphia as a means of encouraging a return to political activity of the leaders of the old municipal corporation. Publicly, the Republican campaign was waged on the ground that efficiency demanded that the city govern itself. The Constitutionalists countered that corporations were irresponsible and that reincorporation would serve the "aristocrats." For the time being the Constitutionalists turned back the Republican effort.⁹

The chartering and operation of the Bank of North America also invoked a bitter political struggle throughout the 1780s. Because there was doubt of the power of the Confederation Congress to charter such an institution, the bank was incorporated under both United States and Pennsylvania charters; in fact New York and Massachusetts had also chartered it to assure the legality of its activities within their boundaries. Its chartering had been one of the first triumphs of the Republicans. The Constitutionalists would have preferred an institution such as the Bank of Pennsylvania of 1780, which was an impermanent organization created to raise funds for the Continental Army. The Bank of North America, in contrast, was a corporate bank in the modern sense, the first on the continent. Its corporate quality especially distressed the Constitutionalists because it seemed likely to them to become an immortal instrument forever using its power over credit to favor its stockholders, their friends, and other special interests. The Constitutionalists feared that "the accumulation of enormous wealth in the hands of a society who claim perpetual duration will necessarily produce a degree of influence and power which can not be entrusted in the hands of any set of men whatsoever without endangering the public safety."¹⁰

The Constitutionalists also disapproved the election as first president of

the bank of Thomas Willing, who by remaining in Philadelphia to represent Willing, Morris and Company during the British occupation had in their eyes sold out to the enemy. The bank was governed by Willing, Morris, Fitzsimons, and a few other wealthy merchants who were Republicans in politics. Constitutionalists claimed also that its interest rates were too high, that it placed excessively narrow limits on currency issues and short-term mortgages, and that it had too much influence over state government.¹¹

The radical Constitutionalists retained enough power in the western counties that on September 13, 1786, they succeeded in repealing the Pennsylvania charter of the Bank of North America. This was yet another blow to the Philadelphia economy as the city attempted to recover from the dislocations of the war. The bank continued to operate under its remaining charters, and Delaware granted it a new charter, opening the possibility that it might move its headquarters downriver. It did not do so, but meanwhile its uncertain status reduced confidence in its credit.

By this time, however, the drift of state as well as city politics was away from the Constitutionalists and the disruptive effect of their policies. The elections of 1785 gave neither party firm control of the legislature, but the Republicans were able to win recharter in March 1786. In Philadelphia, the combination of an economic slowdown that had worsened even before the revocation of the bank's charter with renewed Republican efforts to rally the artisan vote had brought about the defeat of all the Constitutionalist assemblymen from the city.¹²

Less critical to the city's well-being but dismally symptomatic of the chronic discontents that had come to be associated with the Constitutionalist regime was the ongoing battle between the University of the State of Pennsylvania and the College of Philadelphia. The trustees of the college, and most especially its provost, the Rev. William Smith, regarded the act of 1779 that created the university as an "abrogation of the charters" of 1753 and 1755 that had founded the college. The "abrogation," they held, was contrary to clauses in the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 protecting existing corporations in their property rights and privileges.

The officials of the college nevertheless had surrendered the charters, minute books, and use of the buildings at Fourth and Arch to the officials of the new university, albeit Provost Smith delivered up only slowly and reluctantly the seal, the keys, and the accounts. Almost a year was required to pry Smith out of the provost's house.

Thereafter Smith, the college trustees, and increasingly the Republicans, grasping another partisan issue, went on denying the legitimacy of the university and inveighing against it as an invasion of property rights. In their invective, the university became a nest of "robbers" who had gotten control of the institution by "robbing the Original Owners." While this accusation confused trusteeship over property with ownership of it, such blurring of the facts did nothing to reduce the obstinacy of the college's stand or the growing enthusiasm with which Republicans endorsed it. Higher education in Phila-

delphia, long hindered by the Friends' distrust, was now foundering on political shoals.¹³

No doubt the university would have suffered troubles enough without having to wage a battle for its very right to legal existence. In establishing a state university the Pennsylvania Assembly had not only guaranteed to it the property of the earlier college, but had promised that sufficient charges would be made against confiscated Loyalist estates to assure an income from them not beyond £1500 a year. The returns from this source proved slow to come in, however, and meanwhile many persons who had pledged financial aid to the old college disavowed any obligation under the new circumstances. Continuing currency inflation as another attribute of political and economic instability kept expenses higher than anticipated. Within its first month the university had to appeal to the state for a £15,000 loan, which was not forthcoming. The institution simply could not make ends meet. During the 1780s its faculty had to teach with their salaries constantly in arrears. Properties along the waterfront and elsewhere in the city had to be sold off for ready cash, though the eventual increments in their value might one day have guaranteed the university's financial stability. By 1788 the university was regularly receiving an annual income of only about £2200 against normal annual expenses of £2800.¹⁴

These troubles were too numerous for the university to withstand the rise of Anti-Constitutionalist political fortunes. On March 6, 1789, a Republican-dominated Assembly voted to restore to the trustees and faculty of the college the property they had possessed in 1779 and their privileges under the charters of 1753 and 1755. William Smith, who had lately conducted his assaults on the university from Chestertown, Maryland, where he had founded Washington College, returned in triumph to the provost's house, and the college resumed instruction at Fourth and Arch Streets. The revitalized college board of trustees filled ten vacancies that had accumulated because of deaths and the departure of Loyalists. Yet the act of 1789 had not revoked the charter of the university. Though forced out of the old college buildings, the university continued to hold classes, first in the Masonic hall in Lodge Alley, then in a new building just being completed for the American Philosophical Society on the west side of Fifth Street within the State House Yard. Only dubiously capable of supporting a single college, Philadelphia now had two rival colleges within a few blocks of each other.¹⁵

III

For the second time Philadelphia staged a grand civic welcome for General Washington, when he arrived on May 13, 1787, to take his seat in the convention of the states to revise the Articles of Confederation. This convention had been authorized by Congress specifically in response to a call from a convention on interstate commerce meeting at Annapolis in 1786, but more generally in answer to many pleas like those of Philadelphia for national assistance to the economy.

Washington traveled this time from Mount Vernon, so a delegation of senior officers of his old army rode south from Philadelphia to meet him at Chester and dined with him there. The party crossed the Schuylkill at Gray's Ferry, where during the occupation the British had established a floating bridge since maintained by the Americans. The Light Horse Troop and other mounted citizens formed an enlarged escort from Gray's Ferry into the city, where once more the bells pealed forth the inhabitants' greetings. Washington was to have stayed at a boarding establishment run by a Mrs. House, probably at Fifth and Market Streets; but Robert Morris and Mrs. Morris so strongly repeated an earlier invitation that the general lodge with them that he now accepted. He moved his baggage into their commodious house at 190 High Street, the second house east of Sixth Street on the south side. Before the day ended Washington called on Benjamin Franklin, then eighty-one years old and feeble; Franklin had returned from his diplomatic missions in 1785 and was president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania as well as a delegate to the forthcoming convention.¹⁶

Enough delegates had arrived by May 25 to open the convention on that day. The Constitutional Convention, as the meeting became, initially provided little information to fuel gossip in the taverns and on streetcorners. The members decided their work was so momentous—they quickly chose to exceed their instructions and to write a new federal Constitution—that they had to enfold their sessions in complete secrecy. The rule of silence was evidently well observed.

Their deliberations persisted through a hot summer and into September. Washington, who was immediately elected president of the convention, continued to ornament the city's most important social gatherings and to be seen on his way to or from occasional excursions into the countryside; during an intermission in the debates on July 31, he rode over the length and breadth of his army's encampment at Valley Forge. The comings and goings of other prominent men—Gov. Edmund Randolph of Virginia and George Mason, the author of the Virginia Bill of Rights; Alexander Hamilton of New York, very young but already famous as a hero of Yorktown and one of the stoutest advocates of stronger central government; John Rutledge, wartime governor of South Carolina, and many more—revived much of the atmosphere of the Continental capital. But the citizenry learned little of what was transpiring until the convention adopted an agreed-upon document and an enacting motion offered by Benjamin Franklin: "Done in Convention, by the unanimous consent of the States present the 17th of September, &c, in witness whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names." During the signing ceremony, Franklin made his remark that he was now satisfied that the sun depicted on the back of the president's chair was rising, not setting. The rule of secrecy was repealed, and the delegates proceeded to the City Tavern at Second and Walnut Streets for a dinner together and farewells.¹⁷

In Philadelphia and throughout Pennsylvania the news that the convention had drawn up a charter for a strong central government caused little

alteration of existing party divisions. The Constitutionals, who drew their name from the democratic state constitution of 1776, generally saw in the new federal Constitution a threat to Pennsylvania's democracy and a federal government that might reinforce the unwholesome financial operations of Robert Morris and his friends; thus, confusingly, most Constitutionals became opponents of the new Constitution. The old Anti-Constitutionals or Republicans became in general the friends of the new Constitution, or Federalists. They did so largely because they hoped the new government would do the very things their opponents feared, particularly that the clause of the new Constitution guaranteeing the obligation of contract would shield the Bank of North America from future assaults on its charter. In the background, however, was the sense among the friends of the new frame of government that by creating a larger political arena it might rescue Pennsylvania from much of the destructive factional squabbling that had plagued it since independence. This consideration beyond the motives of economic gain of one or another group of businessmen was important because the contest for Pennsylvania's ratification would be, within Philadelphia, mainly a contest for the votes of artisans, small tradesmen, and mechanics, the voting workingmen of the city; as always, the merchants and professional men were already divided between the two parties.

The contest for Pennsylvania's ratification also involved the efficiency of the Republican—now Federalist—party's recently constructed political machine. That machine was never to perform to better advantage. The Pennsylvania Assembly had been approaching the end of a session when the Constitutional Convention adjourned. The Republicans had determined to keep the session alive long enough to call a ratifying convention, rather than risk putting the arrangements into the hands of a new and possibly Constitutionalist Assembly to be elected in October. It was not until September 27, however, that the Confederation Congress formally submitted the new Constitution to the states. The Assembly was scheduled to adjourn on September 29 because its members could no longer delay returning home to prepare for the coming elections. A special courier brought the congressional resolution of submission to Philadelphia on the morning of September 28. Thereupon some of the Constitutionalist members absented themselves from the Assembly to prevent a quorum. The sergeant-at-arms and a clerk were sent into the streets to find at least two members to produce a quorum. Two being found refused to come, but Federalist bystanders dragged them forcibly to the State House. The Assembly then appointed the first Tuesday in November for the election of a ratifying convention.¹⁸

The Philadelphia Anti-Federalists worked up a strong ticket, attempting to confuse the voters by including Benjamin Franklin at the head of it, and publishing the objections to the Constitution drawn up by that champion of natural rights George Mason, who had refused to sign it. James Wilson, Philadelphia lawyer, frequent congressman, one of the Pennsylvania delegates to the Continental Congress who had voted for independence in July 1776,

member of the Constitutional Convention, and next to James Madison probably the single most important architect of the new Constitution, led the oratorical battle in behalf of ratification. Wilson received more votes than any Anti-Federalist for the ratifying convention, and the Federalists won all five Philadelphia city and all five Philadelphia County delegates.

They also won two-thirds of the sixty-nine delegates who assembled at the State House on November 21. This Federalist margin did not prevent vigorous debate, nor was it sufficient to forestall the Anti-Federalists from parliamentary maneuvers to prolong the convention for almost a month. Wilson once more carried much of the burden of debate for the Federalists, enthusiastically seconded by Benjamin Rush. After a forty-six to twenty-three vote in favor of ratification was at last recorded and announced to the public on December 12, that afternoon a group of sailors and ship carpenters mounted a boat on a wagon drawn by five horses and escorted it through the Philadelphia streets, pretending to take soundings as they went: "Three and twenty fathoms, foul bottom"—in reference to the opposition vote—and "Six and forty fathoms, safe anchorage."¹⁹

This small ratification-day procession may have helped inspire the holding of parades in many other cities and towns to celebrate the progress of the Constitution toward the nine ratifications necessary for the new government to go into operation. When the ninth state, New Hampshire, happened to ratify just before the Fourth of July, on June 21, 1788, the Federalists of Philadelphia decided to celebrate again with the grandest procession of all, to be held on the coming Fourth. Francis Hopkinson, poet, wit, signer of the Declaration of Independence, and currently a judge of admiralty, became director of the Federal Procession, one of the most spectacular civic observances in all of Philadelphia's history.

Eighty-eight numbered units comprised the procession. The ship *Rising Sun*, anchored in the Delaware and decorated with the flags of many nations, opened the festivities with a cannon salute at sunrise, echoed by the bells of Christ Church. Ten other vessels anchored near the *Rising Sun* flew flags bearing the names of the states that had ratified—Virginia had just followed New Hampshire to make ten. At eight o'clock ten marshals, headed by Maj.-Gen. Thomas Mifflin, wartime quartermaster-general and now a powerful Pennsylvania political leader, led off the parade from Third and South Streets. It marched north on Third to Callowhill, west to Fourth, south to Market, and thence to Union Green, a park in front of the Hamilton family estate of Bush Hill, north of Market beyond Twelfth.

The Light Horse Troop marched near the head of the procession. The features included Thomas Fitzsimons representing the French Alliance by riding a horse that had belonged to the French hero of Yorktown, Général le comte de Rochambeau, and carrying a flag that combined three fleurs-de-lis with thirteen stars; Richard Bache, Franklin's son-in-law, as herald of a new era, proclaimed in verse on a banner on the herald's staff; and a carriage drawn by ten white horses and displaying the "New Roof, or grand Federal

Order of Procession,

In honor of the establishment of the Constitution of the United States.

To parade precisely at Eight o'clock in the Morning, of FRIDAY, the 4th of JULY, 1788, proceeding along Third-street to Callowhill-street, thence to Fourth-street, down Fourth-street to Market-street; thence to the Grounds in front of Bush-hill.

I. Officers, with their Adjutants, to march and march.	XXIII. The Montgomery County Troop of Light Horse, commanded by James Mifflin, Esq.	XXIV. An armed Guard, drawn by five battalions, bearing Colours, and marching on the right of the Montgomery County Troop.	XXV. The Montgomery County Troop of Light Horse, commanded by James Mifflin, Esq.
II. The City Troop of Light Horse, commanded by Captain John, Esq.	XXVI. An armed Guard, drawn by five battalions, bearing Colours, and marching on the right of the Montgomery County Troop.	XXVII. The Montgomery County Troop of Light Horse, commanded by James Mifflin, Esq.	XXVIII. The Montgomery County Troop of Light Horse, commanded by James Mifflin, Esq.
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Philadelphia: Printed by HALL and SELLERS.

Order of Procession, In honor of the establishment of the Constitution of the United States, printed by Hall and Sellers (1788).

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Edifice," a symbol based on an allegorical poem composed by Francis Hopkinson the previous December in which he ridiculed the Anti-Federalists for preferring an old roof to a new one.

Mainly, however, the numbered units represented the trades of the city—units thirty-three through seventy-seven in an order determined by lot. Most of the trades were represented by impressive delegations, many in some sort of uniform, most with various emblems of their trades and patriotic slogans. The last, the stay-makers, were content to be "Represented by Mr. Francis Serre, with his first journeyman carrying an elegant pair of ladies' stays." The turn-out of tradesmen, like the results of the elections for the ratifying convention, suggests the strength with which Philadelphia workingmen had accepted the Federalist arguments.²⁰

IV

The Federal Procession aptly symbolized a clearing of Philadelphia's and Pennsylvania's political air, permitting the resolution of many of the quarrels that had bitterly divided local factions since 1776.

One such was the question of Philadelphia self-government. Through the 1780s Constitutionalists had feared that Anti-Constitutionalist political strength in the city would yield immediate control of any new municipal government to Robert Morris and his political and business associates. By the end of the decade, however, the Anti-Constitutionalists in their new guise as Federalists usually controlled the state as well as the city anyway. Furthermore they were willing to allow the city government to consist mainly of elected officials, rather than coopted men as in the past. No compelling reason to deny Philadelphia authority over its own affairs any longer existed. Declaring that "the administration of government within the city of Philadelphia is, in its present form, inadequate to the suppression of vice and immorality, to the advancement of the public health and order, and to the promotion of trade, industry, and happiness," the Pennsylvania Assembly on March 11, 1789, at last adopted "An Act to incorporate the city of Philadelphia."

The inhabitants of the city became a corporation and body politic styled "The Mayor, Aldermen, and Citizens of Philadelphia." The freeholders were to elect fifteen aldermen to serve seven-year terms and thirty common councilmen to serve three-year terms. A mayor was to be elected by the aldermen from among their number and to serve a one-year term. A recorder was to be chosen by the mayor and aldermen from among the city's freemen to serve a seven-year term. The mayor, recorder, aldermen, and common councilmen constituted the legislative power when assembled in Common Council. All the property and rights of the colonial corporation were transferred to the new corporation. When the taxing power of the new government proved inadequate because it was too much bound by the limits of the old corporation, the Assembly supplemented the charter on April 2, 1790, to give the Common Council power to raise and levy taxes "upon the persons of single men, and upon the estates, real and personal, of the inhabitants, for the

purposes of lighting, watching, watering, pitching, paving, and cleansing the streets, lanes, and alleys of the city."

Samuel Powel, the last mayor under the colonial charter, was elected alderman and then chosen first mayor under the new charter. Powel had been counted a patriot during the Revolution, and among his fellow aldermen were such other old patriots as Francis Hopkinson and John Nixon. But the mood of reconciliation nourished by the federal Constitution and making possible the municipal charter also produced the election as common councilmen of such former Loyalists or suspected Loyalists as Benjamin Chew, Henry Drinker, Miers Fisher, Jared Ingersoll, and James Pemberton. On the other hand not one Anti-Federalist was elected to municipal office; the Federalists swept the races for alderman and carried twenty-two of the Common Council seats, the rest going to gentlemen or well-to-do artisans of similar sympathies.²¹

The mood of reconciliation also permitted replacing the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 with the constitution of 1790, modeled closely on the federal Constitution, particularly in separating and balancing the legislative, executive, and judicial powers.

The general clearing away of old contentions extended to the contest between the college and the university. The 1789 live-and-let-live solution of permitting both institutions to function as neighbors fitted the conciliatory spirit of the times, but for the practical and particularly the financial requirements of higher education in Philadelphia it was an absurdity. The two boards of trustees consequently brought themselves to negotiate a compromise, merging boards and faculties. The new, unified trustees were to number twenty-four, the same number as each of the old boards; each of the contending boards was to select twelve. The Pennsylvania legislature approved this and other details of the merger on September 30, 1790.

The name of the merged institutions was to be the University of Pennsylvania, dropping "of the State of" from the designation given the university in 1779; common discourse had long since abandoned those cumbersome words. John Ewing, provost of the university and a Presbyterian minister, was to continue as provost. Despite the composition of the merged board, the name, and the final displacement of the Anglican clergyman William Smith by his Presbyterian rival, the merger proved essentially a triumph of the old college. While the governor of the state was always to be president of the board of trustees, and the university was bound to lay a financial statement before the legislature annually, the institution became again a private one of self-perpetuating trustees. The democratizing possibilities of state sponsorship—of initiating the American state university movement—were lost. Out of a complex of reasons, the faculty tended to become that of the college rather than of the university. Though the college itself had been intended, especially by Franklin, as a secular institution in a constellation of American church-related colleges, it had promptly developed an Anglican atmosphere, with William Smith's encouragement; the Anglican overtones soon prevailed

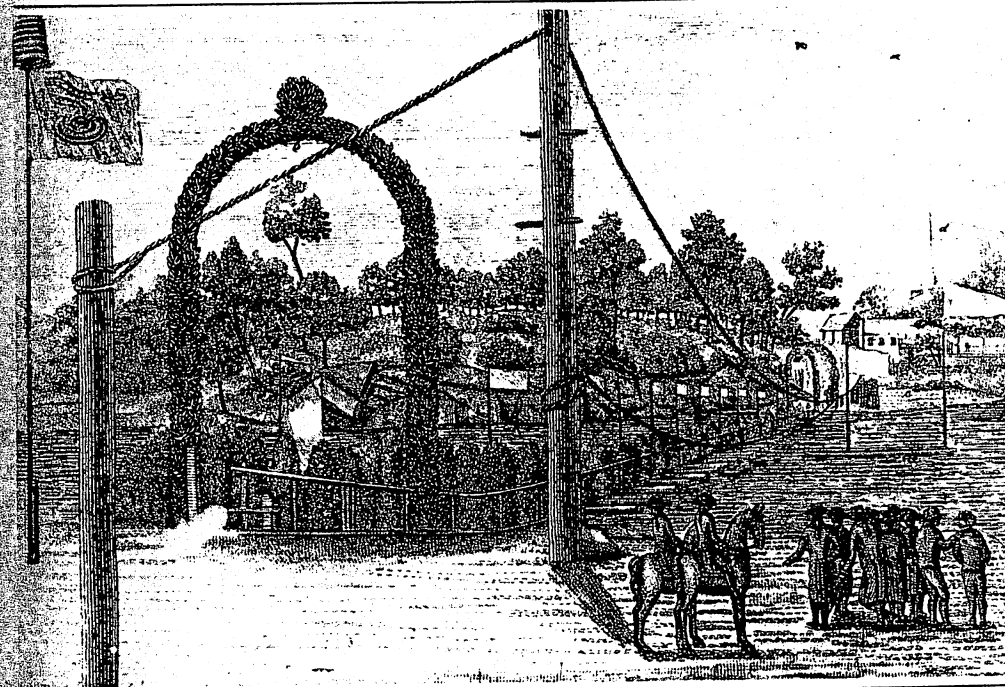
again, notwithstanding the retention of John Ewing. The University of Pennsylvania was set on its course, for over a century, as a conservative institution, and one whose name would always be misleading. Along with conciliation, that outcome also was consistent with the temper of the Federalist times.²²

V

On April 20, 1789, still in a festive mood—so strong and so widespread was the conviction that the federal Constitution could rescue both Philadelphia and the nation from postwar troubles—the city prepared yet again to welcome General Washington. It would be the most splendid of all the municipal welcomes to the revolutionary hero, for he would be traveling through Philadelphia to take up tasks fully comparable to those that had won him his laurels in war. He was on his way from Mount Vernon to New York, the temporary federal capital, to become the first president of the United States under the Constitution.

An honor guard comprised largely of Pennsylvania veterans of the Revolution relieved a similar Delaware guard of honor at the boundary between the two states. Among them was General Mifflin, president of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania. With the guard were also several of the city troops of horse. The escort apparently led a white horse out from Philadelphia to meet the president-elect, so that mounted on it when he entered the city he could be better seen by the populace than if he remained inside his coach. At Gray's Ferry Bridge, Washington beheld yet another welcoming delegation, headed by General St. Clair, along with remarkable decorative embellishments of the bridge arranged by the proprietors, the brothers C. and R. Gray, with the help of the Philadelphia artist Charles Willson Peale. Laurel arched each end of the floating bridge, and laurel and cedar lined its sides. Large banners flew above the approaches, announcing again the themes of the rising sun and the new era, along with the motto particularly appropriate to Philadelphia LET COMMERCE FLOURISH. The flags of all the states lined the north side of the bridge; alone from the center of the south side flew the flag of the Union. One report had it that Angelica Peale, daughter of the artist, lowered a laurel wreath to Washington's head; in other reports it was simply an unidentified girl or boy who performed this ritual.

From Gray's Ferry into the city "every fence, field and avenue" was thronged with people. As usual on these occasions cannon roared and bells pealed; the Philadelphia diarist Jacob Hiltzheimer happened to be in Bristol, Pennsylvania, on his way home from Trenton and recorded that he heard the guns that far away. Leading the procession now astride the white horse, Washington made his way through ever more tightly packed crowds down High Street to Second and to the City Tavern, where about 250 men joined him in a grand dinner and fourteen toasts. Washington again stayed overnight at Robert Morris's house. Inclement weather caused him for once to decline the escort of the City Light Horse when he resumed his journey the next day.²³



An East View of Gray's Ferry, near Philadelphia with the Triumphal Arches, &c. erected for the Reception of General Washington, engraved by James Trenchard (b. 1747) after Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827), for the *Columbian Magazine* (1789).

THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA.

Among the reasons for Philadelphia's hearty support of the federal Constitution was the hope that a new start in government would provide the occasion to bring the national capital back where it belonged, to the largest, wealthiest, and most centrally located city in the Union. If Philadelphia seemed too wickedly urban to puritanical and backwoods congressmen from New England and the South, then Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, and Bucks County were willing to unite in offering a nearby tract on which to locate a new federal district, while the public buildings of Philadelphia housed the government in the meantime. To Philadelphians, the city itself of course would be better yet. Tench Coxe, a rising power among the Federalists especially as a lobbyist, had sought through James Madison to persuade the First Congress under the Constitution to hold its sessions in Philadelphia. Benjamin Rush, who supported John Adams for the vice-presidency in the belief that his old revolutionary friend would support the transfer of the capital to Philadelphia, wanted to see it returned at once to prevent "the seat of government [moving] to a more southern . . . and less republican state" in the future.²⁴

Suspicion of Philadelphia as the combined center of self-interested financiers and unruly urban mobs, concern about the city's high prices, and bad memories of the hasty 1783 departure of Congress under the spur of mutineers all remained strong. A bill setting the permanent site of the capital on the Potomac River but naming Philadelphia as the temporary capital failed during the first session of the new Congress. Opponents of Philadelphia feared that if the capital returned at all, then Philadelphia would muster the strength to assure that it should never leave. Fisher Ames of Massachusetts grumbled about the rival lobbying for Philadelphia and New York as a "despicable grog-shop contest, whether the taverns of New York or Philadelphia shall get the custom of Congress."

Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton—who was close to Tench Coxe, now the assistant secretary—meanwhile was suffering difficulties in his effort to secure from Congress federal assumption of the states' debts. The Treasury leaders decided to try harnessing together the issues of assumption and the federal capital, to combine enough votes to win satisfactory resolutions of both questions. In June 1790 Coxe and William Jackson, one of President Washington's secretaries who was to spend the latter part of his life as a Philadelphia businessman, proposed to Pennsylvania Reps. Thomas Fitzsimons and George Clymer, whom their opponents considered a Philadelphia congressional junto, that Philadelphia become the permanent capital in return for enough Pennsylvania votes to pass assumption. Robert Morris, now a United States senator, on hearing about this overture invited Hamilton to join him on his morning constitutional along the Battery for further discussion. Hamilton offered the votes for Germantown or the Falls of the Delaware to become the capital in return for one vote in the Senate and five in the House for assumption. But he was not ready to assure Philadelphia's becoming the temporary capital, and negotiations with the Pennsylvania delegation dragged on inconclusively for a time.²⁵

Meanwhile Philadelphians were flooding Congress with petitions in favor of moving the capital to the Delaware. Philadelphia newspapers published the petitions in an attempt to arouse a public outcry. The *Federal Gazette* warned that the people might lose confidence in Congress if it stayed in an "improper place." Philadelphia, the paper claimed, was filled with "Americans who exhibited the ancient simple Republican manners of our country."²⁶

Municipal officials also lobbied for the city. The city Council wrote to Congressman Fitzsimons, telling him that the city government would provide public buildings and funds to remodel houses for the use of federal officials. A new courthouse built on the same square as the State House could provide a meeting place for Congress. The city Council conducted a lottery to raise the necessary funds for remodeling old structures and for the building of a new city hall that could also help accommodate the federal government. In addition the Council voted funds to have Robert Morris's mansion on High Street remodeled for the use of the president. City officials hoped that once these buildings were turned over to the federal government, Philadelphia would in fact become the permanent capital.²⁷

This flurry of activity notwithstanding, it is hard to escape the feeling that Philadelphia or at least a nearby site might have won the capital if only Philadelphians had altogether wanted it. But for whatever reason—disdain for a grog-shop contest, or Philadelphian self-doubt—their hearts were not quite in the effort. In the face of Hamilton's proposed bargain the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania congressmen dallied and bargained but failed to come to the point. While the Pennsylvanians dithered, Hamilton sealed instead his famous bargain with Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson of Virginia to locate the permanent capital not on the Delaware, but on the Potomac. Robert Morris and Tench Coxe had to settle for bringing the temporary capital to Philadelphia, for ten years, as Pennsylvania's part in the deal that finally achieved assumption.²⁸

V I

At least Philadelphia had the temporary capital, and there remained those who, like Pennsylvania's other senator William Maclay, thought that once the seat of government was in the city inertia would cause it to remain.²⁹ Thus there would be yet another civic welcome for George Washington, and this time Philadelphia could expect to play host to him for the remainder of his presidential service. Traveling south from New York on September 2, 1790, Washington was met as usual some ten miles out of town by the City Light Horse, other militia, and distinguished citizens. Again the cannon fired and the bells rang when he approached Market Street. Again sumptuous dinners were offered to him, but for the time being he had to decline many of the invitations because he had decided to visit Mount Vernon before returning to Philadelphia to stay.

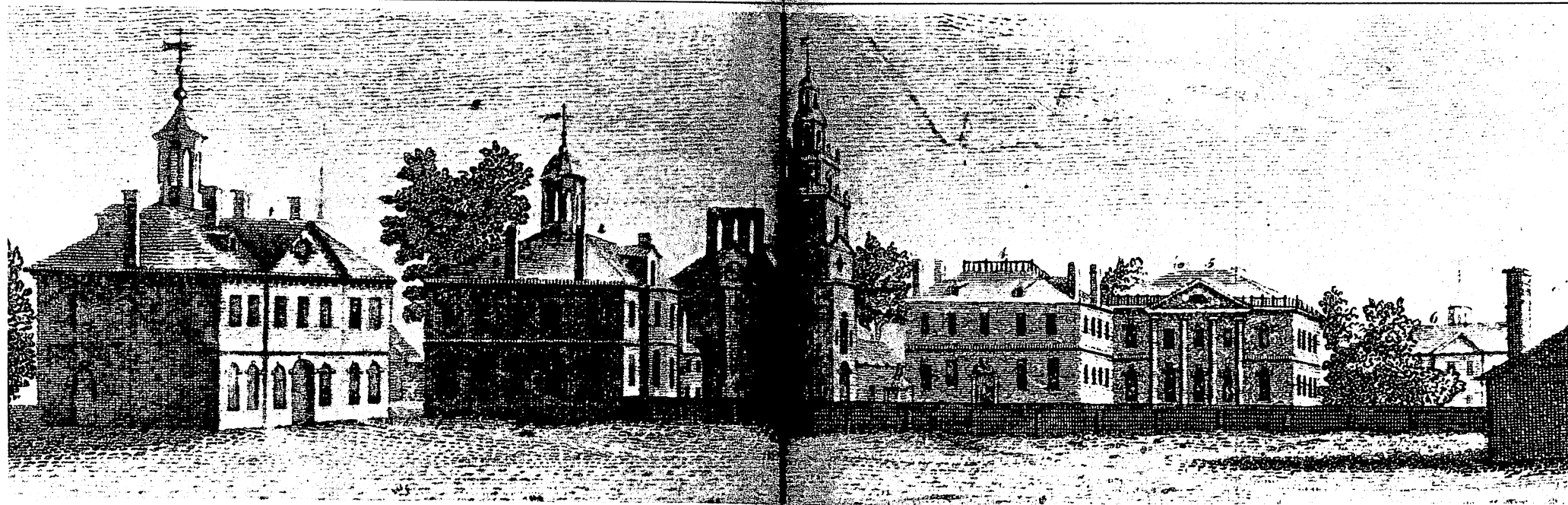
He did, however, pause to examine the Robert Morris house with an eye to its becoming the presidential mansion. The Morrises had graciously acceded to the city's wish that they make their place available by agreeing to move next door, to the house on the southeast corner of Sixth and Market, which had been Joseph Galloway's and from which the commissioners for confiscated estates had evicted Mrs. Galloway after her husband had fled with the British.

The Morris house had been built in 1761 by Mary Lawrence Masters, who in 1772 deeded it to her daughter, also named Mary, at the time of the daughter's marriage to Richard Penn, grandson of the founder. The Penns had gone to England in 1775 when the Continental Congress commissioned Richard to deliver its Olive Branch Petition, and they chose to remain across the Atlantic. During the war both Gen. Sir William Howe and Gen. Benedict Arnold had lived in the house during their respective military commands in the city. Robert Morris purchased it from the Penns in 1785 and immediately rebuilt it, among other purposes to raise the ceilings of the second floor to accommodate the current London fashion of entertaining chiefly in rooms above the ground floor. Despite Morris's changes Washington was not completely satisfied with the house as the prospective residence of the president: "It is, I believe, the best *single house* in the City; yet, without additions it is inadequate

to the *commodious* accommodation of my family." So he wrote to his secretary Tobias Lear, who was given the task of supervising major additions and alterations while Washington tarried at Mount Vernon until late November. During his absence the president bombarded Lear with copious detailed instructions for the work. He returned to move in on November 22, thereby forcing the workmen to hasten the finishing touches.³⁰

The Philadelphia where Washington took up residence stretched about nine blocks north and south along the Delaware and not far beyond the State House to the west. A large wooded area that had long remained between the settled portion and the Schuylkill had mostly been cleared during the British occupation.³¹ In 1781 and 1782 a rural greenbelt area in the Northern Liberties had been sold by the state to speculators; land developers purchased over 1400 lots, which soon became housing sites.³² The population of the city and the adjacent districts, estimated at 38,798 in 1782 despite the effects of war, had grown to 42,520 by the first federal census of 1790. This 9.6 percent growth rate was not spectacular by the standards of most of the earlier decades of the eighteenth century, but it nevertheless signified considerable economic recovery.³³

Refurbishing since the war had made much of the city attractive again, with its red-brick houses facing red-brick foot pavements, rows of button-wood, willow, and Lombardy poplar trees, main streets paved with pebbles and with brick or wooden gutters, and posts between carriage ways and footpaths to protect pedestrians. Architectural styles had changed little from the Georgian of the colonial era. In 1785 the Pennsylvania Assembly had somewhat surprisingly voted to grant to the American Philosophical Society a plot of ground within the State House Yard, along the west side of Fifth Street. There in 1787 the society began erecting the building it has occupied ever since, a relatively unadorned rectangular, symmetrical structure in harmony with the State House. The Library Company of Philadelphia had considered building a similar structure in the State House Yard, but it was unwilling to go so far west as the Sixth Street side as the Assembly wished. Meanwhile a Philadelphia County courthouse was erected along Chestnut Street just west of the State House in 1787–1789, and to balance it a city hall rose east of the State House in 1790–1791; these buildings also followed traditional Philadelphia red-brick Georgian lines, though cupolas gave them a slight air of pretension. With the arrival of the federal government, the first

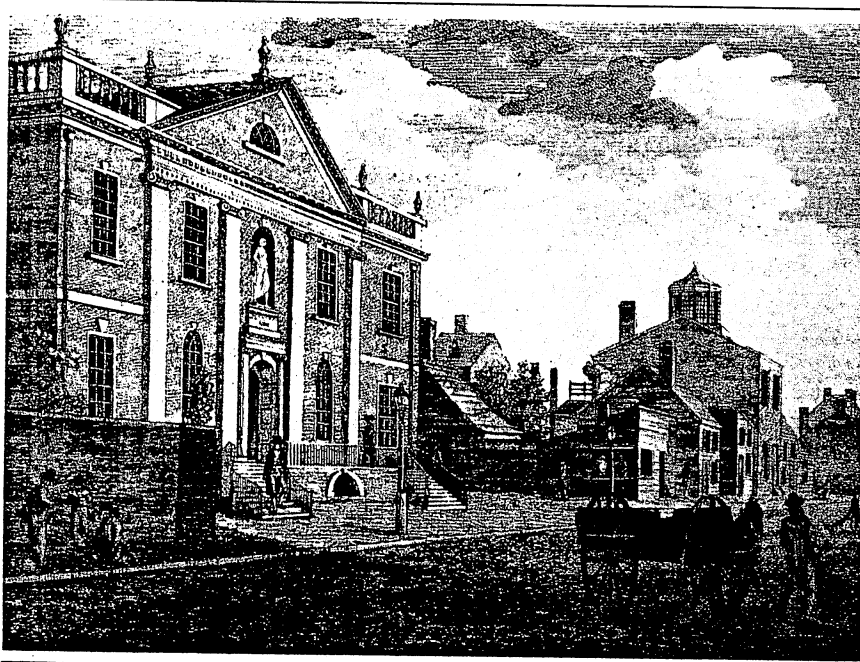


View of Several Public Buildings in Philadelphia, taken from the "Compting House Window of Wm Nancarrow, about 54 feet to the Northward of Walnut Street on the West side of eighth Street by Wm Thomas Bedwell of the Northern Liberties . . ." for the *Columbian Magazine* (1790). From the left, the

buildings are: the Protestant Episcopal Academy; the County Court House, later Congress Hall; the State House; the American Philosophical Society; the Library Company of Philadelphia; and Carpenters' Hall. In 1790 a City Hall which soon housed the U.S. Supreme Court was built just east of the State House.

of these latter two structures became Congress Hall, accommodating the House of Representatives on its first floor, the Senate on the second; the City Hall took in the United States Supreme Court.³⁴

Denied what it considered the most appropriate site within the State House Yard, the Library Company chose to build in 1789–1790 across the street, on the east side of Fifth Street just across from the hall of the Philosophical Society. The style of the new library building signaled the beginning of architectural change in the city. Library Hall was the first building by Dr. William Thornton, a young physician recently arrived from the West Indies, who won a competition for its design. Although Thornton had no architectural training, he was in touch with British architectural fashion, an awareness that stood him in good stead again when he later won the competition to design a Capitol for the new federal city on the Potomac. He gave to Library Hall an elegance and delicacy of detail hitherto rarely seen in Philadelphia—particularly in four pilasters and an ornamental balustrade—the whole representing a fuller and more literal Palladianism than had prevailed in Philadel-



Library and Surgeons Hall, in Fifth Street Philadelphia, drawn and engraved by William Birch and Son (1799). The Library Company of Philadelphia's original building was demolished in 1888, but it was rebuilt to house the American Philosophical Society in 1959. Surgeons Hall, also called the Philadelphia Dispensary, was a clinic and outpatient service established in 1786.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

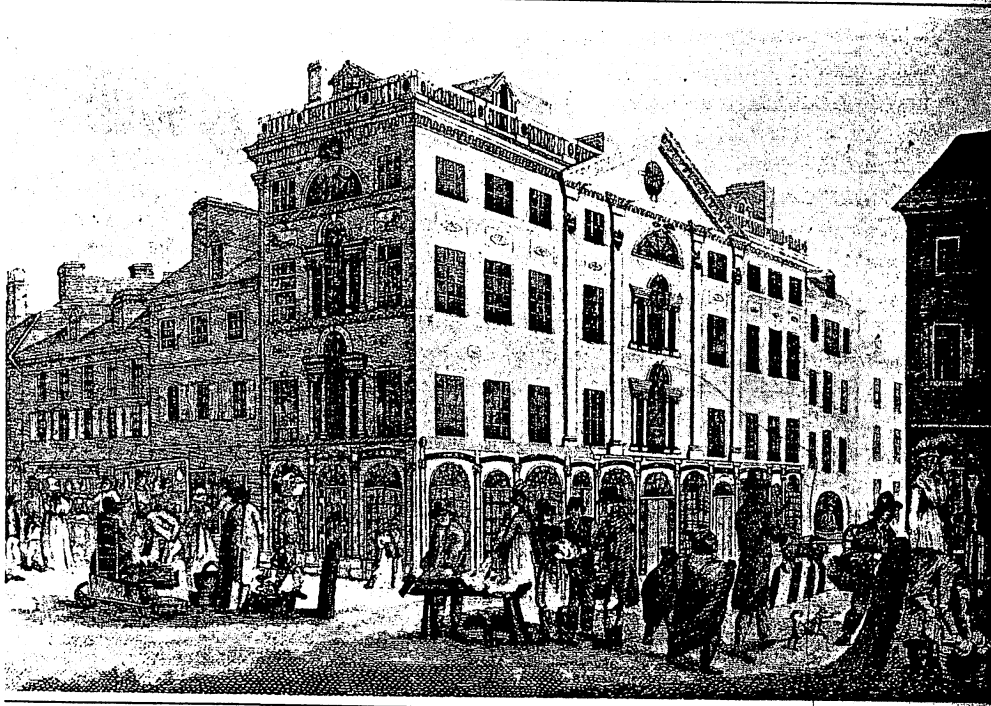
phia before, a style approaching the Robert Adam mode of current English building. When the wealthy merchant William Bingham offered to donate a white marble statue of Franklin for a niche on the front of the building, the impression of elegant classicism became complete; indeed at Franklin's own suggestion the statue was clothed in a toga. The original Library Hall was razed in the 1880s, but the present American Philosophical Society Library, built on the site in 1959, reproduces Thornton's facade.³⁵

The elegance of the Adam style as transplanted to America to become the "Federal" style was perhaps best expressed in Philadelphia in David Evans, Jr.'s Central Pavilion of the Pennsylvania Hospital, facing south toward Pine Street between Eighth and Ninth, begun in 1794 and completed in 1805. The use of marble for the first story, the six marble Corinthian pilasters extending through the red-brick second and third stories to a finely detailed entablature with an equally finely worked pediment featuring a delicate oval window, and perhaps most important the circular balustrade which surrounds the skylight of the clinical amphitheater—all these details carried into a new architectural era a structure whose basic form nevertheless remained the familiar Georgian colonial rectangle with balanced windows and doors arranged along horizontal lines.³⁶

The colonial and the Federal styles both echoed Greek and Roman architecture as filtered through Renaissance Italy and then through England. In part to carry the United States toward a larger cultural independence from England to accord with political independence—though at the same time, paradoxically, relying on trends in England itself—the era of the return of the capital to Philadelphia witnessed also a more literal borrowing of Greek and Roman design. After all, the leaders of the new American Republic liked to think of themselves as emulating the ancient Roman Republic.

In 1788 William Hamilton, grandson of Andrew Hamilton, brought the new, literal classicism to his estate outside Philadelphia, the Woodlands. In the process of transforming a fairly simple farmhouse into a pretentious mansion, he added a large Greek portico with two Doric columns. The first Philadelphia public building to adopt this classic temple facade with free-standing columns was a new First Presbyterian Church, built in 1793 on the site of the same congregation's earlier church on the south side of Market Street between Second and Third, at the east corner of Bank Alley. The church had four Corinthian columns.³⁷

A centerpiece of Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton's program to use the federal Constitution not only to place the Union's finances on a sound footing but to encourage commerce with the help of federal power was a federally chartered bank. The United States government appointed only one-fifth of the directors of the resulting Bank of the United States, but the bank was to have a special relationship with the government, particularly as the depository of federal funds, against which it could issue notes that would circulate as currency, and extend loans. Receiving with the federal deposits the notes of state-chartered banks—several of which had appeared in



South East Corner of Third and Market Streets, drawn and engraved by William Birch and Son (1799). A goldsmith and two French merchants occupied the corner building which was erected by Joseph Cooke in 1793. The Indian King Tavern appears at the far left on Market Street.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

addition to the Bank of North America—the bank could regulate the credit operations of those other banks by means of the promptness with which it demanded that notes be redeemed in specie. Chartered on February 25, 1791, the Bank of the United States opened for business in December 1791 in Carpenters' Hall. The experienced Thomas Willing became its first president. In 1794 the stockholders acquired a lot on the west side of Third Street between Chestnut and Walnut, across from the head of Dock Street, which had been built over the course of Dock Creek in 1784. Construction appears to have begun in 1795 on a design by Samuel Blodget, Jr., a New Hampshire-born businessman, militia captain, and amateur architect.

Blodget chose the newly popular classical "grand order," helping fix the Greco-Roman temple as a favored design for American banks for generations afterward. His temple facade was constructed of blue Pennsylvania marble, except for a wooden entablature and pediment featuring an American eagle. Six free-standing Corinthian columns support the entablature. Inside, eight

Corinthian columns support a balcony, and forty small Corinthian columns support a low dome with a skylight. The bank received an imposing headquarters worthy of Hamilton's ambitions for the institution—except for one conspicuous cost-cutting change in Blodget's plan; as the architect complained, "the brick sides are an injurious deviation."³⁸

No such economies of cost marred the most pretentious private residence built in Philadelphia during the 1790s. William Bingham, Federalist merchant and land speculator, associate of Robert Morris, son-in-law of Thomas Willing, and from 1795 to 1801 United States senator, modeled his house on the London showplace of the duke of Manchester. Built near Third and Spruce Streets, the house along with its formal gardens occupied most of the ground west to Fourth Street and north to Willing's Alley. Its marble stairs among similar features gave the house the "Roman air" now in fashion. "The chairs in the drawing-room were from Seddon's in London of the newest taste, the back in the form of a lyre, with festoons, of yellow and crimson silk. The curtains of the room a festoon of the same. The carpet, one of Moore's most expensive patterns. The room papered in the French taste, after the style of the Vatican in Rome." The mirrors lining the parlors reflected social gatherings rivaling in prestige those of the president's mansion itself.³⁹

The lady of the house, Anne Willing Bingham, had married in 1780, when she was sixteen and her husband twenty-eight. From 1783 to 1786 the Binghams had traveled in England and on the continent, where Anne captivated and was captivated by the courts of St. James's, Versailles, and the Hague. Rich, attractive, intelligent, shrewd, witty, and elegantly dressed, Mrs. Bingham was welcomed to the fashionable salons of the European capitals and began to form the notion of presiding over a salon of her own in Philadelphia. She was especially struck by the "young and handsome" marquise de Cogny, who "takes a lead in all the fashionable Dissipations of life, and at more serious moments collects at her House an assembly of the Literati, whom she charms with her knowledge and her bel Esprit. The women of France interfere in the politics of the Country, and often give a decided Turn to the Fate of Empires."⁴⁰

The empires to which Mrs. Bingham gave a turn with her Philadelphia dances, dinners, and receptions of the 1790s were those conjured up by the imaginations of the ambitious and the successful in the reigning Federalist party. As the politics of the new federal government increasingly divided between Hamilton's Federalists and the more democratically inclined Republicans led by Secretary of State Jefferson and Congressman Madison, few of the Republicans appeared at the glittering Bingham salon. Jefferson himself had long been a friend of the hostess and was always welcome, but he was uncomfortable amid imitations of the social life of a monarchical court, and many of his followers no more met Mrs. Bingham's standards of elegance than they themselves approved of aristocratic display. In 1795, indeed, a mob attacked the Bingham house to protest John Jay's Treaty with England, whose commercial concessions to the British the men of the streets thought an



Anne Willing Bingham (1764–1801), painted by Gilbert Stuart (1755–1828) in 1797.

PRIVATE COLLECTION

all-too-logical product of anglophilia like the Binghams'. But "the dazzling Mrs. Bingham," as Abigail Adams called her, would not allow such a passing incident among the lower orders to disturb seriously her round of entertainments of the Federalist notables, the aristocratic French emigrés such as the duc d'Orléans (later King Louis-Philippe) and the duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, and such visiting English worthies as Alexander and Henry Baring, of the great financial house, who married two of her daughters.⁴¹

Even President Washington's frigid dignity warmed to the slightly risqué conversation of Mrs. Bingham. It was she who commissioned from Gilbert Stuart the full-length painting of the chief executive that, presented by her to Lord Lansdowne, became known in its original and the many copies as the "Lansdowne portrait."⁴²

The portrait conveys the rather different tone of entertainment at the president's mansion, 190 High Street. It depicts Washington in the sort of black suit he wore at his formal levees for gentlemen on Tuesday afternoons from three to four o'clock. The awe in which Washington had come to be held even by most others in high places combined with the president's utter lack of small talk to render these affairs strictly ritualistic. A secretary or some

similar associate of the president presented each caller, to whom Washington bowed, holding back his hands to discourage handshakes. After the presentations the visitors formed a circle and Washington went round it beginning on his right, exchanging a few words with every guest. Finally the president returned to his original position, whereupon the guests approached him, bowed, and departed.

The president's state dinners, held on Thursdays at four o'clock, were not much more jovial, though Mrs. Washington and other ladies sometimes attended. So humorless were the proceedings, so limited the conversation, that even a confirmed democrat might wish himself at the Binghams' instead. Attending such a dinner, the democratically inclined Senator Maclay thought the "dead silence almost" might at last give way to conversation once Mrs. Washington and the ladies had withdrawn. But it was not to be; the president occasionally spoke a sentence or two, he soon went upstairs for coffee, the company followed, and soon everyone went home. Yet Maclay acknowledged that viewing the affair simply as a dinner, the quality of the food was the best he had ever found at any comparable banquet.⁴³

More sprightly, much more in keeping with the social life that well-placed Philadelphians had expected with the "federal court" in their midst, were the Friday evening "drawing rooms" hosted by Mrs. Washington—or "Lady Washington," for she too possessed her full share of regal dignity. These occasions began in the early evening, around seven, and might last as late as nine-thirty or ten o'clock, beyond the Washingtons' customary bedtime. The president's lady received her guests while seated with one or two friends; Mrs. Robert Morris was almost always at her right. The guests bowed to the hostess and chatted briefly, then mingled with informal groupings. Martha Washington usually seemed relaxed and kindly. Refreshments were served in an adjoining room—tea, coffee, cakes, sweetmeats, in warm weather orangeade or some other cold drink. "The room became full before I left it," Abigail Adams reported of an early "drawing room," "and the circle very brilliant. How could it be otherwise, when the dazzling Mrs. Bingham and her beautiful sisters were there; the Misses Allen, and Misses Chew; in short a constellation of beauties?" At least as dazzling as the beauties were the displays of jewelry adorning some of the foreign ministers' ladies, especially the wife of the Austrian minister, "who frequently appeared blazing with diamonds." (Mrs. Washington set herself off by wearing little jewelry.)⁴⁴

The president himself unbent to a degree and mingled with the guests at Martha's "drawing rooms." Not only was the occasion informal, but he did not consider himself the host, and was therefore more at his ease.

Washington rode out from the Morris house in a coach and six, the handsome horses carefully matched, the coach freshly and elaborately repainted and reupholstered by the brothers David and Francis Clark of Chestnut Street when the capital moved to Philadelphia. In fact Washington's "coach of state" was too heavy and ornate for use on bad roads or at moderately rapid speeds; it served only for short trips within the city. Upon the shift

of the capital from New York, Washington also purchased from the Clarks a lighter coach newly imported from England. This second vehicle was to cause historical confusion; Mrs. Samuel Powel, the mayor's wife, bought an identical coach from the Clark brothers at the same time, and it was hers that survived for many years, to be exhibited at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 as Washington's.⁴⁵

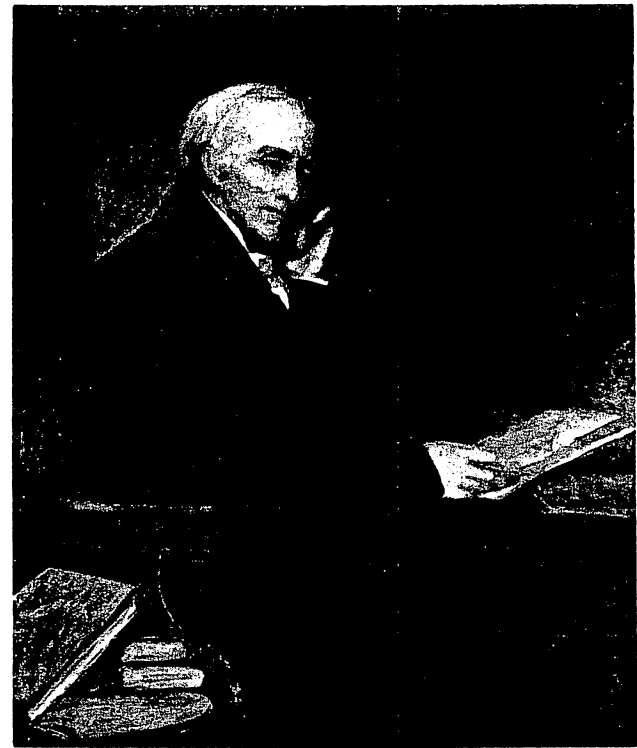
The lighter coach took the president on jaunts into the countryside around Philadelphia. Had he enjoyed more free time, and had his personal finances been less tied up in Virginia lands, Washington would have liked to buy a southeastern Pennsylvania farm to experiment with the rich soil and to live the gentleman farmer's life he loved closer to the capital than Mount Vernon. Aloof though he was, his imposing coach and six traveling the streets was a welcome and reassuring sight to most Philadelphians, tangible evidence that the troubles of the Revolution had been left far behind and that the prosperity of the city and the independence of the nation seemed secure. And after all, Washington knew how to draw the line between an imposing display of authority and the mere fripperies of kingship. When a tradesman, Joseph Cook, proposed to affect British custom and to affix to his shop the Washington coat-of-arms and the inscription "silver Smith to the President," Washington promptly forbade it.⁴⁶

VII

On August 19, 1793, a cloudy, not excessively warm, but rainless day following upon weeks of similar dry weather, Philadelphia's best known physician, Dr. Benjamin Rush, conferred with two other members of his profession about an illness whose appearance in the city had caused him growing alarm through the preceding two weeks. A signer of the Declaration of Independence, a principal shaper of the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, more recently a champion of the new federal and state constitutions—thus a leading political light as well as professor of the institutes of medicine and clinical practice at the University of Pennsylvania, Rush somehow found time for a large private medical practice. Since early August he had treated several patients for a severe fever accompanied by nausea, eruptions of the skin, a black vomit, and eventually deep lethargy, rapid feeble pulse, incontinence, and a morbid yellow coloring of the skin. The little daughter of a colleague who had summoned Rush for help, Dr. Hugh Hodge, had died. Only the day before, Rush had lost another patient to the fever. Now he met with Dr. Hodge and Dr. John Foulke at a house on crowded, narrow Water Street, north of Arch. Hodge and Foulke wished to consult with Rush about yet another case of the new fever; Catherine LeMaigre, wife of a French importer, was dying horribly, gasping for breath and vomiting black bile.

The three physicians agreed that they had seen an uncommon number of such cases recently, all in the same area near the waterfront. Dr. Foulke called their attention to a pungent odor in the air. He reminded them of its source; the sloop *Amelia* out of Santo Domingo had dumped a cargo of damaged

coffee on Bell's Arch Street wharf on July 24, and the coffee had putrified there. Rush, who remembered a yellow fever epidemic in Philadelphia in 1762 and had studied such plagues, immediately reached a terrifying conclusion. He believed that the fever was spread by noxious effluvia in the air, such as that of the rotting coffee. He pronounced the disease that had killed Hodge's daughter and was killing Mrs. LeMaigre to be bilious remitting yellow fever.⁴⁷



Dr. Benjamin Rush (1746–1813), painted by Thomas Sully (1783–1872) at unknown date.

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

News of this conclusion by the city's most eminent physician soon spread through Philadelphia, and so did panic and terror. On August 22 Mayor Matthew Clarkson notified city officials of the presence of a contagious fever and ordered immediate removal of all filth from the streets. On August 25 the fellows of the Philadelphia College of Physicians, almost all the most prestigious doctors in the city, conferred in the hall of the American Philosophical Society "upon the treatment of the existing malignant fever." The first explicit newspaper notice of "the malignant and contagious fever which now prevails" appeared on August 28. By that date the epidemic needed no an-

nouncement in print, for it was reporting itself on the streets and in the graveyards.

On an average August day in Philadelphia there would have been three to five burials. On August 24 there were seventeen, on August 28 twenty-two, on August 29 twenty-four, and thereafter slight declines in burials were quickly followed by alarming increases. Though business at first went on as usual, the lassitude, glazed eyes, depression, even the yellow complexion and seizures of vomiting and delirium symptomatic of the disease could be found everywhere on the streets. By the end of the month Rush was advising "all the families that I attend, that can move, to quit the city." Jefferson, living beyond the town at Gray's Ferry, wrote to Madison that "Everybody who can, is flying from the city, and the panic of the country people is likely to add famine to the disease"—that is, fresh produce was coming in only in a trickle.⁴⁸

There was good reason to fly. Medical science understood little about yellow fever, and the physicians' treatments could well hasten the course of the disease—though a fever that had killed at least one victim within twelve hours of its onset required little hastening. Philadelphia physicians promptly revived an old debate over the origins and means of contagion of the fever. Rush insisted that the source was putrescent refuse like the rotting coffee shipment and that the contagion involved the circulation of noxious matter from the refuse through the air. Other physicians, representing both a different tradition of medical belief and the local patriot's desire to find a foreign origin for the disease, noted that the plague was already widespread throughout the city from early August, far beyond the Arch Street wharf, and that hundreds of refugees from the recent and still tumultuous black uprising on Santo Domingo had come up the Delaware during the summer. Physicians who emphasized these observations tended to believe that the contagion proceeded from direct contact with infected persons, and that it had been brought to Philadelphia by the refugees.

An unusually rainy spring had preceded the prolonged drought of the 1793 summer, first creating flooded streams and numerous swamps, then leaving many stagnant pools. Almost everyone commented on the uncommonly large numbers of mosquitos infesting the city, and some Philadelphians felt intuitively that the swarms of mosquitos had something to do with the plague. But no one knew that the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, biting a victim of the plague—almost certainly beginning with the Santo Domingo refugees—after twelve days transmitted the infection to the next person she bit, and could then inject the disease into a different person every three days, that is, as often as she fed.

More dismaying in retrospect than the physicians' debate over the source of the infection—there was little chance that the science of the time could have perceived enough to eradicate the source anyway—was the controversy over treatment. In the first days of the epidemic Rush was appalled not only by his conclusion that the dread yellow fever had returned, but also by his

MORTALITY.



—EACH SICKNESS has its field, emblem
Of man's enormous frailty, whose simple form,
Outrives empires from the race; each moment plays

His little weapon in the narrow sphere
Of sweet domestic comfort, and cuts down
The latest bloom of February life.

An Account of the BAPTISMS AND BURIALS in the United Churches of Christ Church and St. Peter's, by Matthew Whitehead and John Ormrod, Clerks; and Joseph Dolby, Sexton.
Also—An abstract of the Baptisms and Burials of the various Congregations of the City and Suburbs of Philadelphia. From December 25, 1792, to December 25, 1793.

BAPTISMS, { Males, 74 Females, 65	BURIALS, { Males, 128 Females, 170
139	398
Difference of Baptisms and Burials in Christ Church and St. Peter's between this year and last,	
Baptisms decreased 41	Burials increased, 373
Buried under one year, 23	From forty to fifty, 37
From one to three, 31	to sixty, 31
to five, 19	to seventy, 19
to ten, 26	to eighty, 18
to twenty, 42	to ninety, 7
to thirty, 81	to a hundred, 1
to forty, 63	to a hundred and five, 1

The Diseases and Casualties in Christ Church and St. Peter's, this year.

Anthrax, 1	Gravel, 2
Althia, 1	Hiccup Cough, 2
Bilious Fever, 3	Ilives, 3
Cholera, 1	Mortification, 3
Cancer, 2	Nervous Fever, 3
Cholera, 3	Old Age, 3
Consumption, 12	Purging and Vomiting, 3
Dry Gripes, 1	Palley, 7
Dropsy, 9	Small-pox, 16
Dysentery, 44	Suddenly, 4
Erysipelas, 17	Teeth and Worms, 10
Fever, 7	Worms, 6
Flux, 6	Yellow Fever, 214
Great, 2	

St. PAUL'S CHURCH.

Baptisms 143	Decreased 2	Burials 94	Increased 54
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ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES.

St. MARY'S { Baptisms 335 Burials 370	Decreased 218 Increased 4
St. TRINITY { Baptisms 53 Burials 53	Increased 40 Increased 40

BAPTISMS INCREASED or DECREASED.

Swedes, 42	Decreased 10
German Lutherans, 506	Increased 66
Ditto Reformed, 200	Decreased 9
Fifth Presbyterians, 45	Ditto 9
Second Do., 50	Ditto 20
Third Do., 60	Ditto 5
Scotch Do., 6	Decreased 3
The Associate Church, 1	Ditto 6
Moravians, 50	Ditto 30
Methodists, 4	
Jews, or Hebrew Church, 4	

BURIALS INCREASED or DECREASED.	
Swedes, 96	Increased 6
German Lutherans, 802	Ditto 617
Ditto Reformed, 224	Ditto 15
The Friends, 482	Ditto 314
Fifth Presbyterians, 95	Ditto 58
Second Do., 147	Ditto 160
Third Do., 152	Ditto 2
Scotch Do., 31	Ditto 1
The Associate Church, 15	Ditto 1
Moravians, 18	Ditto 1
Society of Free Quakers, 43	Ditto 20
Methodists, 50	Ditto 52
Baptists, 87	Ditto 52
Jews, or Hebrew Church, 4	Ditto 52

BURIALS in the STRANGER'S GROUND.

Whites, 1639	Increased 520
Blacks, 305	Ditto 238

BAPTISMS this Year, 1634	Decreased 131
BURIALS Ditto, 5304	Increased 3929

BURIALS in the GRAVE-YARDS, since the FIRST of AUGUST.

Christ Church and St. Peter's, 229	Roman Catholics—St. Mary's, 278
St. Paul's, 77	Ditto Holy Trinity, 30
Swedes, 79	The Associate Church, 18
German Lutherans, 608	Moravians, 15
Ditto Reformed, 205	Society of Free Quakers, 5
The Friends, 385	Methodists, 72
Fifth Presbyterians, 70	Baptists, 72
Second Do., 129	Kennington, 178
Third Do., 112	Jews or Hebrew Church, 1420
Scotch Do., 18	Stranger's Ground, 5019

HOW many precious souls are fled
To the vast regions of the dead!
Since to this day the changeling sun
Through his life yearly period runs.
We're survivors, but who can say
That through this year, or month, or day,
I shall retain this vital breath,
Thus far, at least, in league with death.
No more fatigue, no more distress,
Nor sin, nor hell shall reach that place;
No groans to mingle with the cry,
Resounding from immortal torments.
That breath is thine, eternal God!
Thine thou to thy last's abode;
It holds its life from thee alone,
On earth, or in the world unknown.
To thee our spirits we resign,
Make them and own them fill as thine;
So shall they live secure from fear,
Though death should blot the rising year.
Thy children, panting to be gone,
May bid the tide of time roll on,
To land them to that happy shore,
Where years and death are known no more.
No more alarms from ghastly foes;
No need to break the long repose,
No midnight shade, no cloistered sun,
But sacred high eternal dawn.
O, long expected year! begin!
Dawn on this world of woe and sin,
So shall they live secure from fear,
Though death should blot the rising year.
To keep in death, and roll with God.

Broadside bill of Mortality (1793).

LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA

inability to treat it effectively. At the end of August Rush discovered Dr. John Mitchell's account of a yellow fever epidemic in Virginia in 1741, in which Mitchell related that the abdominal viscera of the victim were filled with blood, and that a thorough purging of the body's humors was essential for a cure. "An ill-timed scrupulousness about the weakness of the body" was fatal, Mitchell said.

Conscientious physician that he was, Rush resolved not to be overscrupulous about the weakness of the body. Having included mild bleeding and purging among his treatments heretofore, he now determined upon heroic bleeding and purging. For purging, he decided to use Dr. Thomas Young's

BILIOUS YELLOW FEVER.

17

To this letter I wrote the following answer a few hours after it came to hand.

DEAR SIR,

A MALIGNANT fever has lately appeared in our city, originating I believe from some damaged coffee, which putrified on a wharf near Arch-street. This fever was confined for a while to Water-street, between Race and Arch-streets; but I have lately met with it in Second-street, and in Kensington; but whether propagated by contagion, or by the original exhalation, I cannot tell. The disease puts on all the intermediate forms of a mild remittent, and a typhus gravior. I have not seen a fever of so much malignity, so general, since the year 1762.

From, dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

BENJ. RUSH.

August 24th, }
1793.

Letter from Dr. Benjamin Rush to Dr. James Hutchinson, in Rush's *An Account of the Bilious Yellow Fever Philadelphia: T. Dobson, 1799*).

PRIVATE COLLECTION

drastic formula, employed by Young among the vigorous, youthful soldiers of the Continental Army, of ten grains of calomel and ten of jalap. This dose was far stronger than most physicians believed safe; but when Rush's first experiments with it seemed to bring positive results, he increased the dosage of jalap to fifteen grains, prescribing three doses of "ten and fifteen," one every six hours, or until the patient had four or five large evacuations. For bleeding, Rush resolved on a still more heroic program; he thought the human body contained about twice as much blood as it really does, and he urged that four-fifths of the total volume, or twenty pounds, be drawn away. Once Rush had decided upon the cure, no amount of evidence of its disastrous impact could dissuade him from it.⁴⁹

All too many Philadelphia physicians followed Rush into heroic purging and bleeding, but a few did not. Dr. William Currie restricted himself to mild dosages of medicinal barks and restorative liquids. Dr. Edward Stevens, a native of the West Indies, applied a mild "West Indies treatment" to, among other patients, his boyhood friend in the islands Alexander Hamilton, and to Mrs. Hamilton, both of whom recovered from the plague. A number of French doctors in the city, refugees from Santo Domingo or the French Revolution itself, represented a different tradition of medical education from Rush's Edinburgh, a tradition more fully acquainted with tropical fevers. One of the French physicians, Dr. David Nassy of Second Street, was to compile a remarkable record. Between August 28 and October 10 he treated 117 yellow fever victims and lost only nineteen. Of the latter, eleven were patients he saw only on the second to fifth day of the disease, after other physicians had treated them according to Rush's methods. Another of the French, Dr. Jean Devèze, was to be a hero of the quarantine center eventually established by the city, and eventually became recognized as perhaps the world's leading authority on yellow fever.

But Rush was the most prominent physician in the city—certainly after Dr. William Shippen early joined the exodus—and in the narrow, working-class streets where the plague struck hardest, Rush's methods of treatment tended to prevail. The ravages of the plague came to seem inexorable. From the last week of August to the middle of September at least 600 died. By then perhaps half the population had fled. Philadelphia, the federal capital, was a ghost city. Business withered away; not only were there too few merchants, clerks, or workers of any kind, but the external commerce on which almost everything else depended could not continue because other ports refused to receive ships and goods out of Philadelphia, lest they receive the infection as well. Almost all government was suspended, federal, state, and municipal. Persons obliged to walk the streets stayed in the middle to avoid infected houses. Old friends refused to pause to speak to one another. Tales circulated of husbands abandoning wives, parents abandoning children, victims dying forsaken and uncomforted; in confirmation of some of the rumors, many collapsed alone in the streets.

President Washington departed on September 10. He usually went to

Mount Vernon at this time of year, but the absence of his imposing, reassuring presence worsened the demoralization. When Hamilton and Mrs. Hamilton left only after contracting the disease, their prominence did not prevent their being shunned like lepers on their way to Albany. Soon almost all travelers from Philadelphia, sick or well, found themselves similarly ostracized, at least until they endured a quarantine period along the road. Secretary of War Henry Knox thus had to tarry in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, before he could pass through New York on his way home to Boston.

The governor of Pennsylvania, General Mifflin, had fled early, but Mayor Clarkson believed duty bound him to remain. Sixty years old, a transplanted New York aristocrat descended in the paternal line from a provincial governor and in the maternal line from the patroon families, successful in Philadelphia business through his own skills, and a notable amateur mathematician, astronomer, and engineer, Clarkson could count on almost none of the customary apparatus of government to sustain the city through the plague. He governed finally through an extralegal committee reminiscent of the Committee of Safety. This time, however, the group consisted of leaders altogether self-selected: the few assertive men of competence and bravery who remained in the city besides physicians and a handful of clergy.

Very early, to protect their other inmates from the disease, the Pennsylvania Hospital and the Almshouse refused to receive plague victims. The overseers and guardians of the poor—another civic group with a small core of courageous leaders, until they themselves fell to the fever—thereupon took possession of John Bill Ricketts's circus, on the outskirts of town at Twelfth and High Streets where the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society tower now stands. Ricketts, a famous Scots equestrian, had often attracted President Washington to his circus, but before the plague appeared he had gone to New York for the summer. With his building otherwise empty, it became the first depository of the victims of the plague who had nowhere else to go and nobody to care for them, and whom everyone wanted removed as sources of infection. But Ricketts's circus was not distant enough from the populated areas of Philadelphia, and encouraged by the mayor, the guardians found a more remote retreat by taking over, with dubious legal authority, Andrew Hamilton's old country seat, Bush Hill. By mid-September, however, Bush Hill had become a hell-hole of neglected, stinking, filthy victims of the fever wallowing in their own vomit and excrement, occasionally visited by physicians mainly of the Rush persuasion. Then Stephen Girard and Peter Helm, members of Clarkson's committee, took over.

At forty-three, Girard was not yet well known. He was only beginning his rise to the summit of Philadelphia and American finance, and James Hardie's *Philadelphia Directory and Register* listed him simply as "Girard Stephen, grocer, [number] 43, No. Front St." Peter Helm was a Race Street cooper of German extraction and Moravian religion; Washington had employed him occasionally to make barrels for the presidential household. At Bush Hill, Girard took charge of administration, maintenance of the rooms,

and general care of the sick. Helm was superintendent of grounds and out-buildings, with charge over carting and receiving patients, burying the dead, staff accommodations, and sanitary facilities. Both men combined efficiency with tender care of the sick. They transformed Bush Hill from a place of hopelessness to a clean, airy hospital nourishing as much hope as the circumstances and the medicine of the day might permit. Bush Hill benefited especially from the executive talents that were to propel Girard to his fortune. At least as much, however, it benefited because Girard as a transplanted Frenchman knew the French physicians and brought Dr. Devèze to be medical supervisor of Bush Hill. Moving a French doctor into this post past the Rushites required a combination of forcefulness and guile such as perhaps no one in the city other than Girard possessed (Franklin had died three years previously). Most patients were desperately sick before they reached Bush Hill, but Devèze's cleanliness, cool liquids, cool baths, and mild medicines saved many nevertheless.

It remained mostly black carters who carried the sick to Bush Hill. In the early days of panic when Mayor Clarkson had first asked for volunteers to help fight the plague, only two men had stepped forth, the black clergymen Richard Allen and Absalom Jones. Both were pious men who despite their color had once attained a measure of leadership at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church. Both had been driven away from there because black leadership was not wanted. Allen then established Mother Bethel, the founding church of black Methodism, and was to become the first bishop of the African Methodist Church of North America. Jones established the first Episcopal church for blacks in America, St. Thomas's, became a deacon, and was in time ordained the first black Episcopal priest in America. After they had volunteered, Mayor Clarkson used the Free African Society, which Allen and Jones had founded in 1787, as a major agency of relief work. The society ended 1793 in debt £177/9/8 largely because of its expenses for bedding and means of moving the fever victims. Besides working as carters, blacks recruited by the African Society served as nurses throughout the infected areas. Allen and Jones themselves were ubiquitous among the victims. Until sometime in September no blacks were reported as victims, and the whites at least thought blacks immune. When blacks began to fall by the score, few of them ceased to mingle with the sick as long as they retained the strength to help. In return they received white accusations of thievery and other misconduct.

Some physicians thought that rain would alleviate the plague, but drought persisted with only minor interruptions through most of October. So did the fever, despite cooler weather. Some believed the disease grew worse in October—that at least the torments preceding death became more prolonged and painful. How many died altogether is not certain. Mathew Carey, who achieved his first fame as a journalist by quickly publishing and then enlarging over the years his eyewitness account of the epidemic, listed in his book 4044 dead whom he named. His list omits, however, a number of the known dead, and it must surely have missed many of the anonymous poor, black, and

youthful victims. Probably more than 5000 died—about a tenth of the population of Philadelphia.⁵⁰

President Washington worried in October about the session of Congress scheduled to meet in December. Reports reaching him suggested that the plague might not abate even by then. He doubted whether congressmen would go to Philadelphia. Nevertheless, he informed his cabinet members that he would travel to Germantown to meet them there about November 1.

Comptroller of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott had moved his house and office to "Smith's Folly," an eyrie above the Falls of Schuylkill built by Provost William Smith, where Wolcott was one of the few federal officials to continue doing business in the vicinity of the capital. In late October Wolcott still warned Washington that it was dangerous to return, but on October 28 the president set out for Germantown, leaving Martha at Mount Vernon. On November 1 Washington arrived at the comfortable house in Germantown where Attorney-General Edmund Randolph, having preceded him, found quarters for him. The president opened his office for business the next morning.

He had learned that the fever was abating at last. Deaths declined precipitously in mid-October, only to rise to an appalling eighty-two on October 22, but then fell off again until on October 28, the mayor's committee learned, there were only twelve admissions to Bush Hill, only two deaths there, and no burials at all. October 28 began with a light frost. Fugitives began to return to the city.

Against the advice of most of his close associates, President Washington decided to ride into Philadelphia on November 10. It was a Sunday. He came all alone, and this time there was no welcome in the streets. He rode through the city, bowing with typical formality to the few people he met. The air was fresh and cool. He decided that Congress could meet in Philadelphia as planned, and from Germantown he sent out word accordingly. Washington himself would come back to stay by the opening of Congress at the beginning of December.⁵¹

V I I I

Only one newspaper, Andrew Brown's *Federal Gazette*, went on publishing all through the epidemic. Shortages of workers and paper notwithstanding—neither vessels nor carts would bring paper up from the Wilmington mills that usually supplied Brown—the *Federal Gazette* kept up communication among citizens who, afraid even to converse in the streets, were otherwise isolated.

With Brown's columns of local news given over to the plague and the debates among the doctors about its source and treatment, it was possible, however, to regard the suspension of ordinary Philadelphia journalism as a small blessing for which to give thanks in the midst of the city's great tragedy. At least for the duration of the plague, Philadelphians were spared the vitriolic partisan excesses customary among many of the newspapers of the day.

In part such excesses were an unpleasant by-product of the presence of the federal capital. Somewhat surprisingly in light of the rise of the local Federalist party, before Congress and the president arrived in 1790 Philadelphia had four newspapers of Anti-Federalist proclivities and none supporting Washington's Federalist administration. To be sure, the journals were all relatively moderate in their opposition, but they were opposition papers for all that. Eleazar Oswald's *Independent Gazetteer* was the most outspoken of them. The others were Brown's *Federal Gazette* (in spite of its name); John Dunlap's *Pennsylvania Packet*; and a newcomer, the *General Advertiser*, whose proprietor was Benjamin Franklin Bache, Franklin's thirty-one-year-old grandson. Along with the capital there came from New York, however, John Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*. Fenno was a Bostonian who had been a secretary to Maj.-Gen. Artemas Ward during the Revolution and then mastered the newspaper business as an assistant editor of the *Massachusetts Centinel*. He had established his *Gazette* in New York soon after the inauguration of the new government, with apparent support from Alexander Hamilton and other Federalist leaders. The support was tangible enough in the form of public printing jobs that Fenno was able to dispense with the usual clutter of advertisements on the first page. His reciprocal endorsement of administration policies was fulsome to the point of obsequiousness. In New York, this editorial stance embroiled Fenno in a nasty feud with Thomas Greenleaf's *New-York Journal*.⁵²

After moving to High Street in Philadelphia, Fenno was at first more circumspect, going so far as to give columns to letters from Anti-Federalists. Nevertheless when Jefferson and Madison moved toward open opposition over Hamilton's financial programs, and notwithstanding Jefferson's position as secretary of state, the two Virginians felt a need for a more emphatic rival to Fenno's *Gazette* than any of the existing Philadelphia papers. Madison therefore persuaded a Princeton classmate, Philip Freneau, to accept an appointment as "clerk for foreign languages" in Jefferson's State Department, with the understanding that Freneau's real mission would be to create a Jeffersonian newspaper.

Freneau was already well known as a poet, and he had newspaper experience as assistant to the editor of New York's *Daily Advertiser*. In fact the proprietor of the *Daily Advertiser*, Francis Childs, agreed to underwrite Freneau's Philadelphia paper, and it was to be printed by John Swaine, Childs's Philadelphia partner. The resulting *National Gazette* moved with surprising gradualness toward an open attack on Fenno's *Gazette of the United States*, but by early 1792 Freneau was hurling anathemas against both the secretary of the treasury and the paper that championed him. Freneau depicted Hamilton's policies as designed to drive the industrious middle class into peasantry while further enriching the already rich; he called Fenno and other Hamiltonians "Mad dogs! Such is the hue and cry raised [by Fenno] . . . against every man who writes on the measures of government without dipping his pen in molasses to sweeten every line with panegyric."⁵³

Fenno responded in kind and eventually raised the obvious questions about the legitimacy of Freneau's public employment, which forced the *National Gazette* briefly onto the defensive. The feud naturally took on extra heat as the presidential election of 1792 approached. Freneau began to aim cautiously at Washington himself when the president decided to seek reelection, enough to cause the thin-skinned hero to complain to Jefferson that Freneau's paper was a national menace. Mainly, however, Freneau concentrated on Washington's more vulnerable running mate, John Adams, hoping to transfer the vice-presidency to the Jeffersonian governor of New York, George Clinton.

Undaunted by the failure of that effort, Freneau seized eagerly the opportunity to open a new front when the French Revolution caused Hamiltonians and Jeffersonians to fall out over foreign as well as domestic policies. To embrace revolutionary France and all its works almost uncritically, however, as Freneau did, was to consign oneself as a hostage to erratic and arrogant leaders. In early 1793 this meant particularly to put oneself in the hands of France's brash young minister to the United States, Citizen Edmond Genêt. Puffed up by a rousing popular welcome when he landed in Charleston and proceeded overland to Philadelphia, Genêt tried to push American sympathies for fellow republicans farther than they would go, by not only recruiting Americans to do France's fighting as seamen on French privateers and as soldiers raiding British Canada and Spanish Louisiana, but also by setting up French maritime prize courts within the United States. His patent contempt for American sovereignty drew a rebuke from the president, whereupon Genêt used friendly newspapers such as Freneau's to appeal over Washington's head to the people, practically inciting revolution. A foreigner attacking Washington was going much too far. France felt obliged to recall Genêt, while Freneau by endorsing his actions suffered guilt by association.

Freneau's *National Gazette* was already in dangerous waters when the yellow fever arrived to add its perils. Whistling in the dark, Freneau wrote and published attempts at light and humorous verse about the plague:

Priests retreating from their pulpits!—
Some in hot, and some in cold fits
In bad temper
Off they scamper
Leaving us—unhappy culprits!
Doctors raving and disputing,
Death's pale army still recruiting—
What a pothor
One with t'other!
Some a-writing, some a-shooting.⁵⁴

The plague was too grim for humor even of the blackest sort. Freneau's approach failed. On October 11, 1793, he resigned his State Department clerkship, and on October 27 he announced the end of his paper.

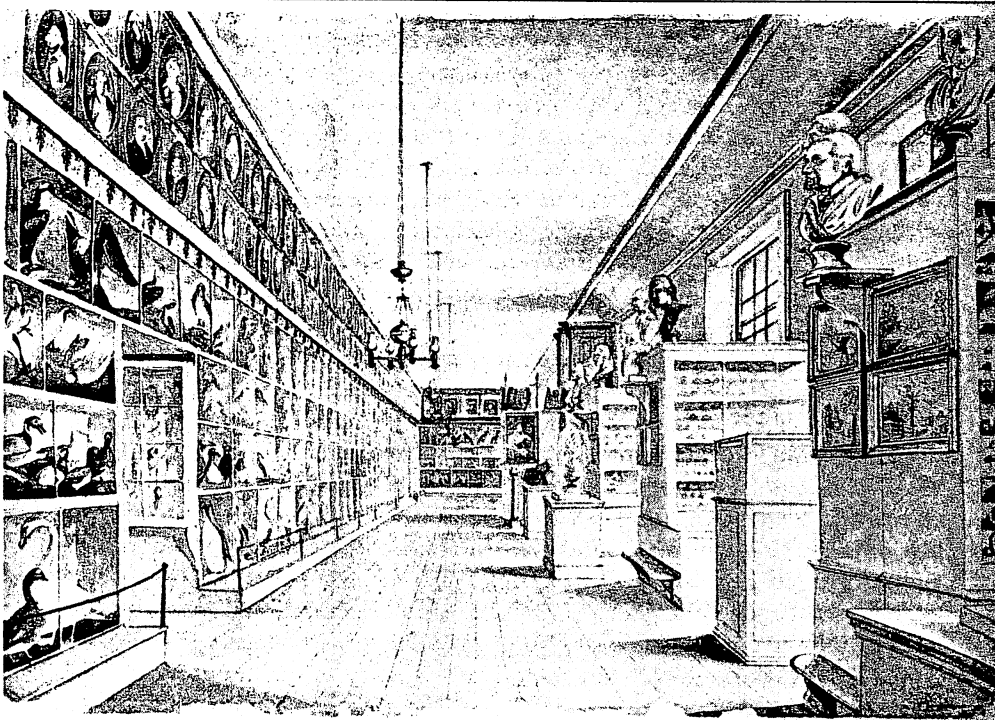
Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* reappeared after the decline of the

plague, and B. F. Bache was soon to reveal a disposition to take Freneau's place in the journalistic jousting. For an interval after the plague, however, those Philadelphians and federal officeholders who found envenomed personal journalism distasteful would continue to enjoy a respite, while those others who found it amusing had to seek diversion elsewhere.

The taverns came back to life, Ricketts's circus returned, and Charles Willson Peale's Museum was an attraction that had never departed—Peale nursed his wife through the fever and survived a brief attack himself. Peale had been well known before the Revolution as a fashionable portrait painter. He became enmeshed in the Revolution for a time as a soldier and a partisan of the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, but he lacked the combative disposition suitable to active politics, and in the 1780s he returned to his painting and to scholarly interests. Many visitors came to his studio, and as a dedicated patriot he decided to make the studio a gallery of portraits of the heroes of the new nation. To this end he added a skylighted building to his house at Third and Lombard Streets. Here in 1784 a collection of mastodon bones assembled by Dr. John Morgan was also on display, while Peale made drawings of them. Some visitors found the bones more interesting than the paintings and urged Peale to develop a museum of similar scientific curiosities. "Cabinets" of such collections had long existed in Europe, and out of them modern museums were beginning to grow. Peale was receptive, and in 1786 he announced through the newspapers the opening of his "Repository for Natural Curiosities."⁵⁵

Peale devoted the remaining forty-one years of his life chiefly to the development of his museum. He arranged specimens of living creatures according to the Linnaean classification and inanimate materials in a similar orderly fashion based on their places of origin. To mount the natural history specimens, Peale taught himself taxidermy—there was no other practitioner of the craft in Philadelphia. He employed his artistic skills to paint backgrounds which along with rocks and foliage created habitat arrangements, an idea he originated. His hope was to teach the public as well as to enlarge the knowledge of scholars. He succeeded well enough that the museum became his main source of income. In 1794 he moved the museum to Philosophical Hall in the State House Yard, where the American Philosophical Society leased to him all but two of its rooms. As part of the arrangement, he became the society's librarian and the curator of its scientific collection. The portrait gallery moved with the rest of Peale's collection but became a depiction of the types of mankind, of various ages, races, and conditions, as well as of patriotic leaders.

The theater was less able to escape politics than Peale had been, in several senses. First, government suppression returned during the Revolution, when the earnest and humorless radical regime of the constitution of 1776 saw to the local enforcement of a congressional resolution of 1774 calling on the provinces to encourage frugality and discourage such extravagances as the theater. In 1784 Lewis Hallam petitioned to have the act repealed, but all he could



The Long Room of Peale's Museum, painting begun by Charles Willson Peale (1741–1827) in 1822. In 1802 Peale was granted the use of the upper floors of the State House for his collections which had been in Philosophical Hall since 1794.

DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS, FOUNDERS SOCIETY PURCHASE, DIRECTOR'S FUND

achieve was permission to present in the Southwark Theatre a *Monody to the Memory of the Chiefs Who Had Fallen in the Cause of American Liberty*. The rise of the Federalists did not bring about repeal of the prohibition until 1789. Then Hallam included Philadelphia on a circuit of port cities through which his American Company toured. When President Washington attended the Southwark for performances of the company, a box was specially fitted out for him, with cushioned seats, red draperies, and the coat-of-arms of the United States. The comedian Thomas Wignell, proprietor of the theater, would welcome the president with ritualistic ceremony, and a military guard would attend the box and the theater doors.⁵⁶

Restored to life, the Philadelphia theater soon became entangled in the same political rivalries that agitated the newspapers. Wignell, hoping for a new and more elegant stage, found backing to begin construction of the Chestnut Street Theatre, on the north side of Chestnut west of Sixth, in 1791. The yellow fever epidemic delayed completion, and the theater opened for

a regular season only on February 17, 1794. Wignell gathered for it a talented company, including Susanna Haswell Rowson, author of the most successful American imitation of Samuel Richardson's moralistic novels, *Charlotte, A Tale of Truth*, actually a tale of seduction and usually known as *Charlotte Temple*. "Old Drury," as the Chestnut Street came to be known, was the most impressive theater built to this time in North America, with three galleries holding 765 persons and a parquet that brought the total capacity to 1165. It boasted French-style lighting, with oil lamps that could be raised or dimmed depending on the scene and mood. But as the 1790s went on Old Drury also became enflamed in noisy demonstrations and counterdemonstrations between Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans, a discouragement to further presidential theater-going or to serious interest in the drama by anyone else.⁵⁷

It was Jay's Treaty of 1794 that rekindled political fires in the streets and the taverns as well as in the theater and the press, enraging Republicans not only because of commercial concessions to Great Britain, but also, and worse, by seeming to make the United States almost a partner of the British against revolutionary France. Bache's paper, now the *Aurora*, leaped into the forefront of partisan journalism with its attacks on the supposed terms of the treaty, whose text the president believed should be kept secret until the completion of Senate consideration. Fenno's *Gazette of the United States* of course promptly sprang to the defense. Eleazar Oswald's *Independent Gazetteer* weighed in with a long and vitriolic series of attacks signed "Franklin." When the Senate at length ratified the treaty on June 24, 1795, Washington decided to release its text, but Bache anticipated him by publishing an abstract in the *Aurora* on June 29 and then offering a pamphlet edition of the whole text two days later. Sen. Stevens T. Mason of Virginia, a Republican, said he had given Bache the text to correct false impressions left by the abstract.

Oswald's paper declared that the Fourth of July should henceforth be a day of mourning, because George III at last had administered a dose of poison to "Mrs. Liberty." On the night of the Fourth a mob carried an effigy of John Jay, depicted as saying to a group of senators, "Come up to my price and I will sell you my country." The mob paraded through the downtown streets and to Kensington, where they burned the effigy and stoned militia who were sent to disperse them.⁵⁸

The street and press wars heightened further with the approach of another presidential election in 1796. Bache emulated Philip Freneau by opening his columns to the French minister for a letter assailing administration policy; the minister, Pierre Adet, a worthy successor to Citizen Genêt, thereby delivered to the public before he transmitted to the secretary of state a threat that "The flag of the [French] Republic will treat the flag of neutrals in the same manner as they shall suffer to be treated by the British."⁵⁹ Bache also republished the forged "Lund Washington Letters," which had been circulating from time to time since 1777 and attempted to discredit Washington by portraying him as a belated convert to American independence. Thus the president himself became increasingly a target of the journalists. He was not seeking reelection,

but his imminent retirement made him appear all the more vulnerable, and the Republicans hoped to strike at his chosen successor, John Adams, through him. So Bache also accused Washington of overdrawing his salary, charged that the "perfidious" president declined to run again not from "a want of ambition or lust of power" but because he knew he could not win, and when John Adams won anyway, printed as a valedictory to Washington a letter from Tom Paine to the president whose climax summarized its message: "As to you, sir, treacherous in private friendship . . . and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide, whether you are an apostate or an imposter; whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any."⁶⁰

From the month of Adams's inauguration, March 1797, the Federalists were represented in the Philadelphia press with equal scurrilousness, thanks to the emergence of William Cobbett's *Porcupine's Gazette*. Cobbett was a British subject and patriot whose prejudices accorded well with those of the most extreme anglophile Federalists. In Philadelphia he had also proven himself the peer of any abusive journalist through a series of pamphlets written under the pen name "Peter Porcupine" and directed against a fellow expatriate whom he loathed, the scientist and political and religious reformer Joseph Priestley. Hamilton and other Federalists had now arranged for Cobbett to enter regularly into the journalistic feuds, with subsidies similar to those earlier provided for John Fenno. The first issue of *Porcupine's Gazette* pounced upon Bache's *Aurora* as a "vehicle of lies and sedition." Bache, Cobbett soon further opined, was a "white-livered, black-hearted thing . . . that public pest and bane of decency."⁶¹

Cobbett benefited from a decided shift in public feeling in favor of the Federalists, when the fears of the francophiles and the threats of Adet about the consequences of Jay's Treaty were both realized in French assaults on American maritime commerce, leading to an undeclared naval war with France in 1798. Patriotic emotions hostile to France and auspicious for the Federalists peaked after President Adams informed Congress on March 5, 1798, of the XYZ Affair, in which the French foreign minister, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, had through intermediaries known as X, Y, and Z informed would-be peacemakers sent by Adams that they could not so much as consult with him without prior payment of a bribe. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney's angry retort "No, no, not a sixpence!" became translated into the Federalists' patriotic slogan "Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute."

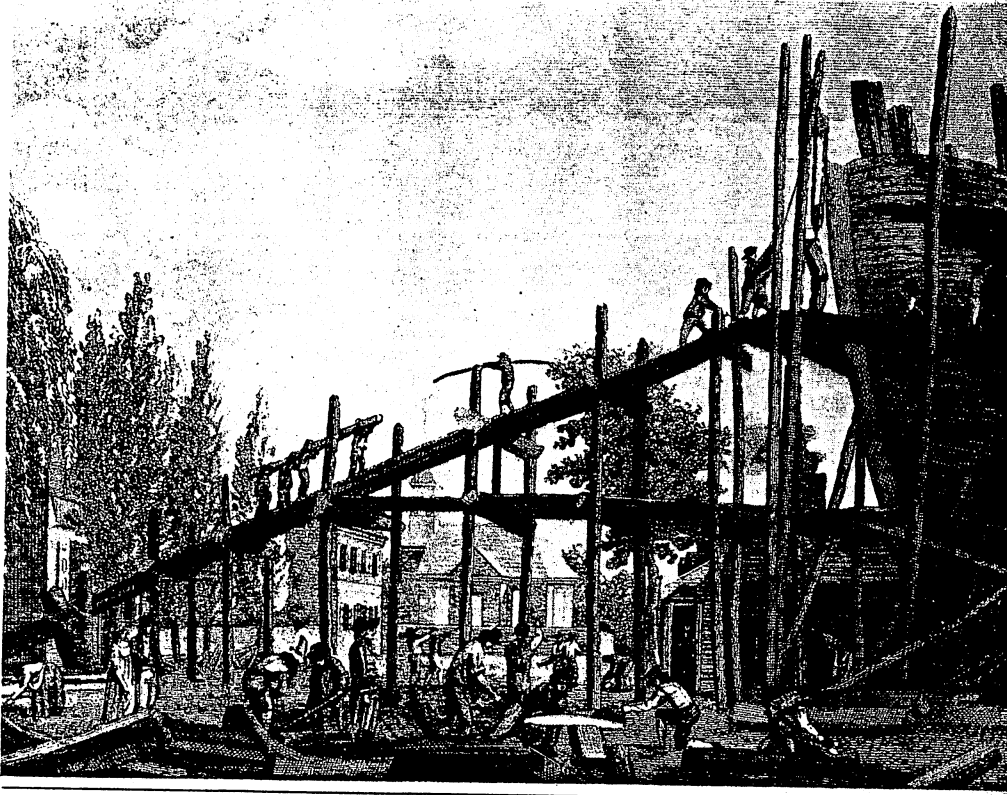
France and Republicanism nevertheless retained some local champions, and the rival theater demonstrations of the two parties along with his own convictions inspired a young actor, Gilbert Fox, to ask Francis Hopkinson's twenty-eight-year-old son Joseph, a Federalist lawyer of some poetic talent, to write a patriotic air appropriate to the times. To accompany the music of "The President's March," Hopkinson wrote "Hail, Columbia." On April 25 Fox introduced the song at the Chestnut Street Theatre. The place was filled



General Washington's Resignation, drawn by John James Barralet (1747–1815) and engraved by Alexander Lawson (1773–1846) for *Philadelphia Magazine and Review* (January 1799). The engraving was based on an allegorical transparency prepared for the "splendid public dinner" given in 1797 by the merchants of Philadelphia for the retiring president.

to capacity; thousands tried unsuccessfully to get in for the occasion. Fox had to encore the song again and again. The audience beat time with its feet, shouted approval at the call "Immortal patriots, rise once more," joined in the choruses, and finally, with the whole house standing for the final chorus, took the anthem out into the streets.⁶²

To face the French, the frigate *United States*, designed like all her sister frigates of the infant American navy by Joshua Humphreys of Philadelphia and built in Philadelphia by Humphreys himself, went to sea under Commodore John Barry. Philadelphia citizens subscribed the funds to build another, somewhat smaller frigate, the *Philadelpha*, which was destined to be captured by Tripolitan pirates and then burned in the harbor of Tripoli by another Philadelphia naval hero, Stephen Decatur, to prevent the pirates' using her.⁶³



Preparation for War to defend Commerce. The Swedish Church Southwark with the building of the Frigate Philadelphia, drawn and engraved by William Birch and Son (1800).

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA

President Adams designated May 8, 1798, as a day of fasting and prayer. The street crowds intoxicated by "Hail, Columbia" preferred riotous disorder. On the eve of the fast day a mob of mostly drunken young men marched on Bache's house. The Republican editor was not at home, and with only women and children inside, the mob began bravely smashing away at doors and windows. Neighbors soon restrained their enthusiasm, but the next evening witnessed a return visit featuring additional shattered windows and a general skirmishing of Federalist and Anti-Federalist mobs. Later in the month a physical attack on Bache in his office produced for the assailant one of the briefest of incarcerations, because Federalist politicians apparently made prompt payment of his fifty-dollar fine.

Once more as in 1793 the crescendo of newspaper excesses was interrupted by the yellow fever. The fever had returned in 1794, 1796, and 1797, though never so virulently as in 1793. On August 17, 1798, it appeared in the city again, and this visit was to prove by far its worst since the great plague of five years before. Once more government and business alike dispersed along with many citizens who could afford it, and Philadelphia again became a ghost city. By October the remaining population was estimated at only 7000. Tent cities sprang up along the Schuylkill, sheltering those who could not afford to flee to more distant refuges. Downtown, again there were few sounds except the creaking of the carts that carried the dying and the dead away. Once more Benjamin Rush took to his heroic rounds, allowing no "ill-timed scrupulousness about the weakness of the body" to deter him from his regimen of purging and bleeding the victims. By the time the plague relented in early November, the number of deaths was estimated at 1292.

This time, however, the journalists' cacophony was not so nearly stilled as in 1793. Hatred of Rush as a Republican helped keep Peter Porcupine's quill scribbling, insisting day after day that the revered doctor was in truth a murderer, whose blood-letting killed nearly all the unfortunates who became his patients. William Cobbett's example may have helped hold John Fenno to the task of spewing forth similar invective, until in early September Fenno announced the suspension of his *Gazette* because Mrs. Fenno had died; then Fenno promptly followed his wife into the grave. Before the month was out their rival Bache was dead as well.⁶⁴

John Ward Fenno resumed his father's paper, and soon he and Cobbett were in full cry after Bache's widow, who took up the *Aurora*. But during the epidemic the political winds shifted. When the city came back to life in November the Federalist mobs and their choruses of "Hail, Columbia" no longer dominated streets, taverns, and theaters. The new mood was represented by a letter in the *Aurora* excoriating John Adams for his flight from the fever—though in fact it was his usual custom to flee the Philadelphia summer, fever or not, to his home in Braintree, Massachusetts. But "An Old Soldier" described the president as "reveling and feasting at Boston and New York while our unhappy city was the prey of disease and death," and those

who survived the plague could hardly restrain themselves from at least a small nod of agreement. There was no hearty welcome when the *Aurora* reported "the triumphal entry of his Serene Highness of Braintree into the city."⁶⁵

The underlying reason for the shift in political sentiment was the war's becoming a fizzle, at least too much so to sustain patriotic frenzies. There were a few sea fights, but for the most part the American navy engaged only in long and uneventful patrols. The French, troubled enough by their European wars, had not bargained for another war with America, and they had soon sent out peace feelers and gradually ceased their raids on American commerce. Such American ship losses as still occurred were mainly at the hands of Caribbean privateers responsible to no government. Meanwhile the Alien and Sedition Acts that the Federalist Congress had passed in June and July to repress Republicanism as akin to treason had boomeranged against their authors; arresting opposition political leaders seemed no way to preserve the traditions of the American Revolution. The Federalist effort to recruit a large army—with only staunch Federalists as officers—backfired similarly, because whatever war there was took place at sea, with no need for a large land force. The Republicans suspected and effectively charged that the real purpose of the army, like the Alien and Sedition Acts, was to put down domestic dissent. The political signposts were pointing toward Thomas Jefferson's victory over John Adams in the "Revolution of 1800."

Another such signpost was the outcome of Benjamin Rush's libel suit against William Cobbett for the accusations of murder during the latest plague. After Cobbett's delaying maneuvers held off a decision until the end of 1799, a jury of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania brought in a verdict assessing \$5000 damages against Cobbett, an unprecedented sum in Pennsylvania. Cobbett's property was promptly seized and sold for \$400. Cobbett fled to New York, where he briefly resumed denunciations of Rush, all other Jeffersonians, and now the people of Pennsylvania in a new paper called the *Rusblight*. In 1800, however, Cobbett returned to England.⁶⁶

IX

The lifeblood of eighteenth-century Philadelphia was always its maritime commerce. When yellow fever was not ravaging the city, the 1790s were a propitious decade for this commerce. In fact a considerable commercial revival from the dislocations of the Revolution had already begun by the time of the Constitutional Convention to lay a foundation for the greater growth of the 1790s.

The glut of British exports to the United States that troubled American manufacturers immediately after the Revolution had fallen off following 1784; some British mercantile houses had overextended credit to America and gone bankrupt. Beginning in 1787 imports from Britain rose again, but this time evidently on a firmer basis of American ability to pay through the acquisition of foreign exchange. American merchants, including those of Philadelphia,

learned to profit from their new ability to trade freely and legally beyond the British Empire.

In direct trade with France, for example, the United States showed a large and consistent favorable balance from 1783 onward. A major ingredient in this balance consisted of tobacco exports, for which Philadelphia's Robert Morris had negotiated a monopoly with the French Farmers-General whereby all American tobacco sold to France had to go through Morris. Goods from Holland, Germany, and even Russia also competed with British products in the Philadelphia market. So did goods from the Baltic countries; Christian Febiger, founder of a notable Philadelphia family, had arrived from Denmark before the war, risen to a brigadier-generalship during the conflict, and afterward represented Scandinavian mercantile houses.

More exotic ports of call soon beckoned to Philadelphia shippers. The ubiquitous Robert Morris was a part owner and prime mover in the 1784 voyage of the *Empress of China* from New York to Java and Canton, the first American ship to trade with the Far East. The *United States*, of Philadelphia, also set out for China in 1784, but she was troubled by scurvy and a drunken first mate and so she changed her destination to Coromandel, the east coast of India, to open American trade with the subcontinent. A transplanted Long Islander who had sailed privateers out of Philadelphia during the war, Capt. Thomas Truxtun, after bringing Franklin home on his ship *London Packet*, had the vessel overhauled in Joshua Humphreys's Philadelphia yard and renamed it *Canton* to enter the new Oriental trade. Sailing in 1786, Truxtun inaugurated Philadelphia's commerce with China.

Old skills in smuggling, cultivated when Britain had tried to bar American colonial trade from the foreign West Indies, were revived by the middle 1780s to help overcome whatever handicaps lay in no longer being part of the British navigation system. The new trade with the Orient soon brought back more Far Eastern products than the American market could consume, and the British Navigation Acts forbade reexport to the British Empire; but the British consul in Philadelphia, Phineas Bond, Jr., reported that Oriental tea was being shipped to the British West Indies hidden by a covering of Indian corn, and that the tea would soon no doubt go from Philadelphia to Britain and Ireland as well.⁶⁷

By 1787 Philadelphia exports appear to have reached their highest level to that time. The volume of the city's trade may have been about half again as large as in the best years before the war. An average of some 45,000 tons of shipping a year had cleared Philadelphia in 1770–1772; by 1789 James Madison estimated Pennsylvania's—mainly Philadelphia's—comparable figure at 72,000 tons.⁶⁸

The 1790s brought yet more accelerated commercial growth. Alexander Hamilton's reorganization of the nation's finances with a strong central bank, a stabilized economy encouraged by the new federal Union, and the funding of national and state debts aided Philadelphia merchants and artisans in their

efforts to increase both domestic and foreign trade. Close on the heels of Hamilton's financial program, furthermore, the wars of the French Revolution brought an increased European demand for American farm produce and a rise in prices for it. At the same time Philadelphia ships, like other American vessels, were neutral carriers and protected from seizure by the belligerents—the periods of British seizures before Jay's Treaty and French seizures late in the decade were brief exceptions—so that they were able to take over much of the world's transoceanic carrying trade.⁶⁹

X

Yet all was not smooth sailing. At first Philadelphia's businessmen almost unanimously favored Hamilton's plans for the Bank of the United States and especially for funding of the national and state debts incurred during the Revolution. Philadelphia had been a center of speculation in government securities, and for speculators who had bought the securities cheaply during the uncertainties of the 1780s, Hamilton's funding program meant that their investments would pay off. But the success of the funding program in turn touched off a new speculative boom in all types of securities and negotiable paper, with prices spiraling upward to inordinate heights until the summer of 1791, when the boom collapsed into a financial panic. According to Jefferson, with the onset of the panic "ships are lying idle at the wharves, buildings are stopped, capital withdrawn from commerce, manufacturing, art, and agriculture." The crisis proved short-lived, but it was followed by another, somewhat more severe panic ten months later.⁷⁰

These two financial crises began to shake the Federalist preponderance in Philadelphia politics. Men whose economic interests suffered began to blame Federalist policies for their miseries. At the same time Philadelphians learned of Hamilton's proposed federal excise tax on distilled liquor, designed to raise money for the payment of the national debt. A tax increasing the price of whiskey touched the pocketbooks and habits of a great many Philadelphians; the whiskey excise provoked the strongest protests against any tax measure since the various hated British duties before the Revolution.

The chief prospect of success for those opposing the Federalists in Philadelphia lay in organizing those citizens who at least since the days of revolutionary fervor had taken little interest in politicians. An emerging Anti-Federalist political organization believed they had to convince large numbers of artisans and unskilled laborers that their interests were involved in the choice of candidates for office. Such an appeal would work only if Philadelphians were convinced that the new party wanted to ensure for every citizen an equal opportunity regardless of his economic status. This idea challenged the assumption of the city's upper class that only the wealthy should govern society. Thus opponents of the Federalists hoped to use a revival of the ideals and goals of the Revolution to form a heterogeneous urban political party that drew support from as many diverse groups as possible. In so doing the emerging Republican party—not to be confused with the very different Re-

publican party of the 1780s—represented itself as a direct antithesis to the exclusive practices of the Federalists.

The Philadelphia elections of 1791 and 1792 revolved around Hamilton's financial policies and their implications for opportunity and equality within the city. The Anti-Federalists organized under the leadership of Dr. James Hutchinson, fellow of the College of Physicians and during the Revolution the surgeon-general of Pennsylvania; John Swanwick, a politically ambitious merchant; and Alexander J. Dallas, who had emigrated from Jamaica in 1783 and quickly risen to prominence in the law. Party labels were not rigid but rather loosely applied during these early campaigns. Federalists still won the elections by wide margins, primarily because Anti-Federalists still lacked the organization of their opponents. The only exception was John Swanwick's victory for an Assembly seat over Federalist William Lewis. Yet the 1792 election was fought intensely enough to produce a turnout of about 30 percent of the eligible voters, an increase of almost 6 percent since 1789.⁷¹

Beginning the next year the issues of the French Revolution accelerated the development of a new two-party system. Republicans saw the French Revolution as an affirmation of the same values as the American Revolution, and they believed Americans should support a sister republic, all the more because France had aided America against the British. Federalists, on the other hand, viewed events in France with disdain. They believed the radicalism into which the French Revolution hastened was a threat to the social structure of the United States. They also feared the effect of European war on America's reviving trade with Great Britain. They strongly opposed any preferential treatment of France under the 1778 Treaty of Alliance.⁷²

To crystallize their support of the French Revolution, the Republicans created pro-French, anti-Federalist "democratic societies," political clubs intended for active campaigning in support of both French and American varieties of republicanism. Dr. Hutchinson and Alexander J. Dallas organized the first Democratic Society in Philadelphia. About 25 percent of this society's members were artisans, 15.9 percent had some relation to manufacturing and maritime interests, and the remainder held a variety of occupations ranging from doctors to innkeepers. As usual, many of the leading opponents of the established upper class were themselves well to do, but ambitious to move closer to the inner circle. The Democratic Society lost a widely respected and even beloved leader when Dr. Hutchinson died early in the yellow fever epidemic of 1793.⁷³

The similar German Republican Society was formed to organize German voters in the city and Philadelphia County. Its leaders included Maj.-Gen. Peter Muhlenberg, a Revolutionary War military hero, and Dr. Michael Leib, who was to discover that political organizing rather than medical practice was his true forte. The German population, until now usually politically inert, had the potential to become a major political force if only its leaders could mobilize it against the Federalists.⁷⁴

During the spring of 1794 the Federalist Congress dealt its own partisan

interests in Philadelphia another blow by approving excise duties on loaf sugar, snuff, carriages, sales of spiritous liquors, and auction sales. The taxes on loaf sugar and snuff were especially galling to Philadelphia manufacturers and artisans. By 1794 twenty-seven snuff and tobacco factories in Philadelphia employed over 400 workers. The city refined about 35,000 pounds of sugar that year. By exploiting Federalist sponsorship of the new duties, Republicans worked to broaden their political base still further.⁷⁵

Nevertheless the Federalists generally hung on to win the series of elections from 1793 to 1799. Yet each election tended to become more hotly contested than the last, and the Republicans achieved some major individual triumphs along the way. In the 1794 congressional election the incumbent Federalist, the prominent conservative merchant Thomas Fitzsimons, was pitted against the Republican merchant John Swanwick. Swanwick won with 51.2 percent of the votes. He carried the day by capitalizing on sentiment against the excise taxes with the help of improved Republican organization, which increased voter participation by another 4 percent over the 1792 congressional election, to 34 percent. In 1796 Swanwick gained reelection despite Federalist successes in municipal and state races. Republicans tended to draw most of their strength from the peripheral wards. This strength spilled over into the 1796 presidential election, when Jefferson carried Philadelphia with 61.1 percent of the votes cast for electors. Yet in legislative elections the Federalists continued to average above 60 percent of the vote.⁷⁶

The Federalists also recaptured the city's congressional seat after the death of Swanwick in 1798. With the aid of the pro-Federalist emotions accompanying the naval war with France, Robert Waln, a wealthy Quaker merchant, won overwhelmingly. The yellow fever epidemic may well have benefited the Federalists by reducing voter participation to 18 percent of the eligibles.⁷⁷

But the Federalists had long been slipping, and the elections of 1800 and 1801 brought the end of their dominance of Philadelphia politics. The close of the war with France in 1800 practically destroyed their opportunity to charge their opponents with lack of patriotism. In the election of 1800 city voters sent Republican William Jones, a wealthy Anglican merchant, to Congress. His margin of victory was only fourteen votes, but Republicans won the seat by achieving a large voter turnout, 50 percent of the eligibles. Most of the increase in participation came in wards that were heavily populated by artisans and unskilled workers. In addition the Republicans captured one of the city's Assembly seats and one place on the city Council.⁷⁸

With Jefferson's election to the presidency, Philadelphia's Federalists could no longer rely on federal patronage or the prestige of having the nation's capital in Philadelphia. The federal government departed as scheduled in 1800. Republicans, on the other hand, looked forward to the election of 1801 as their opportunity to grasp complete control of Philadelphia's elected offices. The results fulfilled Republican optimism. The party elected its entire ticket for the state Senate, the Assembly, and the recently divided Select and

Common Councils. (In 1796 the State Legislature had amended the incorporation act to vest municipal legislative power in a Select Council of twelve persons, chosen for staggered three-year terms, and a Common Council of twenty, elected annually, with the mayor now to be chosen by both Select and Common Councils from among the aldermen.)

With the 1801 results the Republicans controlled the Common Council for the first time in the city's history. They won 53 percent, 52.1 percent, 51.8 percent, and 51.5 percent of the votes for Assembly, Select Council, Common Council, and Senate, respectively. Most of their voting strength still came from the peripheral wards. In fact the election marked the first time that the Republicans carried a majority of the city's wards, winning in nine wards in the Assembly and eight in the other major races. The party also succeeded in turning out 50.4 percent of the eligible voters in an off-year election. The Federalist interest that had dominated Philadelphia since 1785 had passed into a minority position.⁷⁹

X I

Before the Federalists' downfall the undeclared war with France had provided Philadelphia with one last opportunity to cheer the national hero whose fortunes were so closely bound to the city's own eminence as the federal capital. The Federalist efforts to strengthen the army for the war brought the master of Mount Vernon once more from his beloved country seat to the city, to accept a commission as lieutenant-general commanding the army and to establish headquarters in Philadelphia. Returning again just as the yellow fever subsided, on November 10, 1798, General Washington was welcomed by the usual tolling of bells and military guard of honor, the latter uncommonly large this time because of the war spirit. With John Adams occupying the presidential mansion at 190 High Street, the honor guard accompanied Washington to lodgings at the Widow Rosannah White's, 9 North Eighth Street. After he had seen to basic matters of military organization, Washington took advantage of the absence of any immediate military threat to consign active leadership of the army to the inspector-general, Maj.-Gen. Alexander Hamilton. On December 14, 1798, the old commander departed Philadelphia for Mount Vernon.⁸⁰

Exactly one year later, on December 14, 1799, Washington died. The news reached Philadelphia during the night of December 17. The federal government still being in the city, Congress assembled at Sixth and High Streets as scheduled the next morning, but when confirmation of the death arrived during the morning the legislature adjourned. Mayor Robert Wharton requested that the bells of Christ Church be muffled for three days "as a mark of the deep regret with which the citizens of this place view the melancholy news." Congressional chambers, churches, and particularly the pew that Washington had occupied at Christ Church were shrouded in black. A joint committee of Congress drafted memorial resolutions and set December 26 as

a day of formal mourning in the city. Sixteen cannon fired to open the day, and thereafter one of the cannon fired every half hour until an hour before noon, when a procession of military companies and federal and civic leaders formed in Chestnut Street at Sixth to escort a bier representing Washington's

Down Chestnut to Fifth, south on Fifth to Walnut, east on Walnut to



High Street, From the Country Market-place Philadelphia: with the procession in commemoration of the Death of General George Washington, December 26th 1799, drawn and engraved by William Birch and Son (1800).

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Fourth, and north to the Lutheran Church of Zion on the southeast corner of Fourth and Cherry, the largest church auditorium in the city, the procession marched. Bishop William White, long rector of Christ Church and one of the first American bishops who had founded the Protestant Episcopal church, conducted the service. Rep. Henry Lee of Virginia—"Light Horse Harry"—had been chosen by Congress to deliver the oration, because he had

known Washington long and well. "First in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen . . .," Lee said of Washington. "Such was the man for whom our nation mourns."⁸¹

With Washington gone and the capital about to go, the federal era was passing, in its greatness—and in its frivolousness as well. The next winter Anne Willing Bingham contracted a cold during exposure to harsh weather, and like Washington's of December 1799 her cold worsened into a "lung fever" that the medicine of the day could not control. In hopes of halting her rapid decline William Bingham sailed with her for Maderia. But she died on the way, at St. George's in Bermuda. She was thirty-seven years old. Her husband died less than three years later.⁸²

In the federal era Philadelphia had reached the peak of its eminence. In the new century its position as the leading American city would soon be lost. The nineteenth century would greatly alter its economy and society. Philadelphia would give way to New York as the largest and richest American city. After the federal capital moved to Washington, Philadelphia also lost its political preeminence. Even the state capital was gone; in 1799 rural suspicion of the city combined with the desire for a more central location to shift the state government to Lancaster, whence it moved again to Harrisburg in 1812. The end of the eighteenth century in a real sense closed out Philadelphia's colonial epoch. Manufacturing developed, trade became less dependent on Great Britain, and the city's political institutions became more democratic. A new nation had taken root, and Philadelphia had played a leading role in its planting.

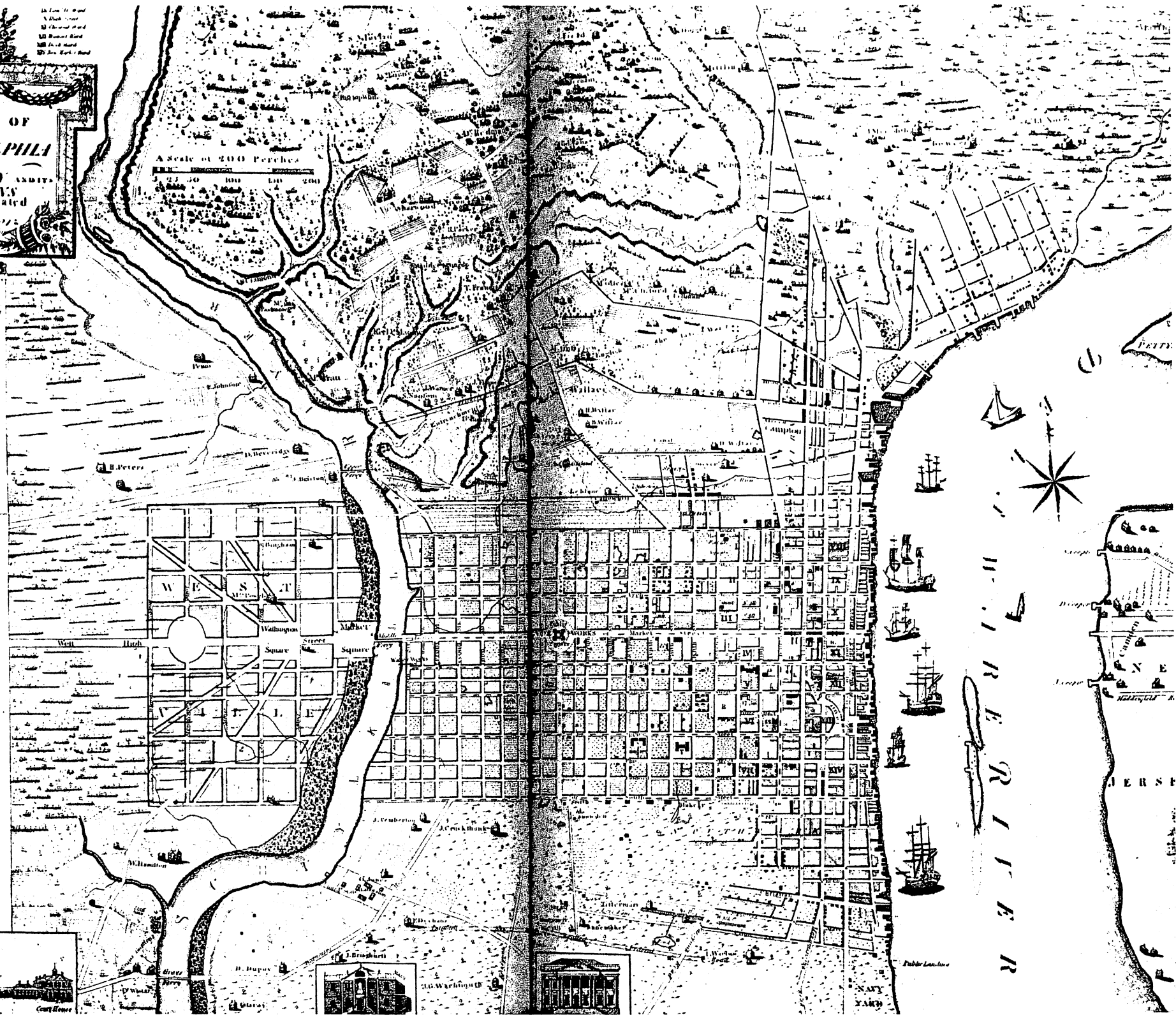
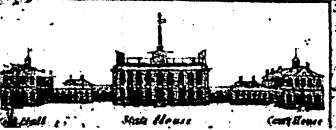
OVERLEAF: Philadelphia [a] New Plan of the City and its Environs, engraved by Joseph T. Scott (act. 1795–1800) after Peter Charles Varlé (act. 1794–c. 1835), first edition 1796, second edition 1802. The extension of the city west of the Schuylkill was proposed by Varlé. His plan of ovals, diagonals, and squares resembles L'Enfant's plan for Washington, D.C.

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TO THE
CITIZENS OF
PHILADELPHIA
THIS NEW
PLAN OF THE CITY AND ITS
ENTRANCES
Is respectfully dedicated
By the
Editor
1792

References

- A Bankers Alley
- B Benner's Alley
- C Schuylkill Alley
- D Walker & Fetter Alley
- E Quarry Street
- F Twister-Platter Alley
- G White Horse Alley
- H Leditia Court
- I Black Horse Alley
- J Lodge Alley
- K University
- L Whalbone Alley
- M York Street
- N Blackberry Alley
- O Carpenters Alley
- P New Theatre
- Q Presidents House
- R Public Square
- S House of Employment
- T Hospital
- U Friends Church
- V German Catholic Ch.
- W Presbyterian Ch.
- X Presbyterian Ch.
- 1 Callowhill Market
- 2 Methodist Ch.
- 3 German Calvinal Ch.
- 4 Moravian Ch.
- 5 Zion Ch.
- 6 St. Michaels Ch.
- 7 Christ Ch. Nursing H.
- 8 Friends Bur. H.
- 9 Baptist Ch.
- 10 Unit. Ch.
- 11 Unit. Ch.
- 12 Market House
- 13 Marys Ch.
- 14 Bank of N. America
- 15 B. of the U. States
- 16 Library
- 17 State House
- 18 Court
- 19 African Ch.
- 20 Bof Pennysl.
- 21 Merch & Coffin H.
- 22 S. Pauls Ch.
- 23 Old A. Catholic Ch.
- 24 Presbyterian Ch.
- 25 S. Peters Ch.
- 26 Newmarket
- 27 Old Theatre
- 28 Swedish Lutheran Ch.
- 29 Augustine Ch. (N. 4th St.)



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