PHILADELPHIA AND THE SOUTHERN ELITE: CLASS, KINSHIP, AND CULTURE IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

BY

DANIEL KILBRIDE

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1997
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In seeing this dissertation to completion I have accumulated a host of debts and obligation it is now my privilege to acknowledge. In Philadelphia I must thank the staff of the American Philosophical Society library for patiently walking out box after box of Society archives and miscellaneous manuscripts. In particular I must thank Beth Carroll-Horrocks and Rita Dockery in the manuscript room. Roy Goodman in the Library’s reference room provided invaluable assistance in tracking down secondary material and biographical information. Roy is also a matchless authority on college football nicknames. From the Society’s historian, Whitfield Bell, Jr., I received encouragement, suggestions, and great leads. At the Library Company of Philadelphia, Jim Green and Phil Lapansky deserve special thanks for the suggestions and support.

Most of the research for this study took place in southern archives where the region’s traditions of hospitality still live on. The staff of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History provided cheerful assistance in my first stages of manuscript research. The staffs of the Filson Club Historical Library in Louisville and the Special Collections room at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond were also accommodating. Special thanks go out to the men and women at the three repositories at which the bulk of my research was conducted: the Special Collections Library at Duke University, the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and the Virginia Historical Society. Thanks also to those in the University
of Florida libraries, particularly in the interlibrary loan and microfilm departments. Their assistance reduced both the time and expense needed to finish this project.

Several individuals dedicated their time to reading some or all of this manuscript and I have benefited from their comments and criticism. Jeffrey Adler and Thomas Gallant read the entire manuscript and offered generous suggestions. John Seelye of the Department of English at the University of Florida also dedicated much of his valuable time to reading the manuscript. Chris Olsen and Mark Greenberg provided computer support and formatting advice that saved me considerable time and misery. Every graduate student in history at the University of Florida for the past five years or so owes much to Betty Corwine, the department’s graduate secretary for most of my tenure at Florida. Betty cut enough red tape to keep me bound for a long time. Without her the administration would surely have tracked me down by now. I am happy to thank my former housemates Mark and Gomez, and the other members of my cohort--Dutch, Grandad, Brains--for their friendship.

At St. Joseph’s University and at the University of Florida I contracted intellectual debts that can never be repaid. Randall M. Miller at St. Joseph’s got me interested in history as a field of study, and his teaching enthusiasm helped convince me to pursue graduate study. At the University of Florida, Darrett Rutman almost convinced me that history is a social science and not one of the humanities. He inculcated in me a rigor and sense of self-criticism without which I could not have written this study. I am happy also to acknowledge the help of the late Anita Rutman who read several of my graduate essays. She taught me the absolute importance of clarity and brevity in my writing; I
shall always treasure her memory. It has been my privilege to work with Ronald P. Formisano, who taught me most of what I know about teaching and a great deal of what it means to be a historian. He read and critiqued several drafts of each chapter. My work is much better for his suggestions. All the good things I have learned about research and writing came from Bertram Wyatt-Brown. In every stage of my graduate career he has been a constant source of encouragement and direction. His well-known generosity, as well as his talent and passion for history, will inspire me throughout my career. That this dissertation has met his exacting standards is its own reward.

The Department of History at the University of Florida provided numerous teaching and research fellowships to support my research. The department also provided a Milbauer Fellowship that allowed me to do a full year of research and travel. The College of Arts and Sciences awarded me a generous dissertation fellowship. Mellon fellowships from the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Virginia Historical Society provided funds for research in their archives. I am happy finally to acknowledge the hospitality of the Philadelphia Center for Early American Studies in Philadelphia. At the invitation of Richard Dunn I spent 1994-1995 at the Center as a research fellow. The stimulating intellectual atmosphere is Richard’s doing, as anyone familiar with the Center well knows. I also owe thanks to Billy Smith and the assorted fellows, faculty and speakers in Philadelphia who made that year of research and writing a pleasure.

My most profound thanks go to my family. George and Kathy Markwalter, my in-laws, provided infectious good cheer plus a roof and a warm bed during my research in North Carolina. My wife Heather has endured most of this project. I hereby apologize
for the misery this study has occasionally brought to our relationship. It is her love and friendship that helped me see it to completion. Our daughter Lauren in no way contributed to this study and at times actively impeded it. Nevertheless, the responsibilities of fatherhood have served to admonish me to finish and abandon studenthood. No one will be happier that this long project is over than my parents and grandparents. No more will I have to hear the plaintive cry “are you still in school?” To gramps, grams, mom, and dad: I thank you and I love you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>TRAVELERS' TALES</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SOCIAL LIFE IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC: THE “CAROLINA ROW” AND ITS CIRCLE</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SOCIAL LIFE AND CULTURE, 1830-1850: SIDNEY GEORGE FISHER'S CIRCLE</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FEMALE ACADEMIES AND THE TRANSMISSION OF CLASS IDENTITY</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>THE “REPUBLIC OF MEDICINE”</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SCIENCE AND SOCIABILITY: THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, 1784-1841</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ARISTOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN CIVIL WAR-ERA PHILADELPHIA</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## REFERENCES                                             | 415 |

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH                                   | 447 |
Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

PHILADELPHIA AND THE SOUTHERN ELITE: CLASS, KINSHIP, AND CULTURE IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA

By

Daniel Kilbride

May 1997

Chairman: Bertram Wyatt-Brown
Major Department: History

In the sixty years before the Civil War, planter-class southerners had an especially close relationship with their privileged counterparts in the city of Philadelphia. Together they maintained an upper-class identity based upon shared manners and habits, devotion to conservatism, and a distaste for democracy and middle-class values of thrift, industry, piety, and sobriety.

Southerners blended in effortlessly with Philadelphia high society. In the early Republic, the nexus of North/South connections in Philadelphia were the homes on Spruce Street known collectively as the Carolina Row. No single household dominated social life in the Jacksonian period, but southerners continued to seek and find hospitality in Philadelphia’s fashionable homes. Throughout the period, Philadelphians discerned
distinctive southern characteristics in their guests, but the consciousness of sectional differences very rarely engendered hostility. Instead, northerners and southerners viewed regional traits as curiosities—as variations on a common genteel theme, as it were.

Young women learned the fundamentals of gentility in Philadelphia boarding schools while their brothers trained to be professional gentlemen in the city’s two major medical schools. Though their experiences in and out of the classroom varied greatly due to the different standards that governed male and female conduct, both sexes inculcated standards of behavior that would serve them equally well in London, New York, or Savannah. Through its librarian, John Vaughan, the American Philosophical tied southern men of mind to Philadelphia. The Society’s devotion to an antiquated definition of scientific endeavor that identified intellectual engagement with gentlemanly leisure endeared it to American conservatives. It also rendered it nearly irrelevant to modern research that was becoming more merit-driven and specialized in the 1840s and 1850s.

These relationships were strained but not broken by the tensions of the sectional crisis and Civil War. Many Philadelphia gentlefolk maintained their ties to the South. They led a secessionist movement that remained publicly pro-southern during the war. As opinion solidified behind the war effort and emancipation, the elite divided, with Confederate sympathizers losing what respect they still commanded from the lower orders. Toward the end of the conflict a new upper class, integrating some old families
with others with more recent fortunes, emerged around a new institutional base—the Union League, devoted to the northern cause, class inclusion, and middle-class values.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

When Spruce Street between Ninth and Tenth Streets in Philadelphia, adjacent to Pennsylvania Hospital, was known as "Carolina Row" in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, it was lined by spacious, elegant townhouses of Federal-style red brick. Those buildings were replaced by modern condominiums in the 1970s, though many of the homes in the neighborhood surrounding Independence Hall have been preserved since the eighteenth century. The same combination of continuity and change marks the large homes around Washington Square, where Madame Sigoigne held a French school for genteel young ladies. The school has gone but the buildings remain: some as homes, businesses, clubs, or foundations. Similarly, the character of Chestnut Street has changed. Once one of the nation's most fashionable thoroughfares, it remains a shopping district today. "Urban renewal" programs undertaken during the administration of Frank Rizzo hardly returned the promenade to its original splendor, however. Most of its shops peddle cheap clothing, fast food, and music. The descendants of the fashionable stores that once lined its sidewalks can now be found a block south on Walnut Street. On the other hand, some aspects of Philadelphia remain from the antebellum era. Philosophical Hall of the American Philosophical Society, where the well-connected bachelor John Vaughan lived from 1822-1841, still stands next to Independence Hall.
The University of Pennsylvania Medical School has moved across the Schuylkill but remains one of the nation's premiere institutions. The Wistar Party and the Philadelphia Club both survive to give succor to upper-crust Philadelphians and their friends. Still, the privileged Americans--Philadelphians and their planter-class friends and relations--who comprise the focus of this study would hardly recognize the city of today as the ancestor of the congenial, conservative, almost southern city of the first half of the nineteenth century.

In fact, one contention of this study is that Philadelphia, while remaining relatively traditional and prosouthernn, was caught in the sectional, democratizing, egalitarian trends of the post-Revolutionary era. Whereas these old families had defined the culture of colonial America, by the turn of the century they were becoming a subculture of a developing middle-class culture. This declension made them more, not less, cohesive and more, not less, conservative, I argue. An overemphasis on the origins of sectional strife and regional identity in mid-nineteenth century America has obscured a very significant trend: the construction of a national leisure class, even as sectional politics grew ever more antagonistic.

Perhaps more than any other city, Philadelphia, the home of an old, conservative, and well-connected colonial gentry, served the southern upper class as a cultural magnet. In addition, the early Republican city aspired to being the social and intellectual heart of the new nation--the "Athens of America," in Gilbert Stuart's grand characterization. These bluebloods helped to construct a national upper class identity distinguished by devotion to class, family, and national honor, the emulation of European standards of
refinement, the exclusion of social inferiors, and to a deeply antidemocratic political ideology. The upper crust established this identity within a popular and political culture that increasingly derided elite claims to natural leadership. The upper strata in Philadelphia and elsewhere could not insulate themselves from changes in politics and the economy; they still pined for the old ways. Hence they welcomed members of the southern planter class as fellow victims of a new and vulgar democratic order. Wealthy southerners had more successfully cleaved to aristocratic lifestyles. Their riches were based on land and agriculture, the traditional foundations of aristocratic power. They retained a political culture steeped in patron-client relations and they knew how to pursue leisure and sensual pleasures in socially acceptable ways. Philadelphia ladies and gentlemen saw in their southern friends and family the soul of their own former greatness.¹

Two themes are evident in this study of Philadelphia and its influence on southern life--the erosion of the power of the colonial ruling class during the "age of egalitarianism" and the development of sectional identities and, eventually, sectional antagonism. The growing prominence of the northern middle class gradually reduced the power of a national ruling class. The heirs of the colonial aristocracy had to accept a reduced role in the political and even economic life of the early Republic. Yet historians too readily dismiss the significance of an almost European element in urban America's

social structure. Even the most recent and celebrated work on this topic, Richard Bushman's *Refinement of America*, is a study of the adaptation of genteel norms by ordinary Americans rather than the sources of those standards. In truth, American gentlemen and ladies--terms with precise meaning then--did not relinquish their place willingly, nor did they passively accept the middle class' appropriation of gentility. Even if the colonial ruling class had ceased to function as a governing elite by the early decades of the century, its members had not ceased to exercise considerable social influence. They continued to emulate English and continental fashions, values, and interests while doing their part to shape a distinctive American voice. They vacationed together at Newport and Saratoga Springs, married within their own select group, guarded entry to their refined circle, and deplored the same popularizing trends. If they could no longer function as a ruling elite, that is, wealthy and conservative Americans persisted as a national upper class throughout the nineteenth century.\(^2\)

To be sure, the upper crust faced serious obstacles in their efforts to withstand the "assault on aristocracy" and to repel the invasions of outsiders seeking social recognition. Besides widespread skepticism as to the merits of the rule of an aristocracy, natural or otherwise, nationally-oriented elites had to contend with the mounting significance of sectional identity and, eventually, outright hostility between North and South.

---

Throughout most of the antebellum era, however, the mental boundaries of wellborn men and women followed not Mason and Dixon's line but the peaks of the Appalachians—not North and South, but East and West. Perhaps it is more proper to suggest that American aristocrats maintained an elite urban culture that spanned not only the seaboard cities of the Atlantic and Gulf coasts but, to a lesser extent, smaller and more provincial centers of inland enlightenment such as Lexington and Natchez. Yet even this urban community, united by bonds of common intellect, taste, kinship, and friendship, withered in the sectional hothouse of the 1850s. Even then the bonds of class were not easily broken. Conservative planters with longstanding ties to the seaboard cities spoke eloquently against rash action in the southern states, even South Carolina, during the secession winter. Their caution emerged at least in part from a conviction that, as Alabama cooperationist Robert Jemison charged, the crisis had been precipitated by the "restless, rash, [and] reckless" action of popular agitators like William Lowndes Yancey and Robert Barnwell Rhett. They were men of means perhaps but, he concluded, hardly gentlemen, and certainly not the sort to provide principled statesmanship in the hour of need.

Many--by no means all--southern gentlemen of moderate temperament and immoderate fortunes were reluctant to see the passing of the union they had served and that had served them so well. In earlier years, these nabobs had been drawn to Whiggery for its cosmopolitanism and market orientation. In the late 1850s they lamented the rise of fire-eating populists of parochial vision and demagogic methods. Few of these cosmopolitan planters had anything but contempt for the Republican party and many, like longtime southern nationalist James Henry Hammond, yearned for a cross-sectional
alliance of conservatives that would stamp out radicalism of every sort and return the republic to the days before "[t]he role of the elite within politics had been irrevocably altered." They pined for a time when the poor and middling deferred in matters political to their betters, those who represented the learned, wise, and talented of the community. Though for the most part silenced (like Hammond) by the overwhelming sentiment for white democracy for the past four decades, conservative men of affairs came forward in the crisis. They saw the events of 1860-61 as irrefutable proof that, for the republic to be saved, the mass of men North and South stood in need of their wise counsel. Such sentiments declined into irrelevance once hostilities actually began. All but a few patricians accepted the verdict of their sections and fought loyally for their respective sides, though there were some notable exceptions, particularly in Philadelphia.\(^3\)

When elites looked for the soul of fashionable life they looked to William Penn's city on the Delaware. Eclipsed commercially by New York in the early antebellum decades, Philadelphia steadily lost social ground as the century progressed. Yet the city's early advantages enabled it to retain its claim to social preeminence until after the Civil War. By the end of the Revolution, Philadelphia had emerged as the greatest American

city, strategically located at the confluence of North and South, the home of the American Philosophical Society, the finest medical schools, a well-established mercantile and financial community, and an enlightened foreign exile and diplomatic presence.

Philadelphia in the 1790s became almost comparable to London and Paris as a center of national politics, culture, and society, the standard of cultivation for the young republic.  

Save for the loss of the capital to Washington, the city maintained its cultural and social advantages into the late antebellum era. Its museums, schools, public spaces, theaters, and grand entertainments remained unparalleled by any city in the new world. In one important respect, however, the city on the Delaware saw its primacy challenged and overcome. City boosters might praise her as "first in the arts, and second to none in whatever can contribute to the grandeur, respectability, and comfort of a city," by the early nineteenth century Philadelphia could no longer claim to be the nation's commercial capital. Trade remained busy; the docks received shipments of every sort of goods from New England, Brazil, Germany, Portugal, and China, and other ports. In 1825 Philadelphia's trade with Latin America surpassed that of any other American entrepot. Still, the city's significance waned as other commercial centers rose up. "[T]he city might have done better," one student of North American trade has observed, "had she not been so relaxed and comfortable. Philadelphia's easy-going southern overtones were in marked contrast to the hurly-burly, the raucous bustle of New York." Even had Pennsylvanians

---

been willing to forgo their relaxed ways for a more enterprising ethic, however, the city to the North simply enjoyed too many natural advantages—and one crucial manmade benefit—for Philadelphia to maintain its place in domestic and international commerce.\footnote{Commodore John Barron in the American Daily Advertiser, May 28, 1825, quoted in Nicholas B. Wainwright, "The Age of Nicholas Biddle, 1825-1841," in Weigley, ed., Philadelphia, 261 (first quotation), 262-263 (second). On changes in Philadelphia's trade in the Revolutionary and early Republican decades see Thomas M. Doerflinger, A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Pennsylvania (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).}

Philadelphia's relative decline vis-a-vis New York was unforseen by most observers. Before the War of 1812, the southern city of Baltimore seemed a far more serious threat than the city on the Hudson. Farmers and merchants in the breadbaskets of central Pennsylvania and Maryland, and even so far as New York, found it far easier to float grains and produce down the Susquehanna than to make the long, slow overland journey to Philadelphia. Even with such stiff competition, at the height of its maritime power in the first decade of the century, Philadelphia docked nearly four thousand ships per year. This fever of activity came to a halt with Jefferson's embargo of 1808-1810, after which trade revived, but war with Britain two years later arrested the brief awakening. The port never recovered from this double blow.

As if competition from Baltimore was not enough, New York surpassed Philadelphia as a trade center. Unlike the Delaware, blocked up with ice sometimes five feet thick for up to six weeks in the winter, New York's ocean port was open year-round. Ships could sail directly into its harbor, whereas Philadelphia required vessels to make a troublesome hundred-mile trek up the Delaware from the sea. With peace in Europe,
British textilers chose to dump their wares at New York to fetch "whatever [price] they would bring," and British goods continued to pour through the wharves on the East River. In 1817, New York set up the Black Ball Line, the first regular packet between America and England, establishing steady, year-long commerce with Europe. Finally, the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 cemented New York's dominance of the southern and western trade. As Table 1-1 illustrates, Philadelphia at the century's quarter mark ranked last among the four largest Atlantic seaboard cities in the tonnage registered at their ports. In the year before the Erie Canal opened, New York still out paced her southern rival in foreign commerce. Over three times the value of goods entered New York harbor as sailed up the Delaware, and over double the amount sailed out. In a city whose self-image and well-being rested on its maritime trade, these figures were indeed reasons for dismay.\(^6\)

Merchants and gentlemen were, of course, aware of these changes. Enterprising Philadelphians did their best to change the course of their town's commercial fortunes. The city's mercantile elite, inclined to favor internal improvements and hence naturally disposed to Whiggery in politics, proposed various measures to promote and add to their city's advantages. The Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Internal Improvements

---

counted as members many of the most respectable gentlemen of the community. It promoted a system of canals designed to link Philadelphia with Lake Erie. But the Society struck a defeatist note from the start. They resolved not to "regain what is lost" from the success of the Erie Canal, but to "retain what is left." Like other commercially minded Americans, Pennsylvanians took part enthusiastically in the canal and turnpike fever of the "market revolution." The Schuylkill Canal, running from west Philadelphia to Reading with a length of 108 miles, boasted a series of locks, pools, dams, and a long tunnel. In 1829 the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal, linking the respective bays, was finished. To promote its use, architect William Strickland that year designed a breakwater at the entrance to Delaware Bay as a shelter from the storms and ice that had claimed 193 ships in the previous twenty years. Unfortunately, several unusually severe winters followed these improvements, choking the river with ice and underscoring New York's advantages over her southern rival. Philadelphians promptly financed an icebreaker, which was clearing a path through the frozen river by 1838.\(^7\)

Most of these improvements were designed to enhance the city's access to the heartland, to the grain of the West, not to the tobacco, cotton, and rice of the South.

Philadelphia did establish three packet lines to and from Liverpool by 1849, but a British traveler on one ship found the journey to Philadelphia "much longer and tedious" than the voyage to the Empire City. Besides, New York offered unparalleled convenience: fifty-two packets traversed the seas between its docks and England by 1845. Philadelphia

continued to carry on a brisk trade in the South's agriculture, of course; in the 1840s shippers added lines between Richmond, Norfolk, and Charleston. These operations, typically, opened with much fanfare and great hopes but just as typically failed to measure up to inflated expectations. The Philadelphia and Atlantic Steam Navigation Company, for example, plied the Charleston route beginning in 1848 but failed in 1852. Despite their best efforts, Philadelphia's mercantile community could not crack New York's shipping monopoly.  

While the goods of southern fields increasingly passed through New York's wharves, shrewd Pennsylvanians capitalized on one crucial advantage Philadelphia held over her Atlantic rival. Located on the fall line, the Delaware river city was ideally situated to join the industrial revolution as a manufacturing center. Mills and manufactures materialized seemingly overnight along the hundreds of creeks and streams that fed the Schuylkill and Delaware. And the city's frantic efforts to foster trade with the West paid an unexpected dividend when entrepreneurs discovered the industrial potential of anthracite—a mineral plentiful on the hills of the upper Schuylkill. In addition to these developments, the embargo of 1808, so disastrous for Philadelphia's merchants, promoted the development of native manufacturing—both as a substitute for European goods and, as hitherto skeptical republicans discerned, to promote American independence and industry from the old world.

If Philadelphia's share of southern commerce suffered, planters came to look to

---

the city for their manufactured goods—goods that, outside of tariff-inflated British products—could not be found in New York. Philadelphia exported millions of pairs of shoes to the slave states, both of the fancy type for the feet of planters and the plainer, more sturdy variety for the region's enslaved African labor force. A highly mechanized cotton industry refined the South's textiles into finished goods. On a less mundane level, southerners, with other wealthy Americans, looked to Philadelphia as the nation's great marketplace of luxury items. Robert Wood's ironworking company, renowned for the "adornment of the dwelling-places, breathing-places, and last resting-places" of his wealthy clients, enjoyed a brisk trade with planters, especially the very wealthy with secondary residences in the region's cities. His fancy gates and bars adorned residences from Richmond to New Orleans. Expensive lighting fixtures, including chandeliers and ornate lamps, found their way into plantation dining rooms and parlors. Of course, Philadelphia for most of the antebellum era remained the hub of the American publishing world. Mathew Carey, advocate of internal improvements and high tariffs, established Philadelphia's dominance in the southern and western markets through the talents of his traveling agents, especially the indefatigable Parson Weems. Besides its large publishing houses, the city was a center of magazine production in the United States. Genteel Americans, as well as those with genteel aspirations, might subscribe to one or more of its conservative journals and newspapers: The Port Folio, edited for a time by Joseph Dennie, Zachariah Poulson's eponymous Advertiser; and, later on, Robert Walsh's American Quarterly Review and the phenomenally successful Godey's and Graham's
magazines.\(^9\)

Cast ironwork, fancy lighting, and fashions, like books and literary magazines, appealed to the South's cultivated class. Despite Philadelphia's lucrative trade with the South in manufactured items, merchants still pined for the days when southern staples sailed from the city's port. To be sure, southern traders continued to shop and seek credit in Philadelphia. John Huston Bills, a planter and merchant of Tennessee, made frequent visits to the Delaware in the 1840s. In 1844 he was in the city on his way to Bethlehem, where he was to enroll his daughter Mary Caroline at the Moravian academy there. After returning from Bethlehem to Philadelphia he "[g]ot to work in earnest buying goods" for himself and his partners. Like most visiting buyers, Bills mixed pleasure with business in the big city. During one trip in July he found "Phila. dull, many of my friends absent."

Nevertheless, Bills managed to make his essential purchases and invested his surplus cash at city banks. Such occasional visits did not satisfy Philadelphia shippers and lenders, who longed to win back the bulk of the southern trade. "Philadelphia now enjoys a

---

lucrative trade with the West," complained one commission report, "but she has not as yet
turned her attention as she should to the South, while New York by her splendid steam
ships has been for a long time monopolizing nearly the whole of this trade." A railroad
linking Richmond or Norfolk directly to Philadelphia, they reasoned, would lure southern
customers away from uncomfortable, slow steamships--from Broadway to Chestnut
Street. This innovation "would afford the manufacturers and merchants of Philadelphia
an opportunity for displaying their wares to the Southern merchants before they could be
brought in contact the manufacturers and merchants of New York, and the fault would
then be their own if they did not secure the larger share of the Southern trade." One trade
book, aimed exclusively at the slave states and southern Illinois and Indiana, sought "to
call the attention of the Southern Trade to Philadelphia, as a great unrivaled market for
the manufacture, sale and distribution of goods, . . . in every way entitled to the entire
confidence of correspondent or commercial purchasers." Though Philadelphia continued
to welcome consumers from the South--tourists, wholesalers, planters, and merchants--
hers leading commercial men had ceased to base their fortunes on southern commerce. In
a reversal of fortune that would have shocked the city's colonial and Revolutionary
mercantile community, the antebellum generation were satisfied to steal the crumbs from
New York's southern feast.¹⁰

¹⁰John Huston Bills Diary, March 15, 1844, July 11, 1845, Southern Historical
Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; Inland Transportation
Committee, Report of the Board of Trade, in Relation to the Delaware Rail Road, and its
Connection with the Commercial Interests of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Inland
Transportation Committee, 1856), 6-7; Butler's Southern Trade Directory and Merchants'
Despite the Empire city's domination of southern commerce, Philadelphia's well-being did owe much to its trade below the Mason and Dixon Line. Philadelphia merchants and southern sympathizers made this point to some effect during the secession crisis, when the commercial community exploited widespread conservative sentiment in arguing that, as the city's economic interests lay southward, so should its political loyalties. Still, wealthy, socially prominent planters generally did not make the long, costly journey to Philadelphia to further their commercial pursuits. The social elite lived for amusement and enlightenment, not industry. In his study The Urban Establishment, Frederick Cople Jaher shows how elites "made ascriptive considerations like birth and kinship overshadow the achievement motive that inspired their family-founding" in the first place, generating "a reordering of priorities from individual to group, from innovation to tradition, and from mobility to inheritance."\(^{11}\)

William Penn's city appealed to the leisure class because it had some claim to being the most refined of all American cities. "Philadelphia," observed Englishman Alexander Mackay in 1846, "is the best counterpart which America affords of the social refinements of Europe." The city was also a congenial spot for slaveowners to visit, more southern in tone and pace than bustling New York and bourgeois Boston. As Stuart Blumin observes, "Arthur Tappan and Nathan Trotter (a Philadelphia merchant/reformer) were by no means middling men, but in their values, their behavior, and perhaps in their network of associations, they may have confused somewhat the otherwise clear boundary

between the . . . upper and middle classes." Despite his wealth, Tappan had no desire to be counted among the 400. Philadelphia's high society took some pains to avoid such "confusion." As Charles Godfrey Leland remembered of Jacksonian Philadelphia, "very trifling points of difference, not perceptible to an outsider, made the whole difference between the exclusive and the excluded." Leland, an embittered observer, considerably exaggerated the cleavages dividing the city's society. Still, the social elite certainly exercised considerable, even ridiculous, snobbery in filling its parlors. Even with such selectivity, the city's hostesses welcomed hordes of "Draytons, Hugers, Middletons, and Izards . . . Carters, Tuckers, Pages, [and] Riveses"--the cream of the South's first families. Sophistication, wealth, and family, not section, determined who lived within the elite's charmed circle, at least on the Delaware.\(^{12}\)

There is more than a little irony in Philadelphia's ties to the slave South. While its upper crust was staunchly conservative, other elements in the city--particularly Quakers--made it a hotbed of antiabolition sentiment. The American Anti-Slavery Society was founded there in 1833. The Quaker minority was outspoken beyond its numbers in their opposition to the peculiar institution. Nevertheless, most Philadelphians--like most northerners--eschewed antislavery radicalism. The 1830s witnessed frequent attacks against free blacks in the city by Irish gangs. Occasional riots left houses leveled and

blacks killed or beaten by mobs. In 1838, a mob gathered outside the newly opened Pennsylvania Hall where the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women had assembled. Inflamed by the sight of white women walking arm-in-arm with black men, the crowd torched the stately building, burning it to the ground. The usually temperate Samuel Breck articulated his approval laconically in the aftermath. "The abolitionist must be put down," he reasoned, "or the Union of these states will be dissolved."\(^{13}\)

Though crowd actions against blacks and abolition sympathizers were hardly unique to the City of Brotherly Love, it added to its allure. Breck's reaction exemplified the views of most cultivated Philadelphians, who regarded the movement as hopelessly radical and uncivil, qualities anathema to their cardinal virtues of order and propriety. One Philadelphian remembered that "there was hardly a soul I knew . . . to whom an Abolitionist was not simply the same thing as a disgraceful, discreditable malefactor." It was no wonder then, that the South's master class flocked to antebellum Philadelphia where, Leland recalled, "everything Southern was exalted and worshiped with a baseness below that of the blacks themselves." Not only were the South's richest holders of human property unlikely to rub shoulders with middle-class parvenus in Philadelphia; they were safe from the outraged glances of and awkward confrontations with antislavery advocates.\(^{14}\)

---

\(^{13}\)Samuel Breck Diary, May 19, 1838, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP).

While bluebloods from around the country enjoyed Philadelphia's cultural and social allurements, this study is concerned with wealthy slaveholders and their families from the states of the future Confederacy as well as from other slave states such as Kentucky and Maryland. Antebellum southerners, both in the popular and historical imaginations, are supposed to be the Americans least disposed to national loyalties. Rooted to family, state, region, and then to nation, southerners found themselves isolated in a nation becoming more cohesive, more "American," as it grew larger and more powerful. These alleged local proclivities became all the more pronounced as the South's economic system consigned the region to backwardness as the rest of the nation committed itself to dynamic capitalism. As the South became more and more anachronistic, not merely in America but within the wider Atlantic world, its people turned inward, committed to slavery as an economic and social system. Growing hostility to the institution in England and America forced southerners onto the defensive. As capitalism propelled the western world forward, this argument goes, the South chose to

---

15 This is not the place for an overview of the enormous literature on southern distinctiveness. For such a summary see, among many other works, Carl Degler, Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Edward Pessen, "How Different from Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?" American Historical Review 85 (1980), 1119-1149; and Drew Gilpin Faust, "The Peculiar South Revisited: White Society, Culture, and Politics in the Antebellum Period, 1800-1860," in John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen, eds., Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 78-119. I will confine myself here to the question of why southerners were chosen for this study of national elite formation.
stand still.\textsuperscript{16}

Compounding this supposed economic backwardness, indeed growing out of it, was a distinctive mind set—romantic, backward-looking, paternalistic, leisure-loving, and honorific. To Eugene Genovese, slavery produced a decidedly "premodern" worldview in the planter class, not just in the American South but in most societies committed to unfree labor. The planters' behavior mirrored their precapitalist attitudes. Committed to "an aristocratic, antibourgeois spirit with values and mores emphasizing family and status, a strong code of honor, and aspirations to luxury, ease, and accomplishment," the master class had little time or inclination for innovation, thriftiness, or the life of the mind. Thoroughly conservative in manners as well as in politics, large planters established a hegemonic control over the South's politics, economy, and culture. If their section was underdeveloped, they might have reasoned, it was also more stable; if violent, more just; if less enlightened, more genteel; if less democratic, better governed. If the South ever articulated an ideology that expounded on these themes it was in its proslavery argument, which in its most mature point in the 1850s represented southern planters as the defenders of the faith, and capitalists of the North and West as the pariahs. Poverty, alienation, vice, crime, and corruption, they charged, occurred in the great cities of the North on a scale unprecedented in human history, even in the vilest dens of Europe. The South,


Such a brief discussion as outlined in the above paragraphs cannot do justice to complicated and sophisticated arguments regarding the uniqueness of the Old South. And scores of historians have spilled much ink challenging, modifying, and defending interpretations of the region's singular course in the western world, of which those of Eugene Genovese are just one, even if the most holistic, far-ranging, and provocative. Moreover, scholars of the slave South are hardly alone in consigning the region to the margins of national development. Historians tend to define "Americans" as the inhabitants of the New England, middle, and western states, relegating southerners to their own peculiar category of nationality. Still, powerful objections have been raised to the picture of a separate southern identity. Few students of early national America would dispute that the South followed a peculiar course of growth that encouraged the formation of distinct habits, traditions, and convictions. And even fewer would deny that by the 1850s, differences across the spectrum of politics, economics, and culture threatened to sunder the fragile structure of national American identity constructed since the Revolution. Perceptive Americans, after all, discerned early on the rise of peculiar regional characteristics. In 1785, Thomas Jefferson, in a well-known example, described
northerners as "cool, sober, laborious, persevering, interested, and chicaning," qualities which became "weaker and weaker by graduation from North to South until one encountered the quintessential southerner: "fiery, voluptuary, indolent, unsteady, generous, and candid." Many, if not most, Americans who thought about sectional differences thought about them in Jefferson's terms. That is, they personalized them, considered them as accents, eccentricities, table talk--not as qualities setting one people off from another.\(^18\)

At the time, upper-class men and women from the free and slave sections identified each other less by regional differences than by the ties that bound them together as friends, schoolmates, relatives, and business associates. Besides, few among the northern gentry were squeamish about the peculiar institution. If American historians, eyes fixed on Fort Sumter, have divided post-Revolutionary America into North and South, genteel contemporaries were more likely to see the line running between East and West. Wellborn Americans of the eastern shore understood and manipulated the same symbols of class identity. Neither the existence of this community, nor its peculiar dilemmas, has escaped the notice of scholars. "On the eve of the Civil War," wrote Charles Beard, "there had been many 'seasoned clans' on the Eastern seaboard, dating their origins back a hundred years or more. . . . able to hold their own socially, if not politically, these select families had absorbed with facility the seepage of rising fortunes that gradually oozed into their ranks." What has escaped the notice of students of the era,

---

at least in recent decades, is the national scope of this community. The upper crust constituted an Atlantic neighborhood running from New Orleans to Savannah to Boston, and even embracing smaller regional centers like Mobile, Columbia, and Atlanta.¹⁹

In almost all important respects, this community adopted common standards of behavior, comportment, taste, and politics. In many instances these standards had been repudiated by the wider culture. This was especially true in the North—including Philadelphia—for these principles were in many ways antagonistic to a democratic society. It was the traditional creed of the European gentry, modified to the more fluid American milieu: the rule of a "natural" elite, distinguished by wealth, breeding, and cultivation; the pursuit of learning; the enjoyment of leisure and sensual pleasures (checked, of course, by a dignified moderation)²⁰; and the expectation of honor from one's peers and deference from the lower orders. This was a deeply conservative ethic, and it grew more so as the century progressed. Around the 1820s it had ceased to command popular respect in the North. It continued to have resonance in the South, although the character of southern political culture, its democratic or patriarchal or "hegemonic" nature, has been an area of


²⁰"Leisure, it goes without saying, did not necessarily mean idleness, although the right to be idle if one so wished was an integral part of the concept. It meant strictly the freedom to pursue any interest, taste or pleasure consonant with the honour of a gentleman, without the further need to demean oneself by earning a living." Harold Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society (1969; London, Ark 1991), 5. J.G.A. Pocock defines natural aristocracy as those men and women of "superior and recognized capacity" whose "talents will also be recognized through outward economic and cultural signs." Pocock, "The Classical Theory of Deference," American Historical Review 81 (1976), 518-519.
some controversy recently. Whatever the status of the patriarchal ethic in the South, it seems undeniable that it fared better there than in the North, where the gentry found itself marginalized by political forces extolling white male democracy, equality, and the wisdom of ordinary people. The "premodern" ethic of the southern gentry, then, was a distinctly national, even international, outlook, evidence perhaps of the special qualities of southern culture but testimony, too, of the national character of the American upper class before the Civil War. If, as some have argued recently, the history of American conservatism is deserving of the same careful and respectful attention that historians have hitherto turned to radical movements, then the antebellum aristocracy, a class as extreme in its own way as populist anti-Federalists, the Working Men's movement, and the Tertium Quids, stands out for understanding.

---


More problematic than defining the sectional limits of this study is clarifying the meaning of class, status, and aristocracy. As always, wealth must be the primary standard for inclusion in the upper crust. But the Philadelphia aristocracy did not open its ranks to all who could afford to enter. Sidney George Fisher, who knew of what he spoke, found Philadelphia's beau monde "unpretending, elegant, cordial, & friendly containing many persons not rich, but few whose families have not held the same station for several generations. . . . wealth is not the only passport, nor want of it a reason for exclusion." In its self image, if not always in practice, the city's fashionables welcomed refined men and women without regard for the size of their bank accounts. The importance contemporaries attributed to cultivation and breeding in defining their group identity demands that historians interpret class in such a way that recognizes the context in which antebellum Americans understood the term. On the other hand, class must not be defined in too relativistic a fashion, as in the celebrated construction of E.P. Thompson, who urged that class be thought of as "something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships," a formulation that begs the question of just what that "something" is. Of course Thompson meant conflict, division, between the oppressed and their oppressors. Experiencing exploitation, Thompson argued, people "identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle against these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes." Class, in Thompson's sense, refers to the historical (that is, relative and diverse) experience of

conflict in human society that almost always, but not necessarily, emerges from productive relations.23

To be sure, compelling reasons present themselves for avoiding static notions of class. Conflict and group identity, after all, undeniably happen in historically and culturally distinct ways. On the other hand, Thompson's construction emphasizes the centrality of struggle, largely ignoring "experiences that express social differentiation but not overt conflict." Indeed, Thompson argues that contention is the necessary condition for class formation: "class-struggle is the prior, as well as the more universal, concept." Yet must it be so? In this vein, Thompson's understanding of class, which sought to free the term from an ahistorical dogmatism, ironically establishes a dogmatism of its own. Class may indeed emerge from social difference, and even enmity between groups, without developing into conflict. And even class consciousness, the awareness of group self-interest and of antagonistic collections of "others," need not deteriorate into strife on the European pattern, as even radical American historians have acknowledged. Sean Wilentz urges that we reject "the more familiar definition of class consciousness as the only one, recognizing the possible coexistence of several tendencies and outlooks [to

23Sidney George Fisher Diary, February 9, 1837, HSP; E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, (New York: Pantheon, 1963), 9; idem, "Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?" Social History 3 (1978), 149. In the previous section I avoided a comprehensive examination of the literature of southern distinctiveness for the sake of clarity and space. Similarly, in this section, I will not undertake a detailed treatment of what one student of this subject calls "the conundrum of class." However, I think that terms need to be defined rather clearly, so I will confine these paragraphs to laying out the meaning of class as will be employed here, along with a brief justification. Martin J. Burke, "The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Subject of Class in America," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1987.
better understand the social and ideological tensions at work in nineteenth century America. An understanding of class informed by these cautions should help historians see how diverse class identities could develop before the Civil War without degenerating into group violence, and should also deter the sort of ahistorical questions, in the tradition of Werner Sombart, that static notions of class encourage. To adopt a definition of class that emphasizes social difference instead of social conflict is intended neither to belittle the importance of group antagonism nor of the role of economic relations in social development. It is intended, instead, to promote a use of the term that respects the particular contextual circumstances surrounding the formation and maintenance of group identity--an exercise quite consistent with the spirit of the Thompsonian historical project.24

To develop this idea a bit further, it is by no means clear that the nomenclature of "class" can accurately describe the social or mental world of Americans in the early Republic. As a term, "class" at that time was hardly unknown and was indeed becoming more common, but its meaning was highly fluid and had little resemblance to modern usage. In 1796, for example, the Philadelphia Aurora, admonishing its readers on the familiar subject of the consequences of luxury in a republic, described how "[t] hose in high life ape the fashions of and manners of the English, French and other nations; the middle class those of the higher or more affluent, . . . and the poor copy the example of

24Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 12; Thompson, "Eighteenth Century English Society," 149; Wilentz, Chants Democratic, 17. Werner Sombart's question, Why is there No Socialism in the United States trans. Patricia M. Hocking and C.T. Husbands, (1906; White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1976), is the sort of query that emerges from a dogmatic conception of class.
the class above them." The writer confined his use of the word "class" to those in the middle, using more ambiguous terms to describe those groups above and below on the social scale. It seems unlikely, however, that this seeming precision regarding those in the middle was intentional, Stuart Blumin maintains, since "even at the end of the [eighteenth] century it was still far more common to express social levels in terms of ranks, sorts, stations, conditions, orders, or even estates." The *Aurora's* classification scheme reflected the familiar structure of the moral economy, not the rigid levels characteristic of advanced industrial economies. "Class" in this transitional era covered a whole variety of categories--racial, economic, sexual, political--although its seems to have denoted rigid categories of people set off from other groups more clearly than more ambiguous terms such as ranks, orders, and stations. Gary Nash, among others, argues that the increasing frequency of "class" relative to other available terms signifies the commencement of a new era. A society grounded in hierarchy, patronage, of vertical divisions based on wealth, power, and personal relationships, "in which men were acutely aware of their exact relation to those immediately above and below them, but only vaguely conscious except at the very top of their connections with those on their own level," gave way to one of horizontal divisions of clearly differentiated levels based on productive relations and income. This emergence of a class society in North America paralleled the transition by which "a society of ranks and degrees of dependency [in which] most people were bound together by personal ties" gave way to "the most liberal, the most democratic, the most commercially minded, and the most modern people in the
world," argued Gordon S. Wood.\(^{25}\) Even in the late antebellum years, older phrases--ranks, orders, estates, and sorts--still had resonance, especially among the upper ranks, some of whom remained nostalgic for more relaxed and deferential times. Reflecting contemporary usage, therefore, "class," along with less precise terms like "level," "sorts," and "strata," will be used more or less interchangeably in those sections of this project dealing with the early Republic. As divisions became more rigid later on in the century, and as that process is, in part, a theme of this study, "class" will be used more frequency in the later portions. If the notion of class in this study seems ambiguous, it was far more so for Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century. Exploring that ambiguity constitutes an important part of this study.\(^{26}\)


Besides "class," "culture" is another contested term that requires precise definition. "Culture" in this study refers, in part, to the "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life." Culture, then, refers to those signs and symbolic systems that render thoughts and deeds meaningful within groups. Using this definition to analyze the social meaning of balls, salons, and other public functions, it is clear that both upper-crust Philadelphians and their southern guests spoke the same language of class. That is, fashionables understood how to communicate symbolically their common identity in public ways to confirm and display their superiority, as Harold Perkin showed for premodern England, where "differential status was part of the given, unquestioned environment into which men were born, and they proclaimed it by every outward sign: manner, speech, deportment, dress, liveried equipage, size of house and household, the kind and quantity of food they ate." Though the forms of social intercourse in America were less directly tied to the legal structure of power as in Britain and the continent (there being no aristocracy in the United States), social rituals and routines still conveyed messages bearing on the proper place of wealth and status in an inegalitarian republic.27

The translational application of culture is particularly important for this study because many of the assumptions about class, hierarchy, learning, entertainment, and power held by the rich and poor of the early nineteenth century are alien, sometimes

---

nearly incomprehensible, to modern sensibilities. As Robert Darnton maintains, "[w]hen we cannot get a proverb, or a joke, or a ritual, or a poem, we know we are on to something." The understanding of what past actions and statements could have meant for contemporaries and the description of them in terms that render these lost worlds comprehensible is one goal of this work. "The searching out of the meanings that . . . actions contained and conveyed for the participants lies at the heart of the enterprise of ethnographic history," argues Rhys Isaac. Nineteenth century America, to be sure, does not seem so strange a world as that of Balinese cockfighters, Renaissance Venicians, or even eighteenth century Virginia Baptists. But in many respects, including those revolving around class relations, the mentality of the antebellum elite seems remote from our consciousness.28

More recently, cultural historians have turned attention to how everyday routines, rituals, and practices legitimize the operation of authority. "The exercise of power," maintains Lynn Hunt, "always requires symbolic practices." Practitioners of this method in this country, who tend to borrow concepts more from literary criticism than from cultural anthropology, have focused more on race and gender than class. These scholars have also been interested in how marginalized groups subverted lines of authority through their manipulation of cultural metaphors and boundaries. The extent to which subordinate groups promoted the subjection of both themselves and other groups (from a modern perspective) has, not surprisingly, received considerably less attention. Upper

class women, for example, largely accepted their secondary position within their class because they received considerable benefits from their station. Besides, while they suffered under the same legal and customary disadvantages women of other ranks, they played an important public role in defending class prerogatives. Elaborate parties, salons, assemblies, and balls were highly exclusive and hence private functions, but through elaborate dress, fine carriages, the necessity of expensive skills like dancing, singing, and language, and the practice of class-based exclusion itself, these affairs did cultural work in the public sphere by defining a distinctive upper class lifestyle out of reach from and contemptuous of popular culture. These social events were the providence of upper class women. Talents learned in fashionable boarding schools--foreign languages, voice, dancing, knowledge of classical literature, science, and history--were to be used to orchestrate polite affairs toward the defense of privilege and conservatism.29

While acknowledging my debt to anthropology and the New Cultural History, I should point out that I apply their methods in a rather limited and skeptical fashion. While these techniques, especially those of cultural anthropology, are extremely useful in gleaning the latent meanings within seemingly ordinary routines and practices, they presuppose that societies, subgroups, and even individuals are far more integrated than they actually are. Cultural anthropology, in particular, pays scant attention to how historical actors shape culture to conform to their own hopes and expectations. Culture does not merely signify: it works. When Robert Waln wrote his parodies of Philadelphia

high society in the 1810s, he was doing more than reflecting class malaise: he was both resisting social change and putting forth a program of reform.30

Not all wealthy Americans expressed conservative, antidemocratic ideologies. Jefferson, after all, suffered such extreme vilification in part because he was regarded as a traitor to his caste. Not every descendant of old families opposed the extension of suffrage and democratic officeholding, practiced social snobbery, patronized luxury shops, and boarded their daughters at expensive French schools. Charles Jared Ingersoll, son of one of Philadelphia's first families, asserted America's moral preeminence against European corruption by arguing that "patrician and plebeian orders are unknown" in America. "There is no populace. All are people." Such a proud statement of the alleged classlessness of the republic was certainly uncharacteristic of the city's upper crust, but the Ingersolls suffered no social retribution for Charles' apostasy. In an age in which the wealthy held such contradictory notions of the place of hierarchy in American life, it would be absurd to suppose that the rich and poor worked from a common cultural script.31

Unpacking the public meanings of private and socially exclusive acts is a necessary enterprise since participants knew that these activities resonated with wider meanings. In the language of cultural studies, they knew that the personal was political.

30Peter Atall [Robert Waln, Jr.], The Hermit in Philadelphia. Second Series. Containing some Account of Young Belles and Coquettes; Elegantes and Spoiled Children; Dandies and Ruffians; Old Maids and Old Bachelors; Dandy-Slang and Lady-Slang; Morning Visits and Evening Parties... (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1821)

31[Charles Jared Ingersoll], Inchiquin, the Jesuit's Letters. During a Late Residence in the United States of America... in Wood, ed., Rising Glory of America, 387.
Fine dress, a majestic home, and refined manners signified one's superior taste and demanded the deference that accompanied high social position. "Great mansions, books, fine dress became instruments of power, a superior culture to parade before the eyes of a deferential population whose compliance was necessary to the continuation of authority," maintains Richard Bushman. Similarly, the emerging white collar sector separated itself from manual work in the early nineteenth century, surrounding itself with large, spacious, and comfortable offices that marked its dignity and importance. Etiquette books made explicit the social and moral benefits of refinement. By passing on rules of behavior descended from the courts of Renaissance Europe, their writers sought to correct those Americans who "regard Rudeness and Republicanism as synonymous terms." The connection between social acts and social messages is hardly a recent discovery, and the confusion surrounding the meaning of social class in antebellum America demands a careful examination of their relation. Finally, Critical Theory's relentless focus on power prevents a humanistic understanding of past cultures. Not all cultural artifacts and practices, it seems to me, should be reduced to elements of authority and resistance. So much more than power was involved in the routines and rituals of genteel life: love, friendship, learning, faith, fun, progress, and innumerable other yearnings and ideals made life meaningful, just as they did, in different forms and contexts, for the middle and lower classes. Contemporaries did not define themselves solely in terms of the latent or manifest structures of power in their society, and historians distort and simplify the past
by doing so. In addition to its anthropological context, culture will also be used in its traditional sense, in reference to the learned societies, intellectual gatherings, and literary works that formed the context of cultivated discourse. The standard of genteel cultivation required ladies and gentlemen to converse within a common intellectual framework that included ancient and modern history, the classics, religion, and natural history. Gentlepeople used their learning to identify themselves and exclude those deemed vulgar and ignorant. Common folk and the privileged shared a cultural framework imported from England and the continent, "but the porosity of the boundaries does not mean that no boundaries existed. In the minds of the people a sharp line divided plain and genteel culture, just as they distinguished in their minds a class of people called gentlemen." The standards of gentility filtered down to the middling sorts, whose eagerness to adopt cultivated ways spurred the publication of reams of etiquette guides and magazines of manners like Godey's and Graham's. The middle class did not passively inculcate the

---

strictures of aristocratic refinement, since to do so would have meant accepting their own subordination. In adopting manners they changed the old standards to serve their ends. Leisure was one casualty of this process. Leisure, argued aristocratic defenders, enabled the gentry to exercise disinterested leadership since their wealth placed them beyond dependence on any man for their well being. It gave them time for pursuing learning and thus obliged them, as the wisest and most impartial members of the community, to serve in the councils of state. But as the middle and lower classes exalted the dignity of labor, leisure was stigmatized as idleness, which in turn promoted corruption. The popularization of gentility, together with the erosion of the economic and political foundations of gentry power, had legitimized an alternative culture to high society, a "popular culture" shorn of aristocratic exclusion and open to everyone. High culture lived on as the embattled providence of an elite, a bastion of aristocracy in an egalitarian and dynamic cultural milieu.33

I seek to make this national elite culture comprehensible by examining three of its central elements: education, the life of the mind, and social life. Philadelphia boasted two of the nation's finest medical schools, the University of Pennsylvania and Jefferson Medical College. Before the Civil War, just under seventy percent of their graduates called the Old South home. In a levelling age in which professional training in the law, ministry, or medicine was often slandered as antidemocratic, a Philadelphia medical

degree was a badge of privilege. In similar fashion, southern parents sent their daughters to Philadelphia to attend one of the city's renowned French academies. Their ornamental and elitist brand of education had nothing to do with the utilitarian educational reforms of the first half of the century. These old-style academies remained proudly and profoundly aristocratic. In education, so too in enlightenment. Philadelphia shone because of its internationally recognized intellectual organizations, led by the American Philosophical Society. Though dedicated to the encouragement of "useful knowledge," the Society awarded membership to many gentleman scientists from across the United States. Early in the century the Society welcomed many southern men of curiosity and cultivation, from the patrician Langdon Cheves to the indefatigable William Dunbar, scanning the heavens from the wilderness outside Natchez. Of course, intellectual curiosity was not limited to men. Social life, the stage of cultivated conduct, embraced commerce, education, and enlightened inquiry. Women more than men organized the salons, balls, and teas of fashionable life. The beau monde involved more than pretty dresses and coquettish smiles. Grand entertainments did the cultural work of the patrician caste by publicly demonstrating its grandeur, power, and cultural superiority.

This study will demonstrate that Philadelphia welcomed its rich southern neighbors as members of a national aristocratic class. While Philadelphians noted the distinctive aspects of their southern guests' comportment, these characteristics in no way hindered their participation in polite society. In an age in which the gentry's claims to its traditional prerogatives faced challenges from democracy in both politics and culture, bluebloods stood together against the barbarians at the gate. Scholars have too often
stressed the forces dividing early America--cleavages of race, religion, and, above all, section. These divisions were very real, but membership in an nationwide, self-conscious social elite centered in Philadelphia united the upper class in cultivation and conservatism.
Table 1-1: Shipping tonnage and foreign import values of eastern ports at the opening of the Erie Canal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shipping Tonnage</th>
<th>Imports ($)</th>
<th>Exports ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1824)</td>
<td>(1826)</td>
<td>(1824)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>84,905</td>
<td>96,481</td>
<td>4,551,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>148,672</td>
<td>171,976</td>
<td>15,378,758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>281,148</td>
<td>316,289</td>
<td>36,113,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>90,977</td>
<td>73,400</td>
<td>11,865,531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Niles' Weekly Register* 28 (July 1825), 292; 34 (June 1828), 265.
CHAPTER 2
TRAVELERS' TALES

As Izard Middleton traveled up the East coast in the Spring of 1834, his correspondence to his cousin followed genteel conventions. He remarked upon meeting relatives and friends, described points of interest, and passed judgement upon cities, landscapes, people, conveyances, and the sundry other attractions that drew the attention of the perceptive tourist. No introspection, no metaphysical questions or sensitive issues interrupted his placid discourse. In the capital, Middleton stumbled upon Captain Edward Mathews, a friend of his cousin. "He seems to have taken a great fancy to me," observed the younger man happily, for since both men's "purpose this summer [was] pleasure," the pleasure-seeking officer pledged to "accommodate himself to all [the] movements" of his new companion. The next stop on this carefree tour was Philadelphia, a place of particular interest to the young Carolinian. It was the adopted home of several close friends of the Middleton clan, particularly the grandsons of Pierce Butler, John and Pierce. These two young men, by conforming to the terms of their grandfather's will, had shed the name of their father, James Mease, and were thereby granted access to the elder Pierce's fortune. Both brothers were well on their way to squandering the rich legacy of their patriot grandfather, though Middleton had no way of knowing this. Instead, he reported the recent marriage of the fiery Pierce to the British actress Fanny Kemble.
"There is a good deal of mystery about the whole concern," gossiped Izard to Nathaniel.

"Some say one thing and some another."

Other close relations of the Middletons proved more conventional than the impulsive Butlers. He dined with Colonel William Drayton and his sons, and as a matter of course paid a visit to Harriet Wilcocks, the daughter of Margaret Manigault. The latter's Spruce Street salon had contributed so much toward binding Philadelphia and Palmetto State bluebloods together in an aristocratic community. Several branches of the far-flung house of Middleton had been introduced to Quaker City society through the good graces of the Izards and Manigaults. It would have been unthinkable for a polite young man like Izard Middleton to pass through the city without calling upon such close friends of his family. "[L]iked her and all her family exceedingly," he assured both his cousin and mother. Even so, Izard did not spend the bulk of his time in the company of his old family circle. Two other young men, "Adler" and "Gregory," commanded most of his attention, and by mid-June he was in New York, continuing his way up the coast. Still, he praised the Delaware River city with perhaps the highest compliment a gentleman of South Carolina could confer. Philadelphia, he wrote, "is the only genteel place I have seen since I left Ch[arleston]."1

While Izard Middleton summed up his impressions of Philadelphia in a single bon mot, most articulate observers felt compelled to describe the city more fully, often in

---

1Izard Middleton to Nathaniel Russell Middleton, 26 May 1834, 8 June 1834, folder 8, Nathaniel Russell Middleton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter SHC). On the Butlers, see Malcom Bell, Jr., Major Butler's Legacy: Five Generations of a Slaveholding Family (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982).
excruiating detail. If they wrote to friends and family, sometimes for those completely unfamiliar with urban life, they tried to reconstruct with words the scale and bustle of city life, the sights, smells, sounds, and tone of a busy downtown or teeming market. Even diarists frequently went on for pages about the streets, buildings, attractions, and people they encountered, for the genre of journal writing required diarists to record their observations for an audience. Until the fashion of Romantic exaggeration transformed the genre into a record of the self, journal keeping was both a literary exercise and family record. This was especially true of the travel account, which served the same function that a photo album or video cassette would today for those back home. Of course, writers subscribed to no rigid rules while recording their thoughts and observations, often switching from the recording of events and travels to intensely personal reflections. Whether they wrote for personal edification or family instruction, letter writers and diarists faced the task of making sense of the urban landscape, of making often unfamiliar and inherently disorderly territory orderly and sensible.\(^2\)

While the act of description may seem, at first glance, quite simple and straightforward, the process of reducing a world to words actually involves choices and discriminations, by no means all of them conscious. These difficulties had little to do with the unfamiliarity of the urban landscape to southern tourists, whose rural sensibility

and parochialism have too long been exaggerated. Many southerners, especially the affluent, were quite familiar with urban life, if not in the large cities of the northeast then in the towns and smaller cities of the Old South. Most cultivated southerners would have understood the sentiments of John Williams Walker of Huntsville, Alabama, who longed to "make an excursion to [the] Quaker City... & then show my good dame the wonders of the Metropolis & let her figure away among the great." In cultural and economic function, if not by size, southern cities were quite similar to their (usually) larger northern counterparts.):

Rather, the difficulty arose in imposing order upon urban space, in making the city comprehensible in prose. Historian Robert Darnton argues that urban views are "charged with emotion, values, and world view... the sense of one's place is fundamental to our general orientation in life." Hugh Merritt Rose articulated this heightened sensibility upon revisiting Philadelphia in 1825. "[T]here is something that possesses my imagination when I am in Phila. that is a little irregular." the Virginian exclaimed. "Directly that I get in the midst of city I feel like all the world is a city!" In touring

---

Philadelphia and other cities—and, more importantly, reporting on people, places, sights, and impressions—refined men and women revealed their notion of a properly structured urban space and their perception of how society ought to be ordered.4

Tourists to Philadelphia did not view the city clinically and report its contents objectively. They came armed with an itinerary shaped by class conventions that virtually compelled their attention to certain areas, attractions, and company while proscribing their field of vision and association. Moreover, they came not as strangers and outsiders but as welcomed members of a community of refinement. The patriotic sites that demanded the attention of almost every careful tourist gave heightened poignancy to the nationwide nature of this community. By revisiting the most hallowed relics of the Revolutionary era, visitors not only paid homage to the founding of the Republic, but took part in the construction of a peculiar version of American nationality. On a diverse and dynamic urban topography, genteel southern tourists imposed their own vision of a properly ordered world that marginalized or effaced altogether elements hostile or contradictory to their refined orientation.

The quasi-aristocratic perspective that many southerners brought with them to Philadelphia and other northern cities on the "Grand Tour" was quickly becoming anachronistic by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Bluebloods, especially

women, were constantly unnerved by the disrespect they received from social inferiors even while they accepted it as a constant feature of American—not just urban—life. "I well know it requires great exertions to Deal with the common Class," commiserated one Philadelphia lady to her Virginia cousin, "they are disposed to Caval and give trouble to our sex when in many instances they would not have courage to contend with their own sex." Despite the special difficulties that the gentry faced when dealing with the urban masses, the problem of making sense of the antebellum city was hardly exclusive to the upper crust. Indeed, as John Kasson observes, "the theme of the city's illegibility was a recurrent one, common to writers as diverse as Balzac, Engels, and Poe. . . . In the new urban centers of the Western capitalist democracies, traditional notions of social relations, manners, and appropriate behavior all appeared in disarray." In the eighteenth century, the population of America's urban areas actually declined relative to the population at large. The spectacular growth of towns and cities after 1820—not merely in population but in industrial development, size, and ethnic diversity—challenged Americans' sensibilities, as cities grew too fast for imaginations to keep pace.5

Etiquette guides furnished advice on how to comport oneself and supplied models on how to negotiate encounters with strangers amidst crowded, lawless city streets.

"Society has its grammar as language has," asserted one adviser with a popular metaphor,}

"and the rules of that grammar must be learned." Behavior manuals, however, were marketed to the burgeoning middle class of American towns to mediate between the social and cultural consequences of egalitarianism, on the one hand, and the need to maintain rules of civil conduct between individuals and groups of widely varying conditions, on the other. If the Old World had established laws and traditions that separated and distinguished the rich from the poor, the New World had no such rules and those traditions that remained were ruthlessly undermined after the Revolution. Etiquette guides sought to furnish the middle class with a modified brand of gentility that combined upper-class refinement with the middling ethos of industry, piety, and self-discipline, values anathema to the gentry's love of leisure. At the same time, the manuals' rigid insistence upon the rules and rituals of gender and class intercourse introduced a semblance of order to the social free-for-all of the Age of Egalitarianism.®

Bluebloods, with their own well-established code of conduct, were in no need of courtesy books, which in any event were not addressed to them, but rather to those seeking to join their ranks. They imposed their genteel perspective upon touring Philadelphia and other cities, maintaining continuities in values, associations, and conduct amidst incredible change. Of course, the city--its people, noise, bustle, and chaotic growth--often exposed the disjunction between the elite's eighteenth-century sensibility and the social and cultural conditions of the new century. But because they

largely remained segregated from lesser folk, the gentry accommodated to innovation with surprising ease. If common people treated them rudely, they avoided places where such people might be encountered. Such changes as they did take note of were usually limited to the social and cultural allurements that attracted them to Philadelphia in the first place. "This city has greatly improved since I visited it six years ago as a medical student," noted James Stuart, who went on to describe the city's latest scientific and artistic attractions. Planters did not so much visit Philadelphia as much as Philadelphians welcomed them to the genteel city—a segregated space of stately public buildings, historic sites, picturesque parks, comfortable salons, and bright ballrooms—that confirmed their exalted place within America's privileged firmament.  

The judgments of travelers regarding social conditions in America have been the subject of some controversy, so a word about context and interpretation seems in order. By no means were southerners the only sophisticated travelers making the rounds of the new nation. Northern tourists made frequent and often well-publicized trips to the slave South in the decades before the Civil War. They chiefly went to explain the essence of slavery and southern manners to the Yankee public. Both at home and abroad, however, the accounts of genteel Europeans captured the lion's share of readers' attention. Only a few among the scores of Old World tourists were shrewd observers, and many exposed obvious prejudices in favor of or against the American experiment, assumptions which were invariably confirmed during their sojourn. Nevertheless, literate Americans had an

insatiable appetite for even the most critical, superficial European accounts, for—as all observers agreed—Americans were deeply insecure about their democratic experiment, and especially about the quality of their emerging culture.

If nineteenth-century readers devoured European memoirs of American travel for their evaluations of American culture, modern students have been drawn to their observations on antebellum social structure. For many travelers, as for de Tocqueville, the most striking feature of the new nation was "the general equality of condition among the people. . . . it gives a peculiar direction to public opinion and a peculiar tenor the laws; it imparts new maxims to the governing authorities and peculiar habits to the governed." To an increasing number of historians in the past three decades, however, these observations obscured more than they enlightened. New studies uncovered the persistence, and often the growth, of inequality, of the concentration of wealth into fewer and fewer hands. Moreover, Edward Pessen demonstrated that men of means continued to dominate urban and national politics, the largest and most influential reform organizations, and that their comfort was based on long-lasting and stable fortunes, thus giving the lie to another common myth, voiced by Frances Trollope, that in America "any man's son could become the equal of any other man's son." To Pessen, their impressionistic observations obscured what "detailed historical evidence" revealed; a nation divided between rich and poor, influential and voiceless, privileged and marginal.8

To the eyes of privileged Europeans, however, America must have looked like a

---

remarkably open, democratic, and mobile society, as in fact it was, comparatively, for the first half of the nineteenth century. In pronouncing the young republic to be a sort of paradise for ordinary people, Tocqueville and other Old World gentry were only judging it from their own perspective—in which distinctions between rich and poor, gentleman, lady, and commoner were legal, not informal, where there existed an established, not customary, aristocracy. From this deeply conservative and traditional point of view, Robert Gallman maintains, "they believed that American inequality was slight compared with European inequality and American economic mobility, great compared with European mobility." Both European and southern travelers shared this aristocratic perspective, one minutely sensitive to gradations in rank, status, refinement and deference. Privileged southerners were distinctive travelers in antebellum Philadelphia, but not because of their regional origin. Class, not section, set them apart. 9

Modern scholars have drawn attention to the persistence of poverty, and issues of wealth were indeed of great import to the upper crust. But fortune was by no means their only, or even greatest, concern. If tourists' insistence on the assertiveness and power of the common class has seemed hollow to modern critics, it is only because the latter have been insensitive to the traditional significance of status and family name—less tangible and measurable qualities than wealth and power, but fundamental nonetheless. Travelers

---

made the rounds of stately hotels, circulating amongst a similarly refined, exclusive circle, only infrequently mixing with the crowd. With all the limitations imposed by this rarified perspective, it supplied matchless insight into the mindset of an American elite which, in the context of others in the western world, enjoyed few of the traditional prerogatives of power, status, and influence.¹⁰

To understand how privileged southern travelers viewed Philadelphia from their place amidst the American elite, it is necessary to take a brief look at the development of the city itself in the sixty years before the Civil War. Like other cities in the republic, Philadelphia grew phenomenally fast in the first half of the nineteenth century. The largest city in the Union in 1800, the city and its contiguous suburbs were the home of 67,787 souls. Twenty years later the city alone counted 63,719 residents, while outlying areas, mostly populated by poorer workers and their families, numbered 72,922. By 1840 the local population numbered over 250,000, with nearly sixty percent living in adjacent suburbs such as Northern Liberties and Kensington. Ten years later this suburban population alone numbered just under 300,000, nearly three-quarters larger than the population of the city itself. In 1854, after Philadelphia's leaders consolidated these outlying jurisdictions into a single municipal body, the newly enlarged city was home to over 550,000 men, women, and children. Immigrants, especially from Ireland, made up much of the increase. Irish churches rose among the manufacturing areas where immigrants settled—especially the districts of Manayunk, Southwark, and Kensington. In

1850, just under 30% of the combined city and county population had been born on
foreign soil—59% in Ireland, 19% in Germany, and 14% in England.\footnote{On population in 1800, Edgar O. Richardson, "The Athens of America, 1800-
Norton, 1982), 218; in 1820 and 1840, Nicholas B. Wainwright, "The Age of Nicholas
Biddle, 1825-1841," in Ibid., 281; on 1850 and immigration figures, Elizabeth M. Geffen,
"Industrial Development and Social Crisis, 1841-1854," in Ibid., 309; and on
consolidation, Russell F. Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War, 1854-1865," in Ibid.,
363-369. On the Irish and church growth, Joseph J.L. Kirlin, Catholicity in Philadelphia
from the Earliest Missionaries to the Present Time (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey,
1909).}

When Philadelphia's founders designed the layout late in the seventeenth century,
they divided it into square lots that stretched from the Delaware river in the east to the
Schuylkill river in the west. During the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth,
however, Philadelphia stretched just a few blocks west of the Delaware in a crescent
shape. The population explosion of the industrial age forced the city's physical
expansion. In 1800, just a few buildings rose past Seventh street, and country estates and
gardens lined the Schuylkill. As tenements, factories, and commercial establishments
rose in settled areas or occupied older buildings, residents pushed westward. Many
artisans and other poor workers resided in adjacent areas to the south and north, though
many lived in the alleys and small streets adjoining fashionable venues. An old resident
observed in 1828 that "where last summer the boys played, there are now solid blocks of
brick buildings, grocery stores and taverns." As older sections of the city swelled with
noise, dirt, and humanity, the well-to-do retreated westward. By the 1850s the
fashionable residential section was Walnut Street west of Seventh, though many fine
houses rose beyond Broad Street towards the Schuylkill. Though the city's jurisdiction
extended only as far as Vine Street, in the north, and South Street, in the south, most of its workers and industrial areas lay outside these boundaries, in the forty incorporated and quasi-incorporated zones north and south of the city limits. The need for greater centralization was made manifest during the Kensington riots of 1844, when officials called out the city militia because Kensington's single sheriff had neither the deputies nor the funds to form a troop of his own. Responding for demands for better public order, an expanded tax base for improved public services, and efficient administration, the state legislature passed a consolidation act in 1854 integrating populated districts to the north and south with their large immigrant and working populations, as well as largely uninhabited areas in the northeast fit for further expansion.\textsuperscript{12}

Philadelphia's commercial and industrial strength supported its spatial and population growth. In 1800 the port city enjoyed a thriving maritime trade with the West Indies, Europe, and China, especially through its domination of flour exporting. By the 1820s, other ports had chipped away at Philadelphia's flour trade. Steadily, the shipping tonnage registered at Philadelphia lagged behind rising cities like New York and Baltimore. With the conversion of the area's abundant water power and the accidental discovery of anthracite's industrial potential, manufacturers laid a new foundation for the

city's economic health. Cotton and wool mills rose all around town in the 1820s, and entrepreneurs established large factories for the production of steel and locomotives. In 1830, almost 25% of the steel manufactured in the United States was produced in Philadelphia. As the significance of the port declined, a myriad of industries rose up to employ the city's burgeoning population: coach makers, chandelier and lamp works, glass factories, and sugar refineries. "[B]y 1828," notes one historian, "the city was recognized as the foremost manufacturer in the country." To the traveler, the transformation was perhaps most noticeable in the city's skyline. Whereas in 1800 tall warehouses, steeples, and the State House's bell tower caught the eye, by 1830 the highest points were occupied by smoking chimneys, north of the city in Kensington or west in Manayunk, far removed from the well-kept townhomes of the gentry.\(^\text{13}\)

If the upper crust made sure that the dirt and grime of the new industrial age remained far removed from its parlors, they kept Philadelphia's cultural and artistic amenities close by. The nonsectarian University of Pennsylvania was at its lowest ebb in the first few decades of the century, when it moved to new buildings on Ninth Street, though its medical school was recognized as the finest in the nation. It was joined at the heart of the city in 1825 by Jefferson Medical College, founded during an episode of professional feuding by Dr. George McLellan, formerly of the University of Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania. Many doctors joined with other scientific men in membership in the American Philosophical Society, whose Hall abutted the State House. The latter place housed the museum of Charles Wilson Peale after 1802, filled with natural history specimens, historical paintings, and--most spectacularly--the skeleton of a mammoth. More specialized than the genteel American Philosophical Society were two new additions to scientific life: the Academy of Natural Sciences (1812) and the Franklin Institute (1824), both situated downtown. A gallery of a different sort opened in 1805, when Joseph Allen Smith of South Carolina donated his collection of Italian art to Philadelphia, whose civic-minded gentlemen organized the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, with a handsome structure on Chestnut Street, to house his gift.

Numerous halls for the entertainment of the lower classes lay in the outlying wards, but its fine theaters and musical houses adjoined its art galleries and learned societies in the fashionable part of town. The Chestnut Street Theater near Sixth Street was the city's finest venue in the century's early decades. Other theaters opened up to support the larger audiences of later years, although they still segregated ladies and gentlemen in the first tier of boxes from the lower sorts and other undesirables, who were relegated to the upper tiers and the pit. The Olympic Theater opened in 1811, and the

---


Arch Street Theater in 1844, the latter promising its respectable patrons that "the Third Tier Nuisance" would not be tolerated. Other entertainers were not so discriminating: in the 1840s a minstrel troupe played to the crowd at the Commissioners' Hall in Southwark, and the New National Theater diverted its audience with a circus. Refined ladies and gentlemen played music to select companies in their homes, or hired professionals to entertain their guests.\(^{16}\) In the late 1840s a group of wealthy music lovers organized several musical clubs. The Musical Fund Society produced several operas and solo performances in the early 1840s and gained in wealth and numbers throughout the decade. The Hall's old neighborhood, Eighth and Locust Streets, became "undesirable" by the 1850s, so patrons erected a new building--the Academy of Music--at the newly popular residential area around Broad and Locust Streets.\(^{17}\)

The tour guides that wealthy travelers consulted pointed out many of these demographic, economic, and cultural features for their readers, plus a good deal more. Yet they presented data on population, trade, and industrial production in the same way they commented on artistic and historical features--as artifacts, objects for the consumption and amusement of urbane adventurers. To be sure, according to the spirit of the age they pointed out the "improvement" in the moral and physical condition of the people.


city contributed by both economic and cultural amenities. Both travel advisers and
tourists writing home were embedded within a cultural style that led them to see the
divided city as a piece, its diverse parts bound together by their relation to and support of
the upper echelons. They represented the city's fine architecture, handsome public spaces,
and civic improvements not as agents or evidence of general moral uplift, but first and
foremost as proof of Philadelphia's good taste and social stature. Similarly, neither travel
books nor, surprisingly, booster tracts ignored the more sordid aspects of urban life--
indeed, they called particular attention to jails, workhouses, and asylums--but they
portrayed them in terms familiar and reassuring to social conservatives. Hence one
locally published guide described a new prison in the middle-class idiom, suggesting that
"every stranger who is likely ever to be called on for an opinion or a vote respecting
prison discipline" should tour the new edifice, but added for its less zealous readers that,
"resembling some baronial castle of the middle ages," the jail possessed architectural
merit that spoke to more refined sensibilities.  

Aesthetic pleasure ranked high on travelers' itinerary. Travel guides did not
merely describe places likely to please genteel eyes and ears but focused their attention on
sites that affirmed their conservative outlook. A favorite attraction of this kind was the
Fairmount Water Works, designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in the 1790s and
reconstructed by Frederick Gaff between 1811-1822, to supply the city with water from

18 A Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia: Comprising a Description of the Places of
Amusement, Exhibitions, Public Buildings, Public Squares, &c. in the City; and of the
Places of Public Resort and Objects of Interest and Curiosity in the Environs. Designed as
the Schuylkill River. The successful hydraulic system Graff installed became the model for water supply systems in almost forty American cities, and indeed his system attracted many visitors interested in the works' scientific apparatus. Even before Graff's improvements, a visiting southern physician found the works "a Grand display of human ingenuity."

Despite the mechanical marvel that Graff fashioned, most tourists did not flock to the banks of the Schuylkill to witness the chugging and whirring of steam engines, water wheels, and stopcocks. Instead, visitors marveled at the pristine buildings housing the works, the harmony of art and nature, from Fairmount, a hill overlooking the river. Guidebooks took up this theme as well. Fairmount, described J.C. Myers's popular travelogue, "presents an eminent combination of elegance and utility. The grounds are adorned with beautiful walks... beautifully ornamented with shade trees of the choicest species." Not only did the machinery supply the city "with water of the best quality, in the greatest plenty," boasted G.M. Davison's *Fashionable Tour*, but "Fair Mount... affords a variety of romantic scenery." Locally published guides also called attention to the marriage of technology and refinement found on the Schuylkill. According to one commercial tract, the "Fairmount Water Works, in addition to their matchless and picturesque beauties, have extensive grounds attached to them which afford a delightful promenade and place of resort." Tourist tracts clearly subordinated the works' 

---

technological wizardry, impressive though it was, to its aesthetic qualities. Hence the
*Travelers' Sketch*, ostensibly a descriptive account of Philadelphia gentility but actually a
lengthy advertisement for the new Continental Hotel, called its readers' attention to the
"pleasure drives [to be] enjoyed through the Fairmount Park; or on the banks of the
Schuylkill."\(^{20}\)

If descriptions that tourists rendered of Fairmount are any indication, the attempts
of travel-guide writers to represent the Water Works as a genteel refuge were nearly
completely successful. Albert Jefress, a usually sober Virginia Methodist teaching
Sunday school in Philadelphia, exclaimed to a friend that "there are many pretty scenes to
be seen here & among the best I would mention the Fairmount Water Works. There is a
very pleasant grove there laid out in walks, furnished with trees, affording shade &
relaxation to those who [go] thither from the noise & distraction of the city." Jane
Caroline North, of Charleston was similarly impressed. "The Fairmount works repaid us
amply for the fatigue & trouble of going through the dreadful dust" of the dry August
streets, she recorded in her diary. Young Jane, accustomed to leisure and well educated,
expressed her admiration in terms more congenial to the cultivated spirit than did the
laconic Virginia Methodist. The Works, she wrote, were situated on "a rugged steep rock

\(^{20}\)J.C. Myers, *Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, the
Canadas, and Nova Scotia* (Harrisonburg: J.H. Wartmann and Brothers, 1849), 446; G.M.
Davison, *The Traveller's Guide through the Middle and Northern States and the
Provinces of Canada* 7th Ed. (Saratoga Springs: G.M. Davison and S.S. & W. Wood,
1837), 71; *Lloyd's Mercantile Port Folio and Business Man's Guide. Designed to be a
Book of Reference, for Western & Southern Merchants Trading with Philadelphia*
(Philadelphia: W.A. Lloyd, 1855), 7; C.G.P. *A Traveler's Sketch* (Philadelphia:
McLaughlin Brothers, 1861), 7.
covered in many places with luxuriant vines. . . the green of the long drooping branches mingling with & seen thro' the spray of the fountain is charming to the eye." The opinionated Carolinian made the usual awestruck observations about the "immense" machinery, but she was far more affected by the "beautiful union of nature and art" manifest in the "small temple[s]" housing the pumps and pipes, the fountains of nymphs and river gods, the whole scene arousing a sense of rustic serenity far removed from the bustle of urban life.21

Attractions within the city also won the regard of tourists. While Jane North considered the Water Works' distance from the noise and grime of the city among its considerable merits, other visitors felt exhilarated by urban excitement. Writing his wife from his Market Street hotel while attending the Presbyterian synod, Drury Lacy of Virginia claimed to be able to "see the whole world in miniature by merely looking out of my window. I am writing now on a fourth story nearly midnight," the minister exclaimed, "& yet the street below is almost as bright as day, & seems almost as lively as when I came in from Church." In fact, the bustle and chaos of downtown streets was a favorite attraction in itself, so long as the commotion took non-threatening form.

Elizabeth Ruffin, a wellborn Virginian, walked spent much of her sojourn in Philadelphia walking "through many streets viewing their splendor . . . and so formed a part of the fashionable promenaders on Chestnut Street." She and her brother walked until her feet were "aching from fatigue," despite her severe deprecation that "they are not deficient in

21Albert G. Jeffress, Philadelphia, to Augustus D. Clark, Richmond, June 23, 1838, Clark Family Papers, VHS; Jane Caroline North Diary, August 20, 1850, in O'Brien, An Evening When Alone, 95.
size at all (being pretty substantial)." James Henry Hammond of Columbia, South Carolina was in Philadelphia in 1836 for medical reasons, yet found the temptations of the streets irresistible. "I have several times walked a mile or more since I came here," he wrote his wife Catherine, for "[t]he streets are so clean, the shops so fine & the houses so beautiful that once never gets tired here." Matilda Hamilton's experience in Philadelphia was both similar and different from that of the Palmetto State senator. Her party was struck "more, than any thing else," by "the streets so gay with carriages, omnibuses, & the constant passing of foot passengers, gayly dressed ladies, gentlemen, boys, & girls, & pretty children." So taken were they by street life that they felt "so broken down by night, that we all go early to bed." 22

For more than a few travelers, the streets held something more than the promise of sightseeing and shopping. While elite values, under the influence of religion and middle-class respectability, had changed considerably since the days when William Byrd had seduced servants and chased after his friends' wives, the leisure class still took its pleasure seriously. Philadelphia was known as the "city of brotherly love," noted an anonymous pamphleteer, but it was, with equal justice, "the city of sisterly affection." Acknowledging that many men anticipated more than a visit to the Athenaeum during their visit, the author sought to "warn the stranger and gay city bucks against the possibility of being involuntarily seduced to visit a low pest house." Houses were ranked

22Drury Lacy to "My dear wife," May 16, 1839, Drury Lacy Papers, SHC; Elizabeth Ruffin Diary, August 1, 1827, in O'Brien, An Evening When Alone, 76; James Henry Hammond, Phila., to Catherine Hammond, Washington, 17 April 1836, Hammond Papers, SHC; Matilda Hamilton Diary, February 25, 1857, Hamilton Family Papers, VHS.
according to the social status of their clientele as well as the cultivation of the women. Hence "Miss Sarah Turner" of "No. 2 Wood Street, above Eleventh," won praise for being "a perfect Queen." Not only was Wood cultivated and discreet, but her "young ladies are beautiful and accomplished; they will at any time amuse you with a fine tune on the piano, or use their melodious voices to drive dull care away. . . none but gentlemen visit this Paradise of Love." Similarly, Mrs. Davis administered "a very private place, visited by none but gentlemen of rank, education and good conduct." Images could be misleading, as in the case of Mary Spicer. Her house, while "well furnished and the girls dress well," nevertheless merited an "X" and a warning about "appearances." "Sal Boyer, alias Dutch Sal," put on no such artifices. "This is the lowest house in the city," warned the pamphlet, "no gentleman ever visits this Sodom." Though the evidence is scanty--men did not generally mention such encounters in their letters home--there is reason to believe that patronizing prostitutes was a significant pastime of southern travelers. The pamphlet's appeal could scarcely fail to excite the imagination of the sensual Carolinian James Henry Hammond, for example.23

Men of the leisure class had a variety of traditionally genteel vices open to them on their urban tour. Drinking, gambling, and carousing were special, if rather

conventional, favorites. Harvey Washington Walter of Holly Springs, Mississippi "renewed many of [his] old acquaintances" during his trip to Philadelphia in 1849, including those of several young women and his friend "McCuen," with whom Walter "engaged in some wildness" during his stay. Walter's confession was scribbled in a private diary, but Andrew Polk was, in a letter to his mother, unusually candid about his Christmas Eve escapade on Chestnut Street. "The whole extent of the street from the Schuylkill as far down as 2nd was one condensed mass of human beings of all ages, sexes, sizes, and conditions," he reported. "Every house (Public of course) gave large "egg nog" parties gratis. We had a superabundance at Jones Hotel." Polk and his friend William Hawkins enjoyed their Christmas break from Princeton in part by joining the throng on Philadelphia's most fashionable promenade. Altogether, he assured his mother, the night "passed off well each [person] appearing to vie with his neighbor in point of happiness and hilarity." While Polk's tale is innocent enough, containing a reference to nothing more corrupting than egg nog, the young man probably omitted the whole truth. Antebellum college students were renowned for their lack of restraint. Far from home, an anonymous man in a gay crowd, it seems unlikely that young Mr. Polk checked the impulses in which so many others of his station indulged.24

In their correspondence, at least, southern tourists rarely strayed from respectable activities on respectable streets. They could hardly avoid the streets at any rate, the tourist enterprise requiring a good amount of walking. Shopping, sightseeing,

24Harvey Washington Walter Diary, entry for August 30, 31, 1 September 1849, Harvey Washington Walter Papers, SHC; Andrew Polk, Princeton, to Sarah Polk, Raleigh, NC, 12 January 1842, Polk-Yeatman Family Papers, SHC.
theatregoing, and most other cultivated activities required that they venture out of doors into the downtown. Nevertheless, their itinerary restricted them to what Richard Bushman calls "a geography of refinement... divid[ing] greater from lesser areas of gentility and regions of civilization from areas of barbarism." Popular attractions on what might be called the "genteel loop" within the city included the Second Bank of the United States, designed by William Strickland and modeled on the Parthenon; the United States Mint; the State House (Independence Hall); and Chestnut Street, the heart of the city's fashionable shopping district. All these places boasted architectural, patriotic, or commercial merits that no cultivated tourist could ignore, and they were generally located within or nearby the city center where rose the city's finest hotels and best residential districts. But the "geography of refinement" of which Bushman speaks could largely be an imaginative construction, as the case of the Eastern State penitentiary suggests.\textsuperscript{25}

Completed in 1829 and situated north and west of downtown at Cherry Hill, the jail was a forbidding sight with its twelve-foot thick, thirty-foot high granite walls and imposing battlements--to say nothing of its wretched population. Nevertheless, the prison--based on a plan of Jeremy Bentham--became a must-see for tourists. J.C. Myers's guide portrayed it as "situated on one of the most elevated, airy, and delightful sites in the vicinity of Philadelphia." Myers's description, with frequent allusions to "massive square towers... embattled parapets... pointed arches," and "corbels," all of which "contribute in a high degree to the picturesque appearance," with nary a hint of the miserable, incarcerated population within, evoked images of fog-shrouded medieval castles.

\textsuperscript{25}Bushman, \textit{The Refinement of America}, 353.
Visitors could purchase tickets from the jail's numerous inspectors and thereby see the prisoners first-hand, but such curiosity only partly grew out of the quintessentially nineteenth-century concern with reformation, to say nothing of penitence. Pennsylvania Hospital, where spectators could watch the insane paraded around a dry moat, offered a similarly pathetic spectacle. Both these patients and the inmates of the Eastern State penitentiary represented, if in extreme form, an ideal lower class to their genteel visitors, one not to be found in the hectic streets just over the walls--subordinate, deferential, and under control. For Matilda Hamilton, her trip to the prison was just another aspect of an extended shopping spree. "It is a very nice, orderly looking place, they have solitary confinement there, never permitted to speak, or see each other," she recorded. "They keep articles to sell, made by the convicts, I bought some of them." Still, neither shopping nor humanitarianism drew most privileged tourists to the prisons. Like Biddle's bank and Girard's College, prison architecture struck a cultural chord. In his extensive tour of Philadelphia in 1817, John Strobia carried one clear impression of the new prison at Mulberry and Broad Streets: it was, he remembered, a "very extensive and beautiful place of confinement."26

Not all encounters with the lower orders could be conducted in such an ideally regulated setting as a prison offered. Even if the conventional tourist circuit kept visitors out of the rollicking artisinal and working-class quarters of Kensington and Southwark, 

---

the gentry still had to face these undesirables even on such fashionable avenues as Chestnut Street, and even middling sorts mocked their quasi-aristocratic pretensions.

Tourist guides took pains to point out the quiet squares and high-class residential districts where such unpleasant encounters might be regulated, or at least minimized. These sites, which became popular in the early nineteenth century, also attracted notice because they were aesthetically similar to other popular attractions such as the Water Works and the Athenaeum. Thomas Holme's 1683 drawing of William Penn's plan for Philadelphia incorporated the founder's vision of wide, perpendicular streets encompassing four squares set aside as parks, with a central square at the intersection of Broad and Market Streets reserved for the seat of government. The city administration made a concerted effort to reserve a system of urban parks amidst the hectic growth of the city after 1820, placing the three squares in the western part of town under close supervision in 1842 and installing iron railings ten years later.

Travel guides described such garden refuges at considerable length. Independence Square, behind the Old State House, was "a most delightful promenade, open at all seasons, planted with a great variety of trees, and laid out with gravel walks," according to one guide. "The place always presents the same elegant and finished appearance."

Despite the hyperbole evident in the guides' descriptions, the parks often lived up to expectations. Preachy Grattan of Goochland County, Virginia found one park "laid off very tastefully in walks [and] covered with a beautiful green sod. . . . It presents a very agreeable appearance located as it is in the midst of the City." Like the Water Works, Bank, and other popular sites, the parks helped Philadelphia embody, for many cultivated
persons, the ideal genteel city. It seemed to combine the cultural and social amenities of any large urban center with the serenity and relative social harmony of the countryside.

Another Virginian, John Strobia, walked to Centre Square, where water pumped from the Schuylkill was stored in a tall reservoir, "a handsome structure of white marble."

Typically, the building combined practicality and ornament. The surrounding area, observed Strobia, "is handsomely ornamented with rows of trees; under the shade of which the citizens enjoy the cool air during the afternoon, and on days of leisure." Of Washington Square, Frances Trollope observed "the trees are numerous, and highly beautiful, and several commodious seats are placed beneath their shade, it is, in spite of the long grass, a very agreeable retreat from the heat and the dust." Despite having the old Walnut Street prison occupy one side of the Square, she felt it to be "the nearest approach to a London square that is to be found in Philadelphia," no small compliment from the acerbic gentlewoman.27

---

27Lions of Philadelphia, 33; Preachy R. Grattan, New York, to "My Dear Wife," Betham, Goochland County, Va., 27 September 1837, Preachy R. Grattan Papers, SHC; Strobia Diary, September 10, 1817; Trollope, Domestic Manners of the Americans, 266. Trollope went on the observe that "it was rarely, however, that I saw any of these seats occupied; the Americans have either no leisure, or no inclination for these moments of delassement that all other people, I believe, indulge in." The absence of leisured park visitors was more likely due to the time of her visit, in the deep summer, when most wealthy Philadelphians abandoned the city for Cape May, Long Branch, or similar resorts. The Walnut Street Prison closed its doors in 1835, but apparently Trollope—who seems to have regarded the jail merely as an eyesore—did not see the gaol at its worst. Matters had apparently improved since 1787, when Manasseh Cutler witnessed the prisoners waving caps suspended from poles at pedestrians, begging for coins. If none were forthcoming, marveled the clergyman, they screamed "the most foul and horrid imprecations." Even so, Cutler was quite pleased with the park. William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, eds., Life, Journals, and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, LL.D. 2 Vols. (Cincinnati, Robert Clarke & Co., 1888), 1:262-263.
Urban parks and squares were, as Richard Bushman observes, attempts to infiltrate the city with patches of gentility. Upper-Class residential districts, shopping areas, and recreational areas were "anchored," as it were, by stately public buildings like Biddle's Bank which practically radiated the marriage of power, wealth, and status, even as its defeat by Jackson exposed the fundamental weakness of America's quasi-aristocracy. Nevertheless, the process of exclusion represented by fashionable addresses and stately parks were only elements in a larger, informal process of class segregation manifest in a myriad of ways. Captain Basil Hall remarked rather approvingly of one such practice during his journey to Philadelphia--the first of many happy observations the aristocratic officer and his wife would record during their stay in the city. "[G]rand steamboats carry at one moment many distinctions of rank," declared the Captain, "because persons of different habits, when there is room for choice, naturally keep together." Moreover, captains kept class segregation alive on land by judging "from appearances what persons are likely to be agreeable coach companions to one another," assigning stages to similarly comported individuals.\(^\text{28}\)

The lower orders were not always as pliable as Hall suggested, and their stubborn unwillingness to keep out of "refined" areas exposed the tension between the elite's aspirations and the social boundaries of the nineteenth century. Travelers unfailingly praised the elegance and refinement of cultivated spaces, but their awareness common folks' derision lurked just below the surface of their placid accounts. Hence "J.Q.P." of

\(^{28}\)Bushman, Refinement of America, 354; Basil Hall, Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828 3 Vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell and Co., 1829), 2:336-337.
North Carolina suggested that better lighting would rid city squares "of those who now visit them, and the respectable citizens and strangers could here promenade without the risk of being insulted at every step." Henry Massie expressed gratitude for the Philadelphia police force, which protected respectable people from the "motley mixture of sailors, draymen, labourers, & blackguards of every description." that loitered just outside the City Hotel. And while Jane North found Chestnut Street "very handsome," her experience was spoiled when "one little miserable of a boy, rushed against me, & before I recovered the shock, he had torn the lace of my defenceless mantilla." Not surprisingly, the issue of deference and disrespect looked differently from the other side of the class divide. Fanny Fern's portrayal of the Water Works as common property framing a landscape available and open to all contrasts rather starkly with the proprietary images of visiting bluebloods. The country estates visible from Fairmount, she argued, were "enjoyed less, perhaps, by their owners, than by the industrious artisan, who, reprieved from his day's toil, stands gazing at them with his wife and children, and inhaling the breeze, of which, God be thanked, the rich man has no monopoly." Fern hated the aristocracy. 29

If the poor would not and could not be kept out of certain refined spaces, the "city of gentility" still remained a reality in some quarters. Numerous attractions and accommodations remained the purview of a small circle of wealthy and prestigious

families. The Continental Hotel assured prospective guests that "a Vertical Railway . . . extending from the ground floor to the top of the house" rendered direct access to the "upper rooms--which have always been regarded as most desirable." The escalator stood out among many other amenities designed to ensure "entire exclusiveness" from the urban rabble on the lower floors, shops, and saloons. Similarly, certain tourist attractions were reserved, by custom or practice, to refined men and women. John Strobia, not knowing that entrance to Pratt's Gardens required the purchase of a ticket from a downtown office, arrived one afternoon with some friends. Rebuffed at the gate, the Strobia introduced his party as "strangers" and gentlemen, and after paying a "trifling fee, we were permitted to enter, and every information given us that we required." Not only were they granted an extemporaneous tour, but the gardener apologized for his rudeness, explaining that, "having received much damage from the depredation of Boys and others, in the destruction of fruit and flowers, the proprietor determined, at last, that no person should enter it without tickets of admission." Once the party identified themselves as Virginia gentlemen, they were welcomed as a matter of course.30

Other places of interest followed a similar policy. Nominally open to the public, they appealed to a cultivated populace and discouraged the curiosity of the lowborn through high fees or a hostile atmosphere. Charles Wilson Peale exhibited the common touch in laying out his museum of natural history specimens and historical portraits, even placing the skeleton of a mouse below his celebrated mastodon skeleton for comic effect. Nevertheless, his collections remained a favorite attraction of cultivated strangers for

30C.G.P., A Travelers Sketch, 13; Strobia Diary, September 11, 1817, VHS.
decades. Elizabeth Ruffin made a visit to Peale's museum her first stop for "amusement" after taking care of business in the morning and was so impressed by the sheer variety of specimens that she refused to "disparage it by an attempt at description; saw every thing and nothing both nature and art in every form." A quarter of a century earlier, Dr. Adam Alexander "Visited the Museum & was [welcomed] by Mr. R[embrandt] Peale with friendly attention." Alexander could afford to pay, but Charles Peale's son "would take nothing from me or my friends." Alexander was a learned physician, a fellow gentleman within the republic of letters. His tour, in which the young artist "shew[ed] us everything," including the unreconstructed mammoth, was an act of professional courtesy to a fellow man of learning, not to be spoiled by a commercial transaction.\textsuperscript{31}

If Charles Wilson Peale gave a special welcome to gentlemen while still opening his museum to the public, other institutions were more forthcoming about their pretensions. The Artists' Fund Society Exhibition, claimed a local guide, "is a fashionable lounge for parties of ladies and gentlemen, who appear in the character of connoisseurs, or patrons of art, desirous of learning, by comparison of their respective works, who among the artists may be most worthy to receive encouragement." G.M. Davison's travel book drew attention to the Academy of Fine Arts, emphasizing that several paintings housed there, whatever their artistic merit, were "the property of Joseph Bonaparte." For the most part, of course, patrons visited the Academy and similar

\textsuperscript{31}Elizabeth Ruffin Diary, July 31, 1827, in O'Brien, ed., \textit{An Evening When Alone}, 74-75; Dr. Adam Alexander Travel Diary, October 6, 1801, Alexander-Hillhouse Papers, SHC. Peale opened his museum in 1786 and administered it for his remaining forty-one years in a variety of locations, including the upper floor of the State House. Sellers, \textit{Mr. Peale's Museum}. 
museums to appreciate the art and to revel in the growing cultural power of the young nation. John Strobia raved that the Academy's holdings presented "the eye [with] an extensive and continued feast, for a considerable time. Some of the paintings in this place, are fine indeed; and the statues and busts deserve particular attention." Museums enjoyed the considerable benefit of sheltering their patrons from the coarseness of the streets. While admirers of architecture were liable to harassment by pedestrians, museum goers were likely to encounter only people of similar refinement. 32

Despite the considerable shelter offered by science and art museums, there existed yet another category of institution available to many privileged travelers, one even more exclusive than the relatively safe confines of the gallery. Exclusive societies like the Athenaeum and the American Philosophical Society opened their doors to refined strangers, and indeed did so quite eagerly--given the sponsorship of a local notable or a reliable letter of reference. That is, these institutions required membership in the Atlantic aristocratic community. Preachy Grattan, a Presbyterian minister, was evidently not in this group. "The fact that I was a total stranger in Philadelphia & had no person to go with me to see any thing or even to direct me how to set about attaining admission to the various objects of curiosity which abound in Philadelphia, rendered my visit much less interesting than it might otherwise have been," he complained to his wife. Travel guides described exclusive societies flatteringly but cautioned their readers that admission required a local advocate. "Strangers are admitted to" the Athenaeum, reported G.M.

32 Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia, 16; Davison, A Travelers Guide, 67; John Strobia Diary, September 9, 1817, VHS.
Davison, only "on being introduced by a subscriber, and a register of their names is kept."

Another guide praised the Athenaeum for "furnishing a place of resort for persons of leisure who may wish to read the newspapers, reviews, and scientific journals," but warned that "strangers" could only be "introduced by subscribers or stockholders."

Leisure of a rather different sort could be enjoyed at the Philadelphia Club, located in Thomas Butler's old Walnut Street manse. They were careful to welcome only men of a congenial temperament. Following custom, the admission of a stranger required introduction by a member, but since membership was limited to elite Philadelphia families, only recognized gentlemen could hope to sip madeira in the clubhouse.

Readmission following the initial introduction required the unanimous vote of the board and signing one's name in the club register. James L[ouis] Petirgue [sic], Beverley Tucker, Francis Blair, and Wade Hampton, whose names appeared on the guest book, were men of such stature.33

Bluebloods maintained a select company to preserve their own reputations, but they were also trying to elaborate their own vision of American nationalism--one that owed much to continental principles of gentility, but one far more open and dynamic than but few amongst the European gentry dared dream. Hostesses carefully weighed the claims of strangers wishing to enter their parlors lest their character become tainted.

Phoebe Rush cultivated a reputation for welcoming persons of "talent, intellectual ability,

33Preachy R. Grattan to "My Dear Wife," 27 September 1837, Grattan Papers, SHC; Davison, Traveller's Guide through the Middle and Northern States, 68; Lions of Philadelphia, 43; Owen Wister, The Philadelphia Club, Being a Brief History of the Club for the First Hundred Years of its Existence, Together with a Roll of its Officers and Members to 1934 (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1934), 23 (guest list), 190-191.
and the power to charm and entertain" into her weekly salons, but dismissed "misguided aspirant[s]" with a "retribution. . . . as swift and sure as a tongue barbed with the keenest satire could make it."34 Visitors also expressed their vision of American nationalism in a more direct way, by viewing the historical sites central to the founding of the republic. If the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the development of sectional spirit in some southerners, a trend exaggerated by the hindsight of the Civil War, it also generated an enthusiastic surge of American nationalism, not the least in southerners. As the cradle of independence, Americans invested Philadelphia with particular patriotic capital. The social whirl embedded bluebloods within a national network of elite families, celebrating the virtues of the genteel lifestyle while cementing cross-regional bonds through courtship and marriage, friendship, and intellectual interest. Historical sites inculcated American identity in a more immediate and less class conscious way, patriotic attractions being open to all. But when experienced in tandem with social affairs and other refined activities, they promoted a distinctly aristocratic version of American nationhood.

The act of traveling itself implied some nationalistic feeling, or at least benign curiosity. At least on the part of American tourists, however, curiosity was itself inseparable from patriotic sentiments, as a game designed for travelers makes clear. As players moved their game pieces around a board imprinted with a map of the United States, they related the characteristics and history of the site on which their die roll landed them. The manual described the young nation as "by far the finest portion of the western

34Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, Salons, Colonial and Republican (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1900), 235, 252.
continent... with respect to wealth, fertility, civilization and refinement." Since
independence, the guide assured, "the country has continually advanced in wealth,
prosperity, and power." Virginians of the Revolutionary era "were not less distinguished
for their loyalty to the British sovereigns, than they have been since for their valour and
patriotism." Other descriptions of local characteristics followed that general pattern, just
as most accounts of cities were consistent with the game's portrayal of Philadelphia as a
"noble city... situated between the Delaware and the Schuylkill rivers... It is the
centre of a great trade, and has the most extensive manufactures of any city in the Union."
Similarly, J.C. Myers's guide fused tourist information with patriotic comment. Hence
Pennsylvanians were "distinguished for their habits of order, industry, and frugality," their
"old commonwealth" replete with "noble roads and public works, with the well cultivated
fields... and also their commodious and durable stone houses and still larger stone
barns." Myers also explained away lower class rudeness, attributing it to refuse from
Britain. "[I]t would be impossible," asserted Myers of American towns, "to find a like
number of cities, with as many inhabitants in any other region of the globe, whose
average moral, social, and intellectual condition stand so high."35

If the long days viewing scenery in carriages and steamboats were infused with
patriotic ardor, such feelings were heightened and concentrated by a visiting the historical
sites around Philadelphia. These attractions not only encouraged pride in American

35The Traveller's Tour through the United States: A Pleasing and Instructive Pastime, Performed with a Tetotum and Travelers. All the Principal Cities are Visited and Described (Philadelphia: Thomas T. Ash, 1835), 5,6, 45; Myers, Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, 436, 449-450.
heritage—especially for the Revolutionary generation—and a sense of the increasing power and cultivation of the nation, but it helped tourists visualize a common national purpose and destiny, a feeling of interconnectedness with other Americans. Tourist guides made frequent allusions to the city's historical significance. One pointed out that "[t]he city is noted for several events in our history, such as Penn's treaty with the Indians, the assembling of the first Congress, in 1774, and being occupied by the British in 1777, &c."

More than these rather general remarks, guidebooks tried to infuse ordinary tourist attractions with historical importance. Hence the American Philosophical Society not only occupied a "large and commodious building on a part of the State House Square, in which [it] has deposited about 6000 volumes of valuable books, and a collection of objects of natural history." The "presidents of the society" were eminent figures from the revered Revolutionary generation, including "Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse, Thomas Jefferson, Caspar Wistar, Robert Patterson and William Tilghman."³⁶

Visitors were receptive to nationalistic attractions. Besides his natural history collections, a significant portion of Charles Wilson Peale's museum consisted of portraits of Revolutionary heroes. John Strobia declared himself "particularly struck [by] the gallery of Portraits of all the leading men concerned in the American Revolution," including "Washington, Fayette, Baron Steuben, Green, Montgomery, Jay; and many other distinguished characters." Peale's artistic execution was admirable, but the portraits' historic relevance particularly impressed the Virginia diarist. "This group, a century

³⁶Myers, Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, 68; Davison, The Fashionable Tour, 438-439.
hence, will be a valuable collection in the eyes of posterity," he predicted. Despite the staunch unionist Whiggery she shared with her father, Emma Shannon of Vicksburg evinced a pronounced southern pride. Yet in an excited letter she reported how, while touring Philadelphia, she and her sister had met an "old gentleman," a "privileged person. . . who inquired if we were strangers," who offered to "take us around and show us some of the places of interest." The young women particularly appreciated their tour of Carpenters' Hall, whose "ancient . . . red and black bricks" they associated with the seemingly distant and epic age of the struggle for independence. Having "entered, [they] stood in the hall where the first congress was held, the spot where Patrick Henry poured forth his spirit-stirring elegance, &c. The same platform on which stands the Speaker's chair, [is] occupied by John Hancock's and another one in which Washington often sat . . . all were here, when the first Congress met." Ironically, these feelings of national distinction were heightened by the sometimes shabby treatment by Philadelphians of their historical treasures. While one visitor thought that "[t]he public buildings are of a fine order," he found one damning exception. The "Old State House, he charged, "stands unnoticed and unhonored," when it "should be the boast of every Philadelphian."

Travelers from all parts of the South saw Revolutionary relics as the "dearest proof of their freedoms," their deepest source of nationalism and most visible symbol of common American identity.37

37Strobia Diary, September 6, 1817, VHS; Emma Shannon to "Mother," April 8, 1858, box 4, folder 40, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," 250. Basil Hall was similarly dismayed by the appearance of Independence Hall, though he ascribed its poor condition to Americans' failure to respect anything "on account of its age, or, indeed, on
As the Carolinians' indignant comments suggest, no place evoked civic pride like the Old State House. Observers not only were inspired by a sense of national power but an image of a better, more unified past from which the nation had somehow strayed. Guidebooks typically sang the praises of the places they described, but by encouraging patriotism by referring to epic, bonding events in American history, they fostered common national identity. One guidebook suggested that visitors interpret the "bell used on [the] memorable occasion" of independence as a knell "calling the people together." While "not in use at present," the Liberty Bell still bound Americans "as a relic of the heroic age of American history." Such feelings possessed Virginian Matilda Hamilton, who visited the Hall in 1857. She assumed the State House would be "the most interesting place in Phil[adelphi]a to all true Americans." It recalled to her the "heroic age" of war, liberty, and nation building. "[E]very thing in it looks ancient," she asserted. Visiting "where the question of our independence was discussed & decided upon & declared" inspired Preachy Grattan to wax philosophical, bringing to mind a "long string of self-evident truths or manly maxims." To these tourists, comfortably ensconced in hotel rooms, the past was not contested terrain. The relics of American history supported their vision of a prosperous, cultivated, and united republic. The national vision of the fathers was not to be questioned. Viewing the State House and its grounds, Hugh Rose imagined "our father patriots s[itting] to deliberate on the fate of the nation . . . what

any other account. Neither historical associations, nor high public services, nor talents, nor knowledge, claim any particular reverence from the busy generations of the present hour, . . . The Turks who pounded the Frieze of the Parthenon into mortar, had an object in view; but I never could hear that the Americans had an equally good excuse for dismembering their Hall of Independence." Hall, *Travels in North America*, 375-376.
reverence we should feel for those great men!"^38

Even in staunch southern nationalists, Independence Hall inspired awe. Not only did it hearken back to a time when sectional differences were submerged under life and death struggles, but as a relic of an idealized past it represented the fundamental values of the public. Some sectional partisans infused the Hall and the bell it housed with a mythical, idealized set of "genuine,"--proslavery--values from which the nation had somehow strayed. For a surprising number of these men, however, the Old State House represented the principles of unity, civic harmony, and national pride. Clement Clay, economic sectionalist and member of the expansionist Knights of the Golden Circle, considered his visit to Philadelphia a massive disappointment. Yet he was profoundly stirred by viewing the stately brick edifice of Independence Hall. When he "struck the old cracked the old bell [and] sat in the chair occupied by John Hancock," Clay "felt [his] patriotism grow warmer and pulse beat quicker." To visit the State House was a pilgrimage, a ritual through which visitors effaced differences of creed and section and confirmed their place in a national community.39

Viewing the historical sites crucial to the founding of the American nation

---

38Lions of Philadelphia, 20; Matilda Hamilton Diary, 24 February 1857, Hamilton Family Papers, VHS; Preachy Grattan, New York, to My Dear Wife, Betham, Goochland County, Va., 27 September 1837; Grattan Papers, SHC; Hugh Merrit Rose to Henry Rose, October 16, 1825, Rose Papers, VHS.

inspired a sense of common interest, sentiment, and destiny, but in visiting friends and associates in Philadelphia, privileged southerners cultivated American nationalism along with a common class spirit— an American upper-class identity. Personal contacts made a trip to Philadelphia more than a vacation; it became a sort of family reunion of the American gentry. Indeed, Margaret and Basil Hall discovered that Philadelphia hospitality embraced the Atlantic aristocratic community. The cultivated pair had no sooner arrived at their boarding house when John Vaughan—the incomparably connected librarian of the American Philosophical Society—came calling. They were immediately smitten with this "most kind and useful of men" who, marveled Margaret, volunteered "to arrange all the business of sight-seeing for us." Charles Daubeney had a similar experience. He acknowledged a large group of Philadelphians, including Vaughan, Stephen DuPonceau, Nicholas Biddle, and Robert Hare, who "did all they could to render my stay at Philadelphia as agreeable as possible, and contrived to make my appearance at the table of the boarding-house really a matter of very rare occurrence." Not only did Hall and Daubeney enjoy tours of Philosophical Hall unavailable to most tourists— guidebooks merely described the buildings and gave a brief history—but the doors of the city's most fashionable houses were opened to them. Perhaps Henry Massie's observation was tinged with more than a little bitterness— it appears his tour of Philadelphia was restricted to its public areas— but it contains a kernel of truth. "The Philadelphians are very distant with strangers, but much the reverse, I'm told, with those they know," the Virginian noted. Friendship did more than promise intimate access to the attractions highlighted in travel books. It provided admission to that most exclusive of all Philadelphia tourist sites— the
The *beau monde* was the ultimate expression of the genteel city. If certain public areas were marked as refined, common people could still enjoy them; if museums and galleries displayed objects requiring cultivation to appreciate, they remained open to the public, for a fee. Polite society was under no such restraints, and it embodied the most cherished ideals of the upper class—exclusivity, accomplishment, leisure, sensuality, and cultivation. For most genteel travelers, as for Izard Middleton, the character of social life determined their judgement of the whole city. Generally, European travelers repulsed by American openness found in Philadelphia a congenial atmosphere, while those enamored of social dynamism thought the city stuffy and reactionary. Privileged Philadelphians carefully cultivated their aristocratic image, especially to inquisitive continentalis. They were quite aware that many opinions formed in their drawing rooms would eventually find their way into print. More important, they were eager to win the approval of genuine aristocrats since their endorsement would validate, in a sense, the Americans' own experiment in blending the best elements of republicanism and aristocracy. Sidney George Fisher attended an affair with the British consul at which "[t]he eternal subjects democracy & the influence of American institutions were introduced." Fisher spoke of his disdain for democratic government with more than his usual zeal. Other gentlemen of

---

40 Mrs. Basil Hall [Margaret Hunter Hall], *The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Months' Sojourn in America, 1827-1828* Ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1931), Charles Daubeney, *Journal of a Tour through the United States, and in Canada, Made During the Years 1837-38* (Oxford: T. Combe, 1843), 77-78; Massie Travel Diary, 1808, VHS.
Fisher's circle later chided him for having "spoken so openly in censure of the institutions of the country before a foreigner, saying that he would no doubt write home that the feelings of the intelligent portion of the community were opposed to the government." His friends objected not to his conservative opinions but to his carelessness in laying bare the fractures in the genteel community to a British gentleman.41

Tour guides did not dwell on the fashionable world, for, unlike other attractions, entry was closed to all but a privileged few. Drury Lacy mixed with highly respectable circles during his brief trip to Philadelphia in 1839, but the company of one tea party far exceeded this modest standard. The mother and daughter who gave the tea, he assured his wife, were "real ladies of the very first class." Other visitors were more accustomed to high society. Margaret and Basil Hall were whisked away almost nightly to one social affair or another, and Francis Grund, Thomas Hamilton, and many other curious Europeans gained easy entry into fashionable parlors, including the well-known Wistar Parties, the informal, social arm of the American Philosophical Society. The conventional tourist circuit paled in comparison to the pleasures of the parlor. A North Carolina traveler made the rounds of parks, grounds, and promenades but reserved his warmest praise for the "taste and refinement" of Philadelphia women, attending numerous "delightful . . . musical soireé[s]" where, he related, "you hear the best vocal and instrumental performers and meet the most select society." His fellow Tar Heel William Gaston averred to a Philadelphia friend that "to mingle familiarly with the delightful

society of your City, with the learned and the gay and the polite, is among the highest
gratifications which my fancy can conceive." Leisure, cultivation, and select company
remained the foundation of the elite's identity in antebellum America, and nowhere more
than Philadelphia were these principles exalted and practiced.42

There is more than impressionistic evidence to support such a statement.

Numerous bluebloods, from both Europe and America, made strikingly similar
observations regarding Philadelphia's high culture. One southerner warned aspiring
gentry that "[t]here is no city in the Union in which the gentleman is better received. If he
pass the ordeal, he is safe and happy in their society; if found unsuited and rejected, he
will find it advisable not to attempt the purchase, as he will most certainly fail." If ladies
and gentlemen were welcomed, others found the door closed to them. "There is no
American city in which the system of exclusion is so rigidly observed as in Philadelphia,"
observed Thomas Hamilton, not unkindly. "The ascent of a parvenu into the aristocratic
circle is slow and difficult. There is a sort of holy alliance between its members to forbid
all unauthorized approach." To many qualified to make the judgement, Philadelphians'
efforts had considerable success. Margaret Hall appeared at one ball devoid "of the haut
ton" of fashionable life that did nothing to improve her image of American society, but
attended a considerably more exclusive one a few days later that changed her mind. "The
Philadelphians claim being the first in rank in society of any town in the States," she

42Drury Lacy to "My beloved wife," May 23, 1839, Lacy Papers, SHC; J.Q.P.
from N.C., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," 250; William Gaston, Raleigh, to
Joseph Hopkinson, Philadelphia, 4 June 1823, Joseph Hopkinson Papers (photostats),
SHC.
confessed, "and the specimen of last night makes good the pretension." Hall thought Quaker City parties boasted a more diverse company and more beautiful and cultivated women. Moreover, Philadelphians were comfortable with their aristocratic identity while other Americans strained to ape European manners, the effort only underscoring their vulgarity. But "things are left to follow their own inclination" in Philadelphia affairs, Hall stated, "and so the company is of course left more at liberty."  

At least one traveler ascribed the city's preeminent fashionable world to its southern character. Philadelphians' "agreeable and hospitable society, their pleasant evening-parties, their love of literature," William Chambers suggested, emerged naturally from "their happy blending of the industrial habits of the North with the social usages of the South." It was personal connections, however--ties between friends, colleagues, and family--that made the city's society so attractive to cultivated men and women from Europe and the North as well as the South. The Halls' sojourn was coordinated by John Vaughan, who saw to it that they were escorted around Philadelphia by Clement Biddle and Roberts Vaux; John Strobia's friendship with Thomas Sully secured access to galleries as well as parlors; and Eliza Haywood spent her Philadelphia vacation in Langdon Cheves's "new and magnificent mansion," the Carolinian having met her party "at the wharf" and insisting that they accept his hospitality. During his visit to

---

Philadelphia in 1821, Thomas Percy "passed an evening at Mr. [John] Vaughan's in company with some pleasant men of learning & a few diplomatic characters," including Robert Walsh and Correa da Serra. Though he rued that "the families to whom I had letters are nearly all in the country," his party was still "very hospitably received by" several of his "old friend[s]," including a number of college chums. With a reputation for unsurpassed refinement to uphold, Philadelphians had to practice exclusion. And, of course, those who were welcomed into salons and ballrooms had their own claims to genteel status confirmed. "It has been said that the Philadelphians are cold and reserved in their intercourse with strangers," wrote one gentleman who walked within the charmed circle, but "[s]trangers who bring letters of introduction, or persons whose family, education, and manners are such as to entitle them to move in their circles will, when acquainted, have the most marked attentions paid them." With those without such connections he was apparently unconcerned.44

Few aspirants to fashionable life could be satisfied with admittance, for to do so would have meant ending the exclusivity that made Philadelphia the center of American society in the first place. Only the truly privileged could enter the highest echelons of the fashionable world. Many tourists visited the city, saw its attractions, walked its streets. Many of these had friends or family in Philadelphia to make their stay more sociable and

less like a vacation. Even their experience, however, underscores the ways that Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century saw their world in the class terms inherited from a more traditional but fading era. All around them were the symbols of elite influence and power: cultivated parks, imposing Greek-style buildings, glittering streets, their shops beckoning the well-to-do, and tall hotels in whose upper stories lounged men in women in fantastic luxury. Even those travelers not of the leisure class seldom thought to question this arrangement. Travel was expensive, and even tourists of relatively modest means, like Preachy Grattan and Drury Lacy, were wealthy compared to the paupers that lined the city's streets and parks. And the very insolence of this lower class--they loitered in genteel spaces, not just in their own quarters--won them the scorn of cultivated men and women, middle and upper class alike. Even if the middle class and newly rich were barred from the most fashionable parlors, both sought worldly salvation, as it were, in the same place--the gospel according to Chesterfield.

All travelers shared some experiences--the discomfort, crowding, length, and even danger of long-distance movement. But the leisure class lived in a different world. The scope and luxury of their Grand Tour could scarcely be imagined by the less privileged. Even more than sumptuously appointed conveyances, lavish rooms, top-notch service, and other perks of first-class travel, the elite enjoyed each other's company. They traveled to consort with people like themselves--rich, cultivated, prestigious, and leisure-loving. Good hostesses carefully monitored hotels and boarding houses for fellow bluebloods to grace their parties. Such a hostess was Margaret Manigault, fortunate enough to have a friend in John Vaughan, a man with his ear to the ground like no other. Never "did ever a
more sumptuous entertainment afford more pleasure," recalled a Philadelphia friend of her salons, "and strangers who were taken there were equally satisfied." The social scene was an integral component of travel, but only for the fortunate few. Above all a means for maintaining an American aristocratic identity, it remained a closed world, with its own rules and rituals—alien, mysterious, and threatening, even to those travelers who, without social connections, peered curiously into, not out of, the French windows of Walnut Street. 

45"Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," Box 10, Cadwalader Collection, J. Francis Fisher Section, HSP.
CHAPTER 3
SOCIAL LIFE IN THE EARLY REPUBLIC:
THE “CAROLINA ROW” AND ITS CIRCLE

Alice Izard wrote to her daughter Margaret Manigault in 1807 of her search for a home for her declining years. The widow of South Carolina patriot Ralph Izard longed to dedicate her old age to the education of her young daughters and grandchildren. Though she wrote from New York, where she was visiting relatives, she did not consider that booming city for her residence. "My heart is divided," she mused, for "it sometimes is in Philadelphia, sometimes in Charleston." This cultivated lady, née DeLancey, daughter of one of New York's mightiest families, had married into the tidewater aristocracy of the Palmetto State. She was destined to divide the rest of her days (she died in 1834) between Farley, her son's estate on the banks of the Delaware river near the resort town of Bristol, and her house on Spruce Street, in the heart of Philadelphia's most fashionable district. Actually, her choice made perfect sense. Not only would she encourage her far-flung family to settle around her, guaranteeing her care and comfort in her widowhood, but she could look forward to the company of generations of Fishers, Mifflins, Chews, Hopkinsons, Craigs, Lenoxes, Butlers, and Biddles, the cream of Philadelphia's social scene. For a woman of the world, for whom the ancien régime represented the epitome of
cultivation, the city on the Delaware beckoned as the heart of aristocratic America.\(^1\)

Of course, the "aristocracy" as it existed in America, even amidst such a proudly unreconstructed upper crust as could be found in Philadelphia, was merely a pale imitation of the genuine European article. Even before the Revolution, the wealthiest Americans who monopolized the highest political offices in the colonies "remained subject to the supreme political authority of Crown and Parliament" while lacking the hereditary lands and titles that defined the aristocracies of the Old World. This important divergence between the nature of wealth and political power in Europe and America did not prevent the gentry from emulating their peers across the Atlantic.\(^2\) Despite the flowering of democratic sentiment and a mounting disdain for privilege, especially amongst backcountry farmers and urban artisans, the lower orders often deferred in weighty matters to their social betters. Even so, more conservative elites feared the unprecedented assertiveness of "men who lacked elite credentials," especially after 1800. It was in these decades that the Manigault family formed their cultivated clique of southerners in Philadelphia. In struggling with the rearing of children, the uncertainties

\(^1\)Alice Izard, New York, to Margaret Manigault, Philadelphia, November 11, 1807, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, microfiche copy at the University of Florida Library, Gainesville (hereafter MFP-SCL).

of war, the maintenance of friendships, and the preservation of family status, the history of the Manigault clan epitomized the difficulties that aristocratic families faced in adjusting to the nineteenth century world. Whether in Savannah, Boston, New York, or Charleston, gentry families often felt besieged by the same subversive democracy. As the nationally recognized seat of republican aristocracy, Philadelphia emerged as the young nation's cultural hothouse.

Like their fellows in the tidewater aristocracy of Georgia and South Carolina, the Manigaults and Izards preferred the glittering world of the eastern commercial ports to life on their rice and cotton plantations. To be sure, coastal barons sought to endow their estates with an aristocratic aura by giving them names and appearances reminiscent of great English manors. Planters often expressed their desire to spend more time at home but typically had difficulty finding the opportunity. Margaret Manigault remembered a favorite family manor as an "Elysium" yet admitted that she would "leave it for Philadelphia," since "great things are to be done in this fair City." The same held true for other family tracts like Broom Hill, The Oaks, and The Fold. They were places for fond

---

memories but infrequent visits. Lowcountry squires, wrote Harriott Ravenel, were "as much town folk as country gentlemen." From the rich soils of lowcountry and sea island estates came the high income necessary to live the high life in the beau monde of urban America.4

Historians have long appreciated the importance of Charleston in the cultural life of South Carolina's first families. Less well understood is that planters were seldom satisfied to play upon this local and increasingly parochial stage. They sought their place in the national aristocracy, a class that for all Charleston's allurements failed to measure up to their cosmopolitan standard. Like cultivated men and women up and down the east coast, they took part in what the historian of medicine, Richard Shyrock, called "an urban culture common to both" North and South." One Carolina lady, summering in the backcountry, wrote to her Philadelphia friends that "in these parts all that [is] necessary for a woman to know was the curing of bacon & making soap. You will allow," she complained, "that those accomplishments are incompatible with studying Montaigne." In the young nation only Philadelphia, then New York, ranked as truly bright centers of culture and cultivation. To be sure, bourgeois Boston and tiny Charleston had their champions, but neither could offer the combination of size, wealth, enlightenment, and variety that could the two commercial giants. Decades after the capital moved to Washington, Penn's city maintained its social and cultural preeminence. Generations of

---

southerners, especially Carolinians, flocked to Philadelphia's parlors on their way to the northern springs. In the decades following 1800, the Manigault/Izard clan traveled often to the Palmetto State and the Empire City, but they returned home to Philadelphia to welcome throngs of Pinckneys, Heywards, Kinlochs, Middletons, Carters, and Rutledges.5

To make the northern city an acceptable "home," the Manigault circle followed class conventions by acquiring land and property appropriate to their rank. Renting summer retreats around the city every year proved impractical and expensive. Upon the family's decision to spend the warm months indefinitely around Philadelphia, Gabriel Manigault in 1808 purchased Clifton, a rural retreat overlooking the Delaware in Bristol outside of Philadelphia from fellow Carolinian Wade Hampton. "Clifton," reminisced Joshua Francis Fisher, "was a very large house, with rooms, I remember, of palatial proportions," that could accommodate the large numbers of Philadelphia and Carolina friends the Manigaults received. Gabriel's mother-in-law continued to rent a townhouse in the winters while spending her summers at Lansdowne or Farley, estates on the

Schuylkill river, where she supervised the education and social lives of the circle's young women—daughters, granddaughters, and friends. These permanent residences freed distant family and friends from patronizing expensive and impersonal boarding houses. On their way to the northern springs, southern travelers sojourned at Clifton or Farley where they might mingle with Philadelphians on their adjacent country estates.\(^6\)

Despite the near-constant company of kin and friends, Alice Izard and her daughter longed for each other's company. Bad roads, inclement weather, and seasonal trips South required long separations. After Gabriel Manigault's death in 1809 their estrangement became unbearable. Alice spent months at Clifton with her daughter and minded the busy house when Margaret wintered in Charleston. Margaret yearned to spend her days with her daughters, sisters, and friends in Philadelphia. While the Bristol house sufficed for the summer months, it was too far from the city to serve the family during the busy winter social season, when bad weather might prevent trips to town or visits with neighbors. With young daughters and granddaughters about to enter the social whirl, Alice Izard knew what was wanting. She should "be very glad... to put myself

entirely under your auspices," she wrote her daughter, but only "as soon as you have a
town house large enough to contain us all conveniently." Margaret's mother was not to
wait long. That month her daughter purchased from Luis de Onis, the Spanish chargé
d'affaires, a house at 112 South Eighth street for the lordly sum of $19,500. Boasting "a
Mansard roof" and all the "ingredients in the composition of Comfort & well being," the
residence housed the Manigaults' far-flung circle of family and friends and allowed ample
room to entertain. "I like it much," enthused Margaret's mother, for "I wish for comfort
& that ease which living within my income will allow me to enjoy." In the years
following her purchase, four other members of her family obtained houses on the same
block. George Izard and his wife Elizabeth, Alice Izard, Nancy (Izard) Deas and her
husband William, and Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith and her husband Joseph all
lived on Spruce street between Ninth and Tenth.? The homes, situated in the heart of Philadelphia's fashionable district, became
known among the smart set as the "Carolina Row." In the next two decades, wealthy
Carolinians, Virginians, Georgians, New Yorkers, and Philadelphians mingled in the
Manigault and Izard parlors. On Spruce Street southern visitors found a more congenial--

7Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 14, 1816, MFP-SCL (first and fourth quotations); Fisher, "Reminiscences," (second); Margaret Manigault to Gabriel Henry
Manigault, March 16, 1818, Louis Manigault Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke
University (hereafter LM, Duke) (third). In Susan Petigru King, Lily: A Novel Jane H.
and William R. Pease, eds. (1855; Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 74, Alicia
Barclay informs the heroine, both students at a Philadelphia ladies academy, that the
houses they are passing "were called Carolina Row... such numbers of our country
people occupied and owned them." King, daughter of Palmetto State jurist James Louis
Petigru, attended Madame Guillen's academy in Philadelphia in the 1820s.
and less expensive—welcome than they could expect at one of the city's boarding houses or grand hotels. But more than that, the Row presented East Coast elites with opportunities for cementing cross-regional friendships, love affairs, and intellectual exchanges. It was through places like Newport, Saratoga, and the Carolina Row that the early national gentry maintained the sensibility that their privileged economic status reflected a genuine social and cultural superiority.

Many of these wellborn men and women found it comforting to believe that their riches were the just deserts of superior taste and breeding. Some old families recognized that their fortunes were not keeping pace with the status to which they clung. "New" men of much commercial but little social acumen seemed to be pushing their way forward. The old set was being eclipsed, it appeared to them. Yet despite frequent complaints about the diminished size of the Manigault family patrimony, it proved ample enough to furnish a degree of "comfort" and "ease" that merited the household a place in the highest circles of fashionable life. Their purchase of winter residences and the establishment of the Carolina Row eased but did not inaugurate the family's entrance into Philadelphia society. Well before the turn of the century the Izards had established friendly and well-connected contacts in the city. Such associations were exclusive neither to the family nor to Carolinians, though observers before and since have discerned an uncommon bond linking the chief cities of the Keystone and Palmetto states.

In 1781, following the capture of Charlestown and the imprisonment of patriot leaders there and in St. Augustine, the British exiled five hundred and seventy men, women, and children to Philadelphia through a prisoner exchange. Though Congress
approved a $30,000 loan for their maintenance, Philadelphians contributed generously from their own pockets.\(^8\) Among the Carolinians then present in Philadelphia either as exiles or members of Congress were Ralph Izard, Arthur Middleton, Thomas Pinckney, and John Rutledge, all of whom retained links to the city after independence. During the years in which Philadelphia served as the seat of the federal government these links grew stronger. For the cosmopolitan in the new capital on the Potomac, "especially the Diplomatic Circle," dismal Washington could not match Philadelphia's allurements. These genteel foreigners "had not ceased to consider Philadelphia the social Capital of the Country," and for those Americans who reveled in the company of genuine aristocrats, Philadelphia endured as be the soul of cultivation in the new nation.\(^9\)

\(^8\)On the South Carolina exiles see David Duncan Wallace, *The History of South Carolina* 3 vols. (New York, 1934), 2:227; and Malcom Bell, Jr., *Major Butler's Legacy: Four Generations of a Slaveowning Family* (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 37. Not all observers witnessed amicability between Pennsylvanians and their southern guests. George Grieve reminisced that "such was the cold, selfish spirit of too many of the inhabitants of Philadelphia towards their Carolina brethren, who had every claim upon their sympathy and good offices, as to merit the indignation of every feeling mind, and to fix an indelible stain upon their character as men and citizens." Grieve contradicted the view put forth by the Marquis de Chastellux in the notes of his translation of the Frenchman's travels. Chastellux, *Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782* 2 Vols., ed. Howard C. Rice, Jr. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 2: 593. Mabel Webber, ed., "Josiah Smith's Diary, 1780-1781," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 34 (1932-33), 67-210, a first-person account of an exile, stresses the fellowship between Philadelphia and Charleston patriots.

Even with these advantages, it seems unlikely that Penn's city could have so magnetically attracted Carolinians throughout the early republican and antebellum decades. That the city's conservative political culture and commercial ties contributed to its congeniality to southerners cannot be doubted. Yet the crucibles of war and government generated close friendships that bound together these disparate communities of bluebloods. The lineaments of sectional intercourse were fashioned out of innumerable strands of commerce, learning, kinship, and camaraderie. A central figure in this network of school chums, financial and commercial contacts, political cronies, and men of science and letters was John Vaughan, Philadelphia philanthropist and wine merchant. Born in England in 1756 to a prominent Unitarian and liberal merchant family, Vaughan emigrated to Philadelphia in 1782. The young man established himself in Robert Morris's counting house and by 1791 was in business for himself. Mildly Federalist in politics, but gifted with a "genius for making friends" that transcended political affiliation, Vaughan "became famous all over the world as an outstanding host in a city famous for its hospitality," observes Elizabeth Geffen. Graced with this gregarious temperament Vaughan quickly ingratiated himself into Philadelphia's fashionable parlors.

"persons passing through or sojourning in this state" be "retained in [Pennsylvania] longer than six months. An amendment required that the slaves of those "intending to inhabit or reside therein shall be immediately ... free." James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders, comps., The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania: From 1682 to 1801 (Harrisburg, 1808), 10: 71, 13: 52. The law was a serious inconvenience for some, not least the "Carolina Ladies [who] do not understand the management of servants in this State." Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, July 14, 1822. Elite families faced constant difficulties finding reliable and compliant free servants.
He proved perfectly suited as the public face of the American Philosophical Society, aggressively recruiting gentlemen from all sections of the young nation. Joshua Francis Fisher remembered that Vaughan introduced into the city's cultivated salons "every person of note, or those who came in any way recommended." Locals and strangers alike remarked at his enthusiasm to aid "every sort of personage, whose characters are good," an ardor grounded in his "practical goodness" and desire to promote a national intellectual community.¹⁰

If Vaughan strove to foster a national scientific conversation in his adopted land, he displayed a peculiar affection for the learned of the Palmetto State. His friendships with Henry Laurens, Henry Middleton, Thomas and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, and future Carolinian Thomas Cooper may have dated from his European years, when his family's acquaintance with liberals like Joseph Priestley facilitated contacts with like-minded Americans. Whatever the source of the association, Carolina's patriots-turned-politicians trusted Vaughan as their Philadelphia agent when that city hosted the national government in the 1790s. Well into the next century, Charleston's sons and daughters were eager to recognize and repay his benevolence. "What a great man you are in

Charleston!" exclaimed the Portuguese diplomat Correa da Serra to Vaughan in 1815. His ties to the Izard family dated at least to the 1790s, when he supervised some construction on Senator Ralph Izard's Philadelphia residence while the latter traveled in New England. Vaughan continued to assist well-heeled Carolinians during their absences from the city, receiving shipments, watching for cheap rents, and even inspecting properties for purchase. His services for the Manigault family were particularly appreciated. Natives noted that Vaughan seemed "particularly intimate with the colony of Carolinians on Spruce Street," and indeed the old Englishman constituted the core of a "society of old gentlemen" that graced the parlors of the Carolina Row on winter evenings at least until Margaret's death in March 1824.11

The homes that John Vaughan frequented on Spruce street between 9th and 10th constituted the hub of a cross-regional aristocracy integrating the first families of Pennsylvania and South Carolina. The east coast camaraderie of the Carolina Row suggests that southern identity among wealthy planters was only slightly felt in the early Republic, but it does "support a thesis of a significant southern emphasis in certain key aspects of upper-class American life," as Steven Stowe has observed. That is, the

---

11Joseph Francisco Correa da Serra to John Vaughan, December 17, 1815, American Philosophical Society Archives, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia (hereafter APS); Fisher, "Reminisces," (second quotation); Charlotte and Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, April 11, 1816 (third quotation), MFP-SCL. Ralph Izard to John Vaughan, August 25, 1793, Madeira-Vaughan Collection, Box 1, APS. Vaughan was a family friend even before the federal government came to the city. During a short layover at the City Tavern in Philadelphia, Gabriel Manigault noted that "Mr. John Vaughan called several times on us." "Tour to the Northward, 1783; and again in 1789 and 1791," [October] 21, 1789, MFP-SCL.
elevation of leisure, honor, hospitality, and consumption--practices popularly and scholarly understood to be the particular virtues or vices of the planter class--endured less as sectional than as class characteristics. These principles retained popular approval longer, perhaps, in the South, but they remained the ideals for genteel behavior for patrician families throughout America in the early nineteenth century.\(^\text{12}\)

The rounds of balls, salons, teas, calls, promenades, and card games represented much more than entertainment to these self-conscious patricians. Public display served to communicate to the middle and lower orders the elite's demands to deference and respect. That such rituals should appeal to such an honor-craving crowd as the southern planter class ought to be expected. Yet planters had no difficulty adjusting to the ways of their Philadelphia friends. The Manigaults and their Carolina circle circulated effortlessly in Philadelphia parlors precisely because no adaptation was necessary. Elite Americans of all sections danced to the same fashionable tunes. In restricting their circle to those who spoke this "language of class," genteel Americans represented themselves as a group distinguished by socioeconomic resources, breeding, taste, and aptitude.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^{13}\)On many works on ritual the most influential for historians have been those of Clifford Geertz, especially his *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). The quotation is that of Asa Briggs, "The Language of 'Class' in Early Nineteenth Century England," in Briggs and John Saville, eds., *Essays in Labor History* (London, 1960), 43-73; see also Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*;
The upper strata lived in their own social world and they guarded its entrance vigilantly. As always, new wealth had to be accommodated as old fortunes withered and old lines died out. Established elites were quite aware that without the steady infusion of new wealth and new names, their ranks would soon grow thin, their principles would appear stale and irrelevant. The illusion of exclusivity had to be maintained, nevertheless, since to admit too readily the permeability of their ranks would be to give the lie to their claims of natural and hereditary superiority. But in this exercise the American gentry had the benefit of the peerless example of the British aristocracy, which had for centuries allowed limited access to its ranks while preserving the illusion of exclusivity. The requirement that up-and-coming families endorse the conservative values of established elites was the crucial element in the integration of new members. Acceptance by the established gentry, after all, confirmed their own separation from the common herd. Indeed, recognition by the fashionable set inaugurated one's physical and mental separation from the lower orders. Though the urban upper class lived among the lesser folk, and could hardly avoid some contact with them in the streets, markets, and conveyances, social space was rigidly segregated.

With very few exceptions, social affairs were limited to the charmed circle of established family names. In parlors, ballrooms, supper tables, and other private spaces, 

Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1983), and Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 240-249. Work on the social history of American elites has lagged far behind that on their social inferiors. The best studies, though dated, remain Edward Pessen, Riches, Class, and Power before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973), and Jafer, The Urban Establishment.
the upper crust kept to itself. Interaction with social inferiors was limited to unavoidable and often unpleasant encounters on the street. On a quiet stroll in 1814, Harriet and Charlotte Manigault hid in the bushes upon hearing men's laughter on a lane near Clifton. Encountering the familiar faces of Jesse Wain and Samuel Wilcocks instead of bawdy strangers, the sisters explained that common sorts, when encountering genteel women traveling "without a gentleman in the country . . . were very apt to be rude." Bluebloods preferred to control the circumstances of encounters with their subordinates. In these regulated environments they minimized the risk of being mocked by those whom they felt owed them the respect due to natural superiors. Charitable visits—conducted by both individuals and organizations—were thus a favorite pastime, as those in need were unlikely to ridicule the empty pretensions of an elite bereft of legally sanctioned political and economic supremacy.¹⁴

Mentally, too, elites inhabited segregated space. Neither the lives nor the

thoughts of the lower sorts excited much curiosity. If they did not bother themselves with the particulars of ordinary life, however, the wellborn were acutely aware of the centrality of class divisions to their lifestyle and ideology. Nicholas Biddle boasted that "the most decisive characteristic of American society is its aristocracy; its downright exclusiveness. We Americans may say what we please, evade it, deny it, modify it, soften it, still it is true in all its force. I know of scarcely any country where the circles of society are more distinctly marked than in the United States." While seeking to add to their ranks, members of the elite might well offer aid and encouragement to certain promising and properly deferential individuals of the lower or middling ranks. But they usually viewed middling organized efforts at "improvement," both economic and cultural, with outright scorn, as Elizabeth Geffen has shown for Philadelphia. High culture and the glitter of the social whirl were far more interesting to the wellborn than the daily drudge of the common sorts.\(^\text{15}\)

Popular derision for the claims of privilege had not yet reached the deafening volume that would mark the late antebellum decades, however. Social elites continued to take part in public rituals marking their taste and elevation, though the performances were increasingly directed toward their own set and seldom designed to impress their majesty upon the wider community. Public demonstration of status did not necessarily involve great expense. The social call was the most frequent form of genial intercourse, though

balls and expensive parties received more public attention. Despite its everyday nature, however, callers were acutely aware that they were taking part in a sort of theater, both watching and being watched, their clothing and comportment scrutinized by others poised to ratify or reject their claims to status. One Philadelphia matron described to her Kentucky relative "the world of light and bright objects passing by" her window. "[O]ur streets are quite a show since the spring," she added. But "the show"--being seen--was only one part of paying visits. Acceptance into elegant parlors conferred elegance upon the visitor. Even for those well established within the smart set, to be welcomed into the homes of peers affirmed one's position. The stability of fortunes over several generations belied the insecurities over status that plagued the well-to-do. Alice Izard, no social outcast, expressed delight at her daughter's "having visited Mrs. Shippen & having been so cordially received by the Dr." Such a reception by one of Philadelphia's most prestigious houses confirmed the honor of the Carolina clan.16

The basis of youthful anxiety had other roots besides the security of family assets. Affluence was never the only standard for membership in the elite, or at least Philadelphians liked to think so. "Wealth is not the only passport" to the city's salons, 

---

commented one socialite, "nor want of it a reason for exclusion." Some observers agreed. The German nobleman Francis Grund found the "society of Philadelphia . . . better than that of Boston and New York" because it lacked the "vulgar aristocracy" of those cities. Frederick Marryat observed that the Quaker city "looked down on both" New York and Boston. The Captain added that New Yorkers dismissed Philadelphians as "a would-be aristocracy," an epithet that Philadelphians might have found objectionable only for its implication of falsehood. Whatever the merits of Philadelphia's claim to be the seat of genuine nobility, the children of the elite had other reasons besides wealth to fret about their performance on the social stage. Riches might secure entrance into respectable drawing rooms, but wit and cultivation won the approbation of peers. Compounding this pressure was the drama of courtship. The search for marriage partners dictated to a significant extent the pattern of social calls for the young. The quality of one's impression on such occasions obviously carried immense practical and emotional consequences.17

Suitors were not always up to the task. Harriet Manigault received a visit one

---

warm summer day at Clifton from James Cuthbert, a familiar family friend from Charleston, though one jittery in the presence of two ladies of courting age (Harriet was 21, her sister Charlotte 22). "He scarcely says a word unless we question him," she complained. "I never saw any person look so completely dumb foundered." More confident was her eventual husband, Philadelphia lawyer Samuel Wilcocks, who appeared unannounced early the next morning. While her mother and sisters frantically dressed and prepared breakfast, Harriet "entertained him as well as I could." Though Wilcocks had disturbed the family while they "indulge[d] themselves" with a late weekend rest, she leveled at him none of the resentment and derision with which she ridiculed the unfortunate Cuthbert. The former's eventual success in pursuing Harriet was due at least in part to his cool comportment under the stressful circumstances of courtship.

Though social calls comprised an important part of the courtship ritual, most visits were informal social exchanges between women. Men took part in the practice, of course, but most considered it a tedious business. Gabriel Manigault reminded his son "of what young men frequently neglect, the paying & returning of visits," for he knew

---

18Harriet Manigault Diary, August 4, 1814, HSP. Wealth was not a determining factor in the match. Harriet's grandmother found the "frankness & gaiety of his disposition . . . very agreeable traits" that made him "a most estimable Man." Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, May 4, 1815, MFP-SCL "He is not rich--but he has a profession," reported Harriet's mother, "and he says he does not fear making wherewithal to live." Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, April 3, 1815, Manigault-Morris-Grimball Family Papers, UNC (hereafter MMG). Harriet rejection of Cuthbert's proposal did not surprise her grandmother, who thought that South Carolina "would not be an agreeable residence for one accustomed to the enjoyments of Pennsylvania." Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, July 21, 1814, MFP-SCL.
such a routine to be "a matter of real consequence in society, & one on which a young man's character in the world often depends." Women devoted themselves to the rites of private visiting. Social calls ratified their place in the social scale while providing a forum for the exchange of news and conversation. Walking and visiting enabled women to keep up with current styles by comparing dress, hairstyles, and other fashions. Parlors also served as arenas for competition. Young women fought for rank through the exchange of gossip and the maligning of peers. Margaret Manigault found herself "dying to be in company with" Madame de Kanzow, wife of the Swedish minister, after hearing from Robert Walsh that she was "without exception the most accomplished Lady that was ever seen in America." Seeing "her in walking the streets" on visits only increased her desire to have the brilliant gentlewoman in her own parlor. So strong was the class imperative to both see and be seen that even Alice Izard, "so agreeably situated" at her son's estate near Clifton "that I have not a wish to go into any other house," resolved to "conform to the customs, & manners of the family I am with." To indulge in her "own wishes [to stay at home might] oblige them to break thro' rules of society . . . which alto' a trifling sacrifice in the first instance might be attended with disagreeable consequences."¹⁹

Not needing to appeal to social conventions to rationalize her visits, her

¹⁹Harriet Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, August 4, 1815 (fourth), all MFP-SCL. For a contrasting picture to the tone of female gossip presented here see Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America." Signs 1 (1975), 1-29. Miss Keene was perhaps the daughter of John Keen, once a vice-president of the Carpenter's Company. See Low, "Youth of 1812," 193.
granddaughter used the polite call as a scoreboard, relating with relish the ins and outs of her set. After one visit she described the disappointment of her Carolina relatives with Miss Keene, a Philadelphia friend, "who I must tell you is very much altered, she has quite a haggard look." The unfortunate lady still ranked better than another belle, "the manners of [the former] so modest & unassuming, and so much like a lady in every respect, and the other so made up & conceited." The social call was for women an important point of access to cultivated companions, social convention, and aristocratic competition.20

The exchange of polite visits was especially important for travelers. For those men and women from out of town, morning calls reintegrated them into the routines of genteel life. Promenading down the street, exchanging greetings and leaving cards, they escaped the anonymity of the boarding house to consort on equal terms with their fellow bluebloods. Face to face visits, much like letters of introduction, secured entry into cultivated houses, cementing cross-regional bonds. Planters welcomed travelers on the long overland trip from the springs to the Carolinas and other points South, rekindling old acquaintances and keeping up with news and gossip from far away. Virginian Eleanor Parke Lewis reopened a sealed letter to tell her friend Elizabeth Bordley that she "just had a kind visit from" a Carolina friend on the way to the Carolinas from the Quaker city. Lewis returned the favor upon touring Philadelphia years later, when she engaged in the

20Gabriel Manigault to Gabriel Henry Manigault, December 9, 1808, LM Papers, Duke (first quotation); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, December 6, 1813 (second); Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, August 20, 1805 (last).
"agreeable amusement of morning visits." Her intimacy with Bordley, a Philadelphia lady and member of the Carolina circle, quickened her reintegration into the city's social whirl. Such relationships were quite common. Spruce Street became the conduit through which refined Carolinians and other southerners entered fashionable life in Philadelphia. Through the routines of small talk, politeness, music, and games emerged the web of intimacy and interest that consolidated a new generation of the Atlantic aristocracy.21

If household visits were the everyday way in which wealthy Americans maintained class bonds, balls and other spectacular events constituted occasions when participants reveled in the overt trappings of their class prerogatives. The Carolina circle moved easily from Charleston's gay world to the Delaware, but the city welcomed sophisticated visitors from across the South. Harriet and Charlotte made their debuts in the former city under the watchful eye of their Mother and Aunt. "You must have been tired of hearing of Balls & the preparations for them," empathized Alice to her daughter, yet she assumed that her granddaughters "have . . . been initiated into these festive scenes. I long to know how they like the gay world, & whether it has many allurements for them." Allurements it had. Philadelphia winters sparkled with balls and parties bursting with luminaries from the leisured orders. "Out of towners looked forward to their Philadelphia visits," noted Nicholas Wainwright, since they could look forward to "public and private entertainments, which were numerous and to which visitors of distinction were ever welcome." Charlotte and Harriet Manigault's mother, looking forward to the

21Eleanor Parke Custis to Elizabeth Bordley, July 2, 1797 and n.d., Eleanor Parke (Custis) Lewis Papers, typescripts, HSP.
season of her daughters' Philadelphia debut, feared that the girls would "have too many invitations." Such a possibility failed to alarm the young ladies. "We are going to be very dissipated soon," they announced to their sister, "for we are engaged to three dances. Two next week and one the week after." Mother and grandmother worried that excessive attention to balls, parties, and public spectacles would lead their charges to "dissipation." The social whirl encouraged vanity and vulgarity, traits the older women associated with a new century seemingly uninterested in elegance or cultivation.22

If women constructed in their "private sphere" a separate social world of sisterly affection and understanding, their public lives implicated them in the assertion of the power and prestige of their class. Parents never entertained the possibility of keeping the beau monde closed to their children. As adults who had themselves been "initiated into [the] festive" lifestyle, and dedicated to the conservative order which it represented, they looked on their children's introduction as their rite of passage into the public sphere.

Pregnant with her first child, Margaret's only "distress" was "that she [was] prevented from dancing." Public balls by their grandeur and magnificence demanded public attention as social calls could not. Expensive dresses, carriages, decorations, and

refreshments trumpeted the wealth, power, and status of those welcomed into the exclusive circle. The Philadelphia Assemblies, subscription balls held since the mid-eighteenth century, enforced rules of behavior that discouraged such individual expression as might imperil the Assembly's presentation of an united patrician facade. The managers forbade guests from wearing boots and decreed that only "absolute indisposition" could relieve participants from completing a dance. "Should any improper person be introduced," warned the managers, "they will be compelled to quit the room and the subscriber introducing such person will be expelled from the assembly."  

Splendid affairs attracted attention and conferred distinction upon the individual, family, circle, and city. "The Ball to be given in your great City will exceed all others in our States in magnificence," Alice Izard predicted from Charleston. Still, hosts needed to heed caution in planning their events lest they cross the line from elegance to vulgarity. "The Philadelphians claim being the first in rank in society of any town in the States," observed a well born Scottish lady, and exercised vigilance in separating true refinement from gaudy parvenuism. The Carolinians attended one "splendid Ball," in Philadelphia, the supper of which "abounded in every rarity & delicacy." Yet the hostess went too far in introducing "a novelty, ginger Ice Cream. . . . it would not do." Concluded one partygoer drolly, "one extreme was sufficient to contend with." Such a grossness belied

---

23 Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, April 3, 1816, MFP-SCL (third); Mrs. Basil Hall, The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Months' Sojourn in America, 1827-1828 ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), 139 (fourth); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, February 16, 1821, MFP-SCL (fifth).
the legitimacy of the elite's claims to deference and privilege.\textsuperscript{24}

If members of the gentry expected to be honored at home, they also pined for the legitimacy that could only come from recognition by foreign elites. Such a design required them to present a cosmopolitan face to the world. Bluebloods strove to construct a genuine American brand of cultivation purged of colonial parochialism but consistent with the standards reigning in the Atlantic world. While local flavor lent diversity to social events, the festivities of urban elites from Savannah to Boston to Natchez remained very much the same. Networks of blood and friendship promoted these social exchanges. The Spruce Street row fostered the integration of regional aristocracies by easing the entry of Carolinians and others into grand Philadelphia events. Harry Manigault escorted a lady of the Middleton family to the circus and then to a party held in her honor at the home of Mrs. Lenox, a leading Philadelphia hostess. The Row invited a who's who of Philadelphia's fashionable scene to a welcoming party for the Rutledges, old friends from the Carolina lowcountry. Virginian Eleanor Parke Lewis was "very much gratified" that

her friend Elizabeth Bordley took her daughter to the "friendly reception" held by her Palmetto State friends on the Delaware. Harriet Manigault's uncle Joseph Allen Smith allowed her aunt to attend the "splendid" ball given in the city in celebration of peace with Britain only "under the protection of Mr. [John] Vaughan." In one week the Manigault circle found its members invited to christenings, teas, cotillions, dinners, and card parties with Philadelphia's first families. Whether in Charleston or Philadelphia, the winter season revolved around a succession of polite entertainments so similar in content that ladies and gentlemen moved effortlessly from one city's beau monde to the next.25

The Carolina gentry's participation in the Philadelphia social rounds was not limited to its public functions. Temperamentally inclined to retire to Clifton in the bosom of her family, Margaret Manigault felt compelled by duty to promote the values of her class by example and precept at a time when those values were under assault. Perhaps not too much should be made of the almost ritualized laments of elites that the passing of the old ways would lead inevitably to social dissolution. Pining after the "good old days," after all, can hardly be said to be the exclusive provenance of early Republican bluebloods. As E.P. Thompson warns, deference from the perspective of the gentry is usually articulated "less as actuality than as a model of an antique, recently passed, golden age from which present modes and manners are a degeneration. . . . paternalist actuality appears to be receding into an ever more primitive and idealized past."

25Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 19 and April 2, 1809, MFP-SCL; Eleanor Parke Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley, January 3, 1815, EPCL, HSP; Harriet Manigault Diary, April 28, 1815, HSP. See Harriet Manigault's diary entries for the second week of January, 1815, for her social commitments.
Doubtless, things looked different from the perspective of the lower sorts. Yet the pervasive sense of decline expressed by the old colonial elites cannot be so easily dismissed. As Gordon Wood observes, these former ruling classes saw "the society of the early Republic in the context of what early American society had once been and what societies elsewhere in the Western world still resembled." Their perception of descent emerged from the collective memory of colonial grandeur, a grandeur encompassing economic, political, and cultural dominance. If the pre-Revolutionary gentry never perfectly realized social hegemony, then, the experience of the early Republic led them to conclude that its attainment was slipping beyond their grasp.26

In order to change these "present riotous, boisterous manners," Alice Izard recommended, "our well bred gentlemen must set the example, and so must our well-educated ladies. They are the reformers of the World. To them society has always been indebted for elegance and refinement." Knowing that her daughter was considering a permanent residence in the North, and desiring one herself, Alice appealed to her conservative social conscience:

Were you more stationary than you are, your well regulated family & your amiable daughters might do a great deal. Recollect what we found society when we returned from Europe. Recollect it, but do not mention it. Do not confine yourself merely to your own circle & connections. Make your House again pleasant to acquaintances as well as friends & particularly to Strangers of character. This you have done, more than any one in America, & you must not give it up! It is productive of too much good to be laid aside.

---

26E.P. Thompson, "Eighteenth Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?," Social History 3 (1978), 136-137; Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 348; on this process in Virginia and the North, see, respectively, Isaac, Transformation of Virginia, esp. 256-259, and 321, and Blumin, Emergence of the Middle Class, 26-30.
Despite concerns about the risks of exposing children to the coarseness of the social world, the Manigault women did so to preserve the family heritage. Both agreed that without a stimulating home life, the world of "shew and splendor" alone would mold their children. Retreating to the parlor with her intimate friends and family, they understood, would constitute a betrayal of the Izards' tradition of public service. Civic duty, disinterested leadership in the cause of right, comprised the family's obligation for the deference it demanded from the lower orders. Like the honored offices of her father and brother, Margaret Manigault's example of a virtuous and enlightened household emerged from deeply imbedded notions of her duty as a member of the gentry. The Carolina Row became a means to champion elitism and cultivation in an age of democracy and crudity.27

As defenders of the patrician faith, the Carolinians would find many in Philadelphia ready to follow. Joshua Francis Fisher recalled how their "house was the resort of all the intellectual and refined society of our city. . . . [the Manigaults'] taste for literature" attracting "all the educated men and women of the time. Other family acquaintances responded creatively to encroaching vulgarity. Robert Waln, a friend of Margaret's son Charles, penned several satires exposing the "affectations and vanities" that belied Philadelphia's aristocratic veneer. Deriding belles and coquettes, dandies, fops, and gossips, Waln lionized "those happy days of primitive simplicity" when Philadelphia's wealthy citizens respected their civic responsibility to entertain with grace,

27 Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 31, 1811, MFP-SCL.
behave with dignity, and rule with restraint. Echoing a familiar patrician refrain, Waln warned that "nothing has deteriorated more than the manners of young people" and ascribed the decline to the erosion of a family patriarchy that mirrored social hierarchy. If genteel men acted like schoolboys, and gentlewomen like coquettes, observed Waln, it was no wonder that their children comported themselves like barbarians. Permissiveness, then, had transformed a natural aristocracy into a class of libertines.28

It was to head off this development that Manigaults, Izards, and Deases established salons welcoming the most cultivated and conservative of those men and women residing in or visiting Philadelphia. At Clifton or Farley, in the summer, and on Spruce street, in the winter, the planter set held parties, teas, and card games that attracted an impressive number of the city's bright lights. There they would mingle with like-minded Carolinians, Virginians, Georgians, French, Spaniards, and Swedes. The rooms teemed with the children of both friends and family, who, it was hoped, would inculcate the good manners of cultivated adults. These fetes brought together local favorites with those worthies in whom they saw the spark of that rare, authentic elegance untarnished by the present age of boorishness. After the company departed, a brilliant group of elderly gentlemen, women, and select relatives remained. This gathering, more dedicated to

28Fisher, "Reminisces," HSP (first quotation); William S. Hastings, "Robert Waln, Jr.: Quaker Satirist and Historian." PMHB 76 (1952), 72 (second); Peter Atall [Robert Waln, Jr.], The Hermit in Philadelphia, Second Series. Containing some Account of Young Belles and Coquettes; Elegantes and Spoiled Children; Dandies and Ruffians; Old Maids and Old Bachelors; Dandy-Slang and Lady-Slang; Morning Visits and Evening Parties ... (Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1821), 63-64 (last quotation). Waln's works aped the popular Hermit in London, which skewered the pretensions of the British aristocracy.
cultivated discussion than the less inclusive, gayer assembly, still shared its basic purpose: to exhibit for the community an example of the genuine superiority born of breeding and birth worthy of respect and deference.

That such a project was needed attested to the depths to which these women felt polite society had descended. Related to the need to uphold standards of good taste was the family's desire to construct a national identity that merged European elan with republican virtues. Complicating this goal was the Manigaults' own infatuation with the ancien régime, an admiration that sometimes threatened to impede their elaboration of a distinctive American nationalism. With Philadelphia considered a "more agreeable place of residence" than Washington by the foreign diplomatic corps, the city offered Americans the opportunity to witness first hand both European elegance and decadence. Their presence set off a period of crass imitation in those Americans whose fire to become aristocrats was matched only by their complete lack of sophistication. "The prevalent disposition to imitate the manners of Europe, has caused the introduction of many frivolous customs and amusements in our city," observed one social critic. Only the American gentry of old wealth was secure enough in their identity to incorporate the foreigners' cultivation while preserving republicanism at home. Still, if their example sometimes threatened to overwhelm the young republic with dissipation, European elites also presented Americans with a template from which they could begin to fashion a national gentility combining continental fashion and American virtue.²⁹

²⁹Hall, Aristocratic Journey, 140; Peter Atall [Robert Waln, Jr.], The Hermit in America, on a Visit to Philadelphia, Containing, some Account of the Human Leeches.
Doubtless the Manigaults' extensive travels in Europe, their fluency in French, and their aristocratic temperament helped their foreign friends feel welcome in their homes. But European travel hardly distinguished the Carolinians from others in their circle. Many genteel Americans, northern and southern, made the Grand Tour. Besides befriending Philadelphia's resident foreign diplomats, the group established close relations with the large body of Francophone exiles and refugees who settled in the city. Prominent among the former group, not surprisingly, were several diplomatic families whose children found close friends in Harriet and Charlotte, the youngest Manigault daughters.\(^{30}\) The Carolina ladies especially enjoyed the company of the daughters of Baron Johan Albert de Kanzow, minister from Sweden and Norway, Narcissa de Onis, the daughter of the Spanish charge d'affaires, and the vivacious children of Andrei Dashkoff, the Russian envoy. While the Carolina Row's older residents conversed with their European guests about old times, contemporary politics, literature, and philosophy, the younger group played music, danced, flirted, or played games. If, as many foreign visitors to these shores complained, Americans proved peculiarly sensitive to their opinion of the manners and progress of the new nation, they were unlikely to be subject

\[\begin{align*}^\text{Belles, Beaux, Coquettes, Dandies, Cotillion Parties, Supper Parties, Tea Parties, \&c \&c of that Famous City.} & \textit{(Philadelphia; Moses Thomas, 1819), 146. Literature on the French in America focuses on the 1790s, though Bonapartist and Bourbon exiles also flocked to Philadelphia in the early decades of the nineteenth century. See Catherine A. Hebert, "The French Element in Pennsylvania in the 1790s: The Francophile Immigrants' Impact," } \textit{PMHB} 108 (1984), 451-469; \text{and J.G. Rosengarten, } \textit{French Colonists and Exiles in the United States} \text{(Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1907).} \\
^30\text{Emma Manigault died at Clifton in 1815.} \end{align*}\]
to such insecure badgering on Spruce Street. The denizens of that street and its environs found "something very pleasing in the society of well bred foreigners," as one observed, for "if they see that you wish to please them, & to place them at their ease, they are grateful, & enjoy the happy privilege." There English and continental gentlefolk would find entertainments reminiscent of European salons and company that wished to employ their old world sophistication to the cause of new world nationalism. 

Though comparatively rare, the expensive parties thrown at the family homes aroused the excitement of the children to an extent that the more mundane teas, dinners, and other small gatherings could not. Such occasions elicited family judgments on dress, manners, and behavior whose meaning transcended mere fashion. A tasteless gown, a gaudy necklace, a beautiful song, a brilliant wit, all contained hidden meanings exposing the shortcomings and strengths of the republic's gentry. "James Cuthbert . . . looked very genteel" at one affair, but the salutary effect of this young American was offset by the lackluster appearance of "Mrs. N[icholas] Biddle [who] wore a common velvet dress" to the same affair. The dullness of the attire of one so eminent in society implicated the taste of her fellow Americans. Mrs. Biddle's inadequacy was all the more glaring when contrasted with the gathering's foreign guests. Family favorite Madame de Kantzow "impressed all, who had not seen her before. Her resplendent charms were all displayed,

---

31 Margaret Manigault to Charlotte (Manigault) Allen Smith, September 11, 1814, MFP-SCL. Basil Hall found that he "was often surprised to discover the degree of anxiety with which the opinions of a foreigner were sought for with regard to many insignificant topics, upon which his sentiments might have been thought very little." Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828* (Edinburgh: Cadell & Co., 1829), 2: 339-340.
ornamented with a handsome neat lace. . . . Diamonds innumerable sparkled in her small shaped hands." Madame de Onis adorned herself in a "white satin" dress with a "rich lace robe over it," a similar though more understated radiance than that projected by her Swedish friend. In their mannerisms, too, Americans seemed to reflect the general coarseness of their popular culture. One prominent gentlewoman, observed at a ball, "has grown exceptionally clumsy, & exposes her great & now frightful neck in an astonishing degree, & is so out of time!" This matron's wealth could not redeem her diverse social sins--on the contrary. Her failure to reconcile her wealth with her manners exposed the shallowness of aristocracy in the young republic. If the gentry behaved like commoners, the latter might ask, why should they respect its claims to privileged status?32

But if the gay world had declined into hedonism, old-line conservative Americans tried to uphold the traditional routines that defined their circle as a separate and superior class. One frequent visitor to the Carolina Row remembered how he always found Alice Izard "ready to give a courteous acknowledgement to my bow" when he attended her Monday night receptions. Such a formal greeting did not portend a stuffy evening. At one small party, Margaret reported to her sister, "We waltzed & danced & . . . jumped & squealed & sang & laughed & talked." Gaiety of this sort was hardly indecent but instead demonstrated the gusto with which the gentry was expected to partake in its pleasures. Parvenus who tried to mimic the form of elite entertainments without grasping

32[Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris], December 21, 1813, MMG Papers, UNC; Charlotte Manigault and Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, April 11, 1816, MFP-SCL.
the substance risked the ridicule of those they hoped to impress. Robert Waln's Hermit attended one such bourgeois soiree that appeared "to be rather one of mourning than of joy," hearing "no merry peals of laughter; no buzzing sounds of voices that denoted a collection of youth and gaiety." The parties of aristocratic pretenders, he concluded, "are productive of pleasure neither to the entertainers, nor the entertained." The Hermit instantly recognized stuffiness as a sign of pretentious imitation. Fun, he knew, was a prerogative of aristocracy.\textsuperscript{33}

As a family serious about its merriment, the Manigaults offered their guests a variety of pleasures. Music, dancing, food, cards, and a variety of other games kept the company occupied until the pre-dawn hours. For the younger set, dancing and singing provided the greatest amusement. "Mrs. Izard's grand-children and their friends were almost always in number sufficient for a dance," recalled one young man, and since "the young ladies of the family were most of them accomplished in music," their youthful guests expected musical evenings. Only rarely were they disappointed. Although one "Tea Fight passed off admirably," observed Harriet, "we heard that almost everybody expected that it would be a dance."\textsuperscript{34}

In mixed company of adolescents and adults, instrumental music, not dancing, predominated. The older guests watched while their children entertained them with

\textsuperscript{33}Fisher, "Reminisces," HSP (first quotation); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, September 25, 1814, MFP-SCL (second); [Waln], \textit{Hermit in America}, 46, 62.

\textsuperscript{34}Fisher, "Reminisces," HSP (first quotation); Harriet Manigault Diary, December 22, 1813, HSP (second).
piano, harp, and song. At one "charming" and "sociable" gathering, the proud parent related, Miss Keene and Harriet played the harp and piano together to "perfection. . . . [Harriet] says she never was so much flattered in her life." While music provided their company with entertainment and the young players with approbation, it did more important cultural work. The Manigault letter writers took special note of occasions when their musical company collaborated with their European friends. The virtues Margaret Manigault discerned in the young Kantzow ladies exemplified those she wished to see in her own set. "They play & sing without pretension," she noted, "they dance . . . waltzes, & gavottes, & boulangeres, & coquettes. Their attitudes are all ease, & their ease is not diminished by the precision of their steps." Music and dance united American and Old World bluebloods in an Atlantic cosmopolitan community. The expense and time involved in educating children in traditional forms of singing, dancing, and musical skills limited their attainment to the wealthy. American youth accomplished in such cultivated arts distinguished themselves from the common herd and associated themselves with aristocracy.35

35Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, December 19, 1812, MFP-SCL (third); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, November 20, 1813 (fourth). All social ranks sang, danced, and played instruments, of course, but different contexts determined, in part, the substance of the entertainment. "[T]he activities of polite entertainment were not in themselves distinctive," observes Richard Bushman. Their substance--classical music, elaborate dance--and their contexts--elegant parlors, ballrooms--made them so. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Vintage, 1992), 51. Although not always part of the formal academy curriculum, parents often hired dance and voice tutors for their daughters or paid extra fees for these "ornamental" courses. See Christie Anne Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 66-67; and Nancy
While cards, music, and dancing were important elements of the Carolina Row's entertaining, enlightened discussion eclipsed all other activities. The Manigaults, like other bluebloods in the Atlantic world, deemed the development of the intellect as an essential duty of their class. They opened their homes to men and women of cultivation to counter the philistinism they saw spreading among their set. "Men of wit and science," related one gentleman familiar to Spruce Street and Clifton, "knew where they could always find congenial society of both sexes." With John Vaughan watching out for urbane strangers from his apartments at the American Philosophical Society, and with their own cadre of educated family and friends to choose from, the Carolina Row's parlors echoed with the voices of well-read ladies and gentlemen, men of science, diplomats, and men of affairs. If the "Athens of America" (a term also claimed by Boston) boasted other parlors, like those of Joseph Dennie, Deborah Logan, and Robert Walsh, that strove to match the same standard of European sophistication that inspired the Manigaults, it also included homes that exhibited the bad taste of unrefined upstarts. Robert Waln spoke of just such a boorish set when he denigrated "a pretty numerous class, existing in our city, which, by birth, is entitled to hold a situation in the first ranks of society," that, lacking cultivation but exploiting their "birth, education, and fortune . . . take (and, what is worse, are permitted to take) liberties in conversation with ladies, which no birth, no talents, no gold can warrant, or excuse." Such vulgarity was absent from the parlors of the Carolina Row, where "the refined manners which prevailed . . .

gave a charm to these simple receptions, which the utmost luxury could not have enhanced." By gathering the genteel of America and Europe into their Philadelphia homes, these Carolinians attempted to fashion a distinctive American gentility—cosmopolitan yet unpretentious, but thoroughly elitist and conservative.36

In the formation of this salon, political opinion mattered less than wit and manners. Still, the Manigaults associated themselves especially closely with the city's Federalist establishment. Their "intimate circle of the Supper Tray"—a small group of dinner table intimates—thus accommodated the Manigault, Smith, Deas, and Izard clans, unreconstructed Federalists all; Vaughan, the non-dogmatic Federalist; William Short, Jefferson's former secretary, "adopted son," and Francophile; and José Francisco Correa da Serra, Portuguese diplomat, disillusioned democrat, and friend of the French Revolution. Conversation and conviviality set the standard. Of course, the would-be gentry eagerly welcomed the genuine article, and when not in Washington the Onises, Kantzows, de Pusys, and Dashkoffs could be found around one of the Carolina Row's conversational tables. Other American family favorites included Elizabeth Bordley, and after her marriage, her husband James Gibson, Miss Keene and her aunt Mrs. Lenox, Isabella Mease, sister of the eminent physician James Mease and aunt to Thomas and

Pierce (Mease) Butler, plus an assortment of Walns, Fishers, Craigs, Biddles, Heywards, Draytons, and Middletons. While the list of their invitees did not include all those in the first rank of Philadelphia society, it encompassed most of those who still remembered "how to do the honors perfectly."  

The women and men who gathered around Margaret Manigault's fireplace or Alice Izard's whist table embraced their hosts' agenda for social reform. The hostesses established in their parlors forums for discussion and mannerly debate, seeking out articulate persons likely to provoke conversation. The presence of lively minds, diverse experiences, and the clash of ideas created a cultivated discourse sparkling with wit, sarcasm, and intellectual play—all contrasting with the banality these traditionalists discerned in nineteenth century social life. Of course, not everyone could be accommodated. Uninteresting strangers could be excluded, but family had to be indulged. After one large gathering, Charlotte Manigault considered it "fortunate that [Aunt Elizabeth Izard] delights so much in [whist], for she is the most reserved & silent person in the presence of the General [her husband George Izard] you can imagine."

Despite the presence of John Vaughan, several French exiles, and other family, the Aunt still preferred cards to conversation. It was for these stubbornly wooden friends and family, one habitue remembered, that "sometimes a second party of whist was formed." Was it not better to remove these wallflowers from the salon than to let the conversation lag? For such a reason Alice Izard found it "surprising that the merits of a Card table should not be understood."^38

Yet such social blemishes were rare. Genteel strangers, especially if caught in Vaughan's web, found themselves welcomed by the Carolina clique. Partly through the contacts of Carolina family and friends, then, Philadelphia found itself host to an ever widening circle of enlightened bluebloods. The Carolina ladies were pleased to find Cleland Kinloch, an old acquaintance, in town, but when they "sent back to invite him at his lodgings, it was necessary to invite his fellow lodgers of my acquaintance; so Messrs Vaughan, Correa, & [James] Cuthbert came." Yet such a disturbance hardly constituted an inconvenience. Margaret Manigault delighted to hear that Correa da Serra, whose scientific and literary acquirements attracted her more than his political leanings, "is very impatient to be [invited] here." She could hardly wait to attract such a legendary conversationalist into her set. "I will tell you if I like the old gentleman as well as I expected," she promised her sister. The controversial Abbé proved a treasured companion to the circle, and especially to the widowed Margaret, during his years in

^38Charlotte Manigault and Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, April 11, 1816 (first quotation), MFP-SCL; Fisher, "Reminisces," HSP (second); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, January 23, 1814, MFP-SCL (third).
America. "The Abbate reasons, & moralizes with me while my Mother & three others play at Whist," she boasted. What attracted the family to the elderly cleric was not the congeniality of their views but his European savior-faire. In the verbal joustings of Philadelphia's salons the Abbé could be expected to give at least as well as he received. Of course, such a noted intellect could not fail to draw other enlightened figures into the Carolinians' Philadelphia circle. Ladies and gentlemen with minds and tongues of Correa's caliber found a welcome place by the Manigaults' fire.39

At least as attractive to the circle as their recreation of the salons Margaret, her sisters, and their mother witnessed in the Old Regime was the stimulating discussion of gentlemen of an eighteenth century temper. The Abbé was, as Margaret understood, "a great resource in the long winter evenings. A sensible, well-informed, polite old man is a treasure, I think, in society, & particularly in a large female family like ours." But the new century no longer produced men of his temperament, or so it seemed to conservatives who hungered for more temperate times. True gentlemen, one matron feared, "grow more and more rare--I very much fear the breed will be lost." The Manigault widows (Margaret was in her forty-fourth year in 1812, her mother was sixty-six) surrounded themselves with men of their own generation who shared their disdain

with deteriorating manners and declining civility. Such "well educated men of sense" as John Vaughan, William Short, George Izard, and the Abbé Correa also served to provide living examples of genteel masculinity to the young men of the circle. The ladies encouraged their "little Societe" to meet "almost every evening." The presence of elderly men of learning was especially appreciated during the war years of 1812-1815, when military service required the Manigault men to endure extended absences from their family. These cultured women regarded chats with their "society of old gentlemen" as something of a godsend during the long years of war and widowhood.40

If the establishment of a cultivated company in their parlors provided for intellectual comfort for their declining years, it also served to socialize their children and other youngsters in their circle to the aristocratic temper. While not as entertaining as dances and parties, the young people tolerated "ceremonial dinners and tea parties . . . as endurance tests rather than social blots to be excised." The public function of these entertainments was subordinate only to their educational purpose within their set of family and friends. Margaret Manigault and Alice Izard accepted their public roles reluctantly, out of a sense of duty, but this duty was itself rooted in conceptions of family identity inseparable from their social class. Inculcating in their children a sense of the responsibilities implicit in being born a Manigault and an Izard remained their primary

40 Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, November 7, 1812, MFP-SCL (first quotation); and March 24, 1813, MMG Papers, UNC (second); Margaret Manigault to Alice Izard, July 12, 1812, MFP-SCL (last). Margaret's son Gabriel Henry served as an aide under her brother, General George Izard, who served in Wade Hampton's command. Her son Charles served in the Washington Guards and spent much of his service around Philadelphia.
responsibility. Their public and private acts reflected the common purpose of perpetuating class principles of honor, stoicism, civic duty, and intellectual engagement. The family's presence within a popular culture that increasingly stigmatized the elitism in which these ideals were so inextricably bound complicated these parental designs. "For a half century following the Revolution, maintains one historian of the era, "common ordinary men stripped the northern gentry of their pretensions, charged them at every turn with being fakes and shams, and relentlessly undermined their capacity to rule."\textsuperscript{41}

Despite the difficulties generated by impertinent popular and political cultures, the Manigaults' presence around a great northeastern metropolis did not obstruct the socialization of their progeny--on the contrary. The concepts of honor, patriarchy, and stoicism have been commonly (and not unfairly) identified with the master class of the Old South. They should also be seen as class ideals, standards of thought and behavior fundamental to the identities of the young nation's wellborn. The ethic of honor may well have languished in the North sooner than it did below Mason's and Dixon's line, but it lingered in both sections as the ethic of a consciously marginalized social and cultural elite. Southern "assumptions of status, taste, and good breeding," as one scholar has noted, "were quite compatible with the criteria prevailing in the salons of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and London." What better worldview with which to face the growing insignificance of one's class than stoicism? This duty-driven impulse to pass on to the next generation the obligations of aristocracy in a democratic milieu constituted the inner

\textsuperscript{41}Low, "Youth of 1812," 188 (first quotation); Wood, \textit{Radicalism of the American Revolution}, 276 (second).
culture of the Carolina circle, as it did for patrician households throughout the new nation.42

Wellborn families all over Philadelphia endured similar difficulties. Grand parties, social calls, and dances constituted the rituals through which wealthy Americans demonstrated a heightened awareness of the ways of privilege and power, but the habits of everyday life implanted more thoroughly the responsibilities of caste and family. The fabric of ordinary experience, what Steven Stowe calls the "routines of intimacy," infused those special events with significance. The ideals of family honor and class privilege exhibited in balls and promenades emerged from the humdrum of home life. Intimacy within the group--close kin, distant relations, and acquaintances--helped transmit these principles. "I am not at all reconciled to the loss of my Mother & Brothers," complained Margaret after one visit ended. "I feel lost & unhinged, & I am a stranger in the land--never having lived any where without some of my family, & having all my life preferred their society to that of others." Gabriel Manigault expressed fatherly concern about his son's dislike of Thomas Smith, a Carolina cousin coming to live with Harry, because the families were "nearly related" and he feared that to snub the intemperate young man, the associate of admittedly "vicious and abandoned" characters, might lead to a break with their "amiable aunt." Better, he advised, to endure the "disagreeable" situation than risk

---

splitting the close-knit clique.\textsuperscript{43}

Other wellborn fathers, northern and southern, might not have empathized with their nervous sons in similar situations. Accustomed to command, they expected the boys to conform to their wishes without so patient an explanation as Gabriel Manigault hazarded. "The patriarchal ideal," observes Michael Johnson, "required sons to learn to be rulers while they were taught to be subjects." While some gentry parents might employ sternness to inculcate patriarchy and still others indulgence, the Manigaults used sentiment peppered with reproach to educate their charges to the ways of paternalism. Wondered Harry's father at the close of an admonishing epistle, "what is it for a father to write to his son? . . . Always the same thing, nothing but advice, advice, advice." Harry's brother, at school outside Philadelphia, fared no better over his mother's concern that he "attend to [his] spelling." She reminded him that "it is disgraceful for a gentleman to be deficient on that point," warning that "if you have any regard for your reputation, \& any love for your Mother," he would write with more care. The circle's adults admonished the children of others as a matter of course. Margaret spoke to Thomas Middleton concerning his "impropriety" and chastised James Cuthbert--both not yet twenty--

\textsuperscript{43}Stowe, \textit{Intimacy and Power in the Old South}, 161-163 (first quotation); Margaret Manigault to Charlotte-Georgina (Izard) Allen Smith, November 7, 1813, MFP-SCL (second); Gabriel Manigault to Gabriel Henry Manigault, December 17, 1808, LM Papers, Duke (last). The interpretation presented here is very different than that set forth by Michael Zuckerman, who explains evidence of colonial southern parents' indifference to parenthood by suggesting that they "did not wish to be bothered" about their children's welfare. Zuckerman, "Penmanship Exercises for Saucy Sons: Some Thoughts on the Colonial Southern Family," \textit{SCHM} 84 (1983), 159; and "William Byrd's Family," \textit{Perspectives in American History} 12 (1979), 255-311.
regarding his misanthropic wish to "absent himself entirely from [Philadelphia] society" one winter. In each case, adult counsel did not seek to protect children from the corruption of Yankee principles. They sought through their advice to establish young men as "independent gentlem[e]n . . . that station you will certainly find the happiest in the world." It was a station, moreover, confined neither to the North nor the South. The Spruce Street clique sought to raise their children to meet metropolitan standards of gentility.  

If the aims and means of youngsters' upbringings were not distinctive to the South, neither were they confined to young men. Class imperatives dictated that boys be raised to lead, but these same principles required that young ladies learn the duties of their station. Hierarchy, after all, ordered society as well as the family, and women in the public sphere represented their class to the lower orders just as their men did. Women embodied elite power and pretension in the social and cultural realms they dominated--balls, teas, salons, and the like. Genteel ladies were not expected to defer to their husbands' guidance in every facet of public life, but were trained from childhood to lead others according to their high station. Yet gender boundaries remained clear. Upper class manhood embraced learning, graciousness, and leisure--within limits--as well as the martial virtues and sensual pleasures traditionally linked to aristocracy. To all women,
especially those in the higher ranks, the latter two categories of behavior were off limits. Not only did physical exertion violate the male sphere of honor and violence, but it threatened to mar the beauty and delicacy essential to womanhood.

Conservative temperaments responded with revulsion upon hearing of "Ladies perform[ing] military evolutions at the Riding School" in Philadelphia. Eight young women of the smart set "distinguished themselves by their strength & adeptness & courage & dexterity." Not only did proper women and men object to this breach of traditional gender conventions, but they believed that such outrages were undertaken in a craven imitation of Napoleonic fashions. Such a repudiation of America's brand of virtuous gentility for European corruption disgusted Americans, if it did not surprise them. "We are we so imitative, so emulative" of "Paris," observed Margaret, that even well-bred women seemed eager to follow fashions and join "this hardy race of Amazons." Like other girls, the young ladies of Clifton would learn to sing, dance, sew, and play the piano and harp, but they would learn at home, where adults could prevent cultivation from degenerating into corruption.45

The Carolinians living in Philadelphia read widely in classical and contemporary

45On women in the public sphere see Mary Ryan, Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots, 1825-1880 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990). Margaret Manigault to Mrs. Pinckney, April 2, 1809 (first quotation); Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 23, 1808, both MFP-SCL (last). Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Women's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon, 1982), and Anne Frior Scott, "Women's Perspective on the Patriarchy of the 1850s," Journal of American History 61 (1974), 52-64, argue that southern women opposed the fundamental principles of their region and class but were prevented, through a variety of measures, from acting on their convictions.
fiction, science, travel, politics, and religion. While their taste tended toward the traditional, the adults inculcated in their children a sense of their duty as gentlepeople to keep abreast of contemporary intellectual developments. "Do you see the Select Reviews?" Margaret asked her daughter, advising her that "you would find sentiment & instruction in them. They tell you what is going on in the Literary world." Like her parents, Margaret regarded an active, inquiring mind as a *sina qua non* of their caste. Stimulating discussion, a staple of a truly cultivated society, required both men and women to converse on literature, natural science and philosophy, religion, and history. Nevertheless, gentlefolk like those of the Manigaults' circle struck a difference between genteel learning and antisocial bookishness. Knowledge was to be sought after as an agent of moral and social improvement, and also for entertainment, but never out of a purely an intellectual interest. As Margaret Manigault assured one fun-loving daughter, "I am not afraid of your growing a Blue Stocking." The young ones' reading reflected their elders' opinion that the "authors of the passed [sic] century were wise, & clever beings . . . the present one has [not] improved upon them." Modern children had grown "bold, & indelicate" owing to a lack of parental supervision, and if adults did not fear intellectual curiosity in their daughters and sons, they took pains to ensure that such curiosity led them ultimately through well-worn paths of the mind. Reading need not be boring, of course. "Our evening book is generally some *novel,*" noted Harriet Manigault, "as we read such serious books in the morning." Didactic reading included works on modern philosophy, the *Spectator*, the Bible, Gibbon, and ancient and modern travel accounts, some of which, the girls confessed, they found "very entertaining &
Some scientific instruction for young ladies was a must in a house which often welcomed luminaries of the American Philosophical Society like Vaughan, Short, and Correa da Serra. Harriet noted that their mother was reading the children a botanical work that summer, "just to give us some idea of the thing," since the author (a Mrs. Wakefield) "is not very deep." Their course of instruction—mirrored by other Philadelphia ladies—also included dancing, recital, song, and French. In addition to being a "very delightful" way of passing the days, their education conferred upon a new generation the arts of conversation, behavior, and cultivated recreation. It would also make them appealing marriage partners, but more than that, it would pass on timeless standards of cultivation at a time when "the gentry themselves felt increasingly compelled to reach down and embrace wider and deeper levels of the populace," a process in which class principles "necessarily became popularized and coarsened."

The gradual introduction of young men and women into the social whirl, the carefully chosen assembly of family and friends, the establishment of an eighteenth-century style salon, the monitoring of the educations of their children and those of associated families, and their choice of Philadelphia over New York and Charleston—all speak to the Manigaults' efforts to reproduce in the next generation their own experience

---

46 Margaret Manigault to Elizabeth (Manigault) Morris, October 28, 1812, MMG Papers, UNC (first quotation); Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 10, 1811, MFP-SCL (second); Harriet Manigault Diary, July 29, 1814, HSP (third).

as a privileged gentry class in the European style. But it was not to be. Only three of Margaret Manigault's children--Charles, Harriet, and Harry--survived her when she died at her Spruce street home in 1824. Of those three, only Charles, who died in 1871 in South Carolina, lived past 1835.

Too much can be made of the experiences of this single family. They were hardly representative of Americans generally, but they were well-placed within the upper echelons of American society. Moreover, their dual residence--in both Philadelphia and Charleston--made them the axis of a wider circle of bluebloods and demonstrates clearly the national pattern of upper-class identity. The Carolina Row introduced a new generation of southern youth into the ways of the Atlantic gentry, but even had more of its children enjoyed longevity, the elitist principles it exalted could not have long endured. The fundamental problem, even more intractable than mortality, was that the patrician class was struggling against deep-seated cultural and political trends toward democracy against which its efforts were doomed to fail. The schooling in stoicism given to sons and daughters prepared them for a world that no longer respected class-based demands for privilege. "I shall cherish no ambition of living in the minds and memories of men, but I shall endeavor with all my efforts to obtain that living grace which can only come into the heart from my soul," went one adage learned by Charles. The stoicism embodied in that aphorism was particularly suited to an aristocracy in its twilight.48

In a public-spirited house like the Manigaults, such a principle amounted to an

admission of irrelevancy. But the writing was on the wall. Adults prepared the younger
generation for the gentry's twilight by passing on to them the stoic code through precept
and behavior. One family friend remembered of Alice Izard that "her self-composure was
very remarkable" upon hearing of her son's suicide. Though her family tried to keep the
awful event secret, the young man had announced his intentions to her in a private note
the night before his act. "As she was about to receive her friends at her weekly reunion,
she put the letter in her pocket--without a word, and had been able to control her feelings
throughout the evening," the friend recalled in awe. Her behavior was actually consistent
with her fatalistic worldview. To a woman of the patrician class, personal misfortune
could not interfere with social duty. Through such extraordinary examples of rectitude
the Manigaults prepared the youths under their influence to endure all kinds of adversity--
financial setbacks, family marginalization and rampant vulgarity of social upstarts--
because they would not be able to overcome them.49

As one historian of the period observes, the generation of Gabriel and Margaret
Manigault witnessed "new alignments out of which the modern distinction between high
and popular culture was born." Democratic society did not merely spread good manners
and good taste by a sort of trickle-down process to the lower orders. Through the
refinement of America these aristocratic standards became diluted, corrupted by popular
traditions until they generated a middle class culture that rivaled and eventually
delegitimized its genteel forebear. If "[r]epublicanism cut off the top of American society

49Fisher, "Reminisces," HSP.
by forbidding an American aristocracy," suggests Richard Bushman, it nevertheless created a nearly insoluble dilemma for a society that, for all its democratic pretensions, still lionized gentility. Political democracy "meant that the best people and the best circles, the models for others to follow, were always elsewhere." The popular contemporary notion that the decades before the Civil War constituted a sort of "Age of Egalitarianism" itself suggests the privileged image of the era that preceded it. Even if a few men and women on this side of the Atlantic experienced a kind of gentility before and even just after the Revolution, the opportunities for living the sort of privileged life worthy of the name aristocracy had disappeared by the dawn of the age of Jackson.

None of this means that Americans did not amass fortunes on a European scale, live lavishly, socially exclude the less fortunate, and pass on their fortunes through several generations. Neither does it suggest that "self-made men" pushed old fortunes from ranks of the rich in the nineteenth century. Nor, finally, does it mean that the wealthy suddenly found themselves excluded from office and influence. Some Americans enjoyed fantastic wealth and enjoyed showing it off. Most affluent men built their fortunes from inherited money. And the men who ran the great organizations of the second party system, held public office, and ran voluntary organizations owned property far out of proportion to those whose interests they served.\(^{50}\)

The problem with these observations, made most famously by Edward Pessen to disprove the “egalitarian myth” popularized by Tocqueville, is not that they are false, but that they miss the point. The lifestyle of the urban elite suggested they were after something else than wealth and the celebration of it. They tried to reproduce, as best they could, the manners of the colonial and early national gentry. But the experience of riches is not the experience of aristocracy. Money and property certainly conferred on those who enjoyed them in plenty opportunities closed to others, but affluence could not match the combination of power, status, wealth, and entitlement that defined aristocracy. For the Manigaults and their circle, as for other wellborn old American families from Boston to New Orleans, the proper society resembled a more open, democratic, and egalitarian version of societies in the old world—a world of subtle but accepted hierarchies of wealth, taste, and family, bound together by reciprocal relationships of deference and protection.

At least the past looked that way to these backward-looking conservatives. But the new world in which they found themselves was “more dominated by the interests of ordinary people than any that had ever existed before,” observes Gordon Wood, even if stark inequalities persisted. In this unpromising context, wealthy Americans tried to establish an upper class identity that reproduced genteel entitlement. But their task was more daunting than they imagined. With the middle class redefining gentility to conform to its own wishes, the efforts of urban elites to maintain exclusivity and tradition seemed increasingly petulant and pathetic.51

51Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 348.
CHAPTER 4
SOCIAL LIFE AND CULTURE,
1830-1850:
SIDNEY GEORGE FISHER'S CIRCLE

The chief effect of the aristocratic spirit in a democracy is to make those who are possessed by it exclusives in a double sense; in being excluded yet more than in excluding. The republic suffers no further than by having within it a small class acting upon anti-republican morals, and becoming thereby its perverse children, instead of its wise and useful friends and servants.¹

Harriet Martineau, Society in America

Both Margaret Manigault and Alice Izard had died long before Harriet Martineau’s visit to the United States in the 1830s. Yet, had they been alive, it is likely that they would have been puzzled by the Englishwoman's distinction between republican aristocracy and "useful" behavior. In their Spruce Street parlors and at Clifton, north of Philadelphia, they contrived to elevate the standards and maintain the morale of their privileged class despite the leveling tendencies of post-Revolutionary America. They assumed that those invited to their salons should be the most cultivated and sociable men and women of the Atlantic world, and they were convinced that exclusion performed a valuable public service. For in constructing a national leisure class, the Manigault women had maintained a counterculture of sorts to what was emerging as the main current of

American public and political culture—the self-assertion of ordinary people. Those bluebloods believed that the select companies gathered around their fireplace, piano, and whist table at 118 South 8th Street cultivated the tastes, manners, and conservative opinions that the republic would need, and to which it would inevitably turn, after its indulgence in democratic excess had run its course.

By the time Harriet Martineau published her account of her American trip in 1837, all but a handful of genteel Americans had resigned themselves to the realities of democratic government and popular culture. In that vein, it is instructive that it was Martineau's visit to Philadelphia that prompted her musings on the irrelevancy of the American aristocracy. The upper crust of William Penn's city remained remarkably unreconstructed in the antebellum decades. The oldest families, the most exalted circles, maintained their devotion to conservative principles and exclusive company. During the early national period, the leisure class had been attacked for its un republican manners and principles. Abraham Bishop of Connecticut, for example, reviled them as the “well-fed, well dressed, chariot rolling, caucus keeping, levee revelling federalists.” The aristocracy, though, still retained a significant degree of legitimacy when contrasted to the rollicking, subversive character of working class culture. After the 1830s the American social elite's marginalization took on a different quality. As middle class women and men sought respectability by eagerly assimilating themselves to aristocratic standards of gentility, they asserted their own authority and the superiority of their principles by modifying the old codes. They modified Chesterfield's gospel, purging it of its luxury, sensuality, and idleness while fusing good breeding, accomplishments, and other
traditional elements of cultivation with their own values--especially piety, industry, and domesticity. In affirming their own brand of refinement middle-class advocates attacked the moral foundations of elitism. Those elites who remained loyal to the old ways thus became, in Martineau's phrase, the "perverse children" of the new nation--privileged and proud, embittered and marginal.²

Sidney George Fisher was in many ways the very personification of upper class angst. Fisher was a conservative Whig, even a reactionary, who scorned democracy because of its refusal to recognize the natural leadership of men of talent, cultivation, and moderate principles--men like himself. Moreover, the highest circles of society in Philadelphia, New York, and Newport counted Fisher as one of their own. Though poor by the standards of his circle, and thus prevented from entertaining himself, Fisher was welcomed into the most elegant houses of his city by virtue of his family, old Quaker stock grown wealthy and socially prominent during the 18th century. His diary, kept from 1837 until his death in 1867, is the best record available of the social lives of eminent Philadelphians and the national society over which they ruled. Though Fisher remarked upon his acquaintance with fellow aristocrats from other parts of the northeast,

his relationship with prominent southern families, especially the Butlers, Middletons, and the descendants of Alice Izard and Margaret Manigault, emerges with striking clarity.

Fisher's diary presents unmistakable evidence that the bond between Philadelphia elites and their southern counterparts continued unbroken well into the 1850s, and even beyond. In addition, his reflections testify to the tensions that strained that relationship. For Fisher grew fonder of his southern friends, but he also he became progressively contemptuous, even hostile, towards the South itself. He increasingly came to see slavery as a national evil, both in its own right and for its invidious influence on southern whites. Nevertheless, the Philadelphian mentally segregated political from personal feelings.. He may have deplored the source of their fortunes, but Fisher envied and admired their easy hospitality, their generosity, and the manners and conservative convictions that marked them not as southerners but as fellow bluebloods.

Of George Cadwalader, a Philadelphian with strong prosouthern feelings and several Maryland estates, Fisher observed that “he is uncultivated, unintellectual, selfish & heartless, addicted wholly to money-making & sensual enjoyments.” On the other hand, he recognized that “he is a gentleman in his manners as he is in birth & breeding.” Many of his fellow Philadelphians suffered from no such ambivalence regarding the peculiar institution, openly admiring both southerners and their social order, but the balance Sidney Fisher maintained between hostility toward slavery and friendship toward slaveowners suggests how the American upper crust maintained its cohesion amidst growing sectional division. Indeed, Fisher's diary suggests that privileged and conservative Americans grew more, not less, united in the decades preceding the Civil
War, because in all sections they were marginalized by the same movement toward refinement that marked the emergence of a confident middle class. Whereas in the 1810's Margaret Manigault had opened up her parlor to confront the forces of egalitarianism, twenty years later Sidney Fisher and his fellow aristocrats retreated into theirs.  

Fisher's conservatism had deep Philadelphia roots. His parents, James L. and Anne Elizabeth (George) Fisher, both belonged to prominent Pennsylvania families. The first American of the line, John Fisher, accompanied the first party of William Penn's Quakers to the new colony. The Fishers soon emerged as one of the leading mercantile families of Pennsylvania. The branch of the family headed by his cousin, Joshua Francis Fisher, retained their wealth more successfully than Sidney's line, though their relative poverty in no way hindered their social prospects. Much to his chagrin, Sidney Fisher was compelled by necessity to earn an income. Both he and his cousin studied law in the office of Joseph Ingersoll, though Joshua did not practice. He married well after a long, happy bachelorhood. Elizabeth Ingersoll, the daughter of Charles Ingersoll, wed Fisher in 1851. Infatuated with husbandry and the life of a landed gentleman, about this time Fisher began cultivating his lands in Maryland, though entirely without success.

Though Fisher was frustrated by the failure of his agricultural ventures and the drudgery of his law practice, he found solace in writing. He published a book of mediocre poetry, *Winter Studies in the Country*, and a number of well received essays on the sectional crisis, the latter signed in genteel fashion with the pseudonyms "Cecil" and.

---

3Fisher Diary, August 12, 1849.
"Kent," the Maryland counties closest to Philadelphia in which Fisher owned farms. While Fisher first published some of his essays in the *North American*, others such as *The Trial of the Constitution* (1862) were originally distributed as pamphlets. All his published works, however, addressed the sectional crisis. As relations between North and South disintegrated in the 1850s, Fisher found himself torn between his admiration for white supremacy and southern manners and his contempt for the South's primitive economy and political arrogance. As a gentleman, he felt responsible to offer guidance to public opinion, and his writings, while unsympathetic towards the South, nevertheless expressed the same moderation that characterized the more prosouthern publications of his cousin Joshua Francis Fisher. Regarding the desire of some Philadelphia merchants to publish in pamphlet form Fisher's 1856 *North American* Article "Kansas and the Constitution" under his real name, Fisher demurred. "This I positively refused," he recorded, partially because the publishers wished "to state in a preface that the writer is an owner of Southern property. This I object to. I hate notoriety of this kind." Though Fisher had nothing but contempt for the nation's democratic politics, the breakup of the Union filled him with despair, necessitating as it did the disruption of Philadelphia society and a separation from his many southern friends. Despondent in his final years over his livelihood and failing health, he found solace in his marriage and his son, the historian Sydney George Fisher. He died in Philadelphia in 1871.4

---

Though Fisher craved the respect and genteel connotations that the life of an essayist promised, he was frustrated by the necessity of providing for himself and, after 1851, his new family. Before and after his marriage, however, he commanded both esteem and cultivation in the company of others of his rank. Fisher was a socialite par excellence, more at home in the ballroom and parlor than the courthouse. Though his relative poverty prevented him from entertaining others, his austerity does not appear to have damaged his reputation in the eyes of his peers. Fisher maintained a relentless social calendar. Though unable to reciprocate the invitations of others, they consistently invited him to their affairs, which he invariably attended. Perhaps his conversational skills and his rather eccentric demeanor endeared him to others of his level. Williams Middleton praised "Syd[‘s] . . . incredibility" as being "equal to that of his great namesake of Spanish renown. . .[t]he only difference between them is that between performances & non performances exceeding belief."5

Fisher himself had another explanation for his social position, one that in its own way was just as flattering as that hazarded by the admiring Williams Middleton. "I have the satisfaction of knowing that tho' my family is neither so rich nor so influential as it once was, I come on both sides from good blood, and that my ancestors, as far back as the first settlement of the country, have held respectable, some of them eminent positions in the best society of their time," he reflected after an afternoon with his Quaker kin.

"[A]ltho I have no great reason for boasting on the subject," Fisher nevertheless boasted,  

5Williams Middleton to Joshua Francis Fisher, March 25, 1848, Box 20, Brinton Coxe Papers, Joshua Francis Fisher Section, HSP.
"I have a right to consider that 'I am a gentleman,' tho a poor one." In the more dynamic, less traditional cities of the eastern seaboard, Fisher believed his position would have been far less secure. "[S]peculation & enterprise," not cultivation and family, counted in the northeast, "particularly . . . in N[ew] York, and as money there is the only test, the society is composed of people from every rank in life, even the lowest." Outside Philadelphia circles, high society in most other American cities consisted of "but few families of long standing, & they cannot vie with the nouveaux riches, who have immense incomes which they send very lavishly," he concluded sadly.®

Two careful studies of class, status, and persistence in antebellum American cities reinforce Fisher's judgement. Frederick Cople Jaher and Stuart Blumin agree that elites in Boston and New York differed substantially from those in Philadelphia and other southern cities. Boston's Brahmins were more successful than Knickerbockers in maintaining their position and fortunes through successive generations but adopted an enterprising, commercial ethos and a religious zeal anathema to the more traditional elites on the Delaware. Less pious, perhaps, but even more enterprising were up-and-coming elites in New York. Old Knickerbocker families made "repeated attempts to create distinctions and institutions which would provide form and order" to the city's social scene, though to no avail, argues Jaher. The desperate attempts to retain old guard influence through exclusive clubs and social affairs only served to "reveal the uncertain status and extensive permeability in the haute monde." Though not characterized by the

®Fisher diary, Dec. 29, 1843, February 9, 1837.
"frenetic dazzle, stupendous extravagance, and rarity of blueblood credentials of the Gilded Age smart set," antebellum New York society still suffered from the vulgarity and meanness of its relatively bourgeois origins. Anecdotal evidence supports their conclusions. Noah Webster approved of the practice of New York's "principal families" in "associating in their public amusements with the middle class of well-bred citizens," a practice that the New Englander believed "prevent[ed] that . . . affectation of superiority [found] in certain families in Philadelphia."^7

If Fisher's Philadelphia friends found his lack of wealth offset by his family's eminence and his personal cultivation, so did planter-class families find Philadelphia's exacting standards more to their liking. Less dour than Boston and more self-satisfied than New York, Philadelphia society burst with southern luminaries. Partly, the Fisher family felt comfortable with southern manners and conventions because of blood ties. Fisher's wife, Elizabeth (Bet) Ingersoll, was the daughter of Charles Ingersoll and Susan

Brown Ingersoll, the daughter of Dr. Samuel Brown, a southwestern planter and professor at Kentucky's Transylvania University. As a young man Brown had trained under Benjamin Rush at the University of Pennsylvania and he had maintained his ties to Philadelphia by corresponding with his many friends there. His work for the American Philosophical Society kept him in touch with the city's professional and scientific community. When Susan Brown came of age, her father escorted her to Philadelphia for a genteel education befitting a young lady of her station. He sent her first to Mrs. Phillips's school, then to the French-speaking academy of Aimee Sigoigne, where she entered Philadelphia society and met Charles Ingersoll.8

Bet Ingersoll Fisher grew up surrounded by southerners. One of her closest friends was Charlotte Manigault Wilcocks, the daughter of Harriet and Samuel Wilcocks and the granddaughter and great-granddaughter, respectively, of Margaret Manigault and Alice Izard. Charlotte lived in the home of Bet's uncle, Joseph Ingersoll, after the death of her mother in 1834. By virtue of her friendship with Charlotte Wilcocks, whose affection for the social whirl was unparalleled, Elizabeth Ingersoll found herself in the frequent company of her friend's relations in the Izard and Butler families. After her marriage to Harry McCall, Charlotte continued on intimate terms with the Fishers. As a girl, Bet's own household was highly sympathetic to southern causes of the day. Her father Charles maintained close social ties to friends from that region. During the 1850s

he steadfastly defended southern interests against northern attempts to limit the extension of slavery into the territories. In the secession crisis, he supported the southern states and urged his home state to follow their example. During the Civil War Union forces arrested this son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence for his overtly pro-southern sympathies. Elizabeth was the mistress of her own household when her father's feelings toward the South moved from mere sympathy to outright treason, and she and her husband deplored his radical views. Nevertheless, in her girlhood she could not help but have inculcated some of Charles's pro-southern sentiments. Antislavery meetings, speeches, and sermons—as well as crowd actions against them—were common events in antebellum Philadelphia, and it seems unlikely that their occurrence went without comment in the Ingersoll household.⁹

The marriage of Sidney Fisher's closest friend and cousin, Joshua Francis Fisher, to the daughter of South Carolina's powerful planter-politician Henry Middleton further cemented the family's ties to the South. Owing partly to the longtime presence of the Manigault-Izard clan in Philadelphia, Palmetto State first families were an ubiquitous presence in Philadelphia during the early nineteenth centuries. The Middletons, as close friends and relations of the family of Ralph and Alice Izard, became habitual sojourners

in William Penn's city. The Carolinians, recalled Joshua Fisher, "formed . . . a most agreeable portion of our quiet refined society" in Philadelphia. Around 1820, the entire Carolina-Philadelphia cohort began summering at Newport, Rhode Island, where Joshua met Elizabeth Middleton. Upon his engagement, Fisher cautioned his uncle George Harrison over a common northern prejudice. Elizabeth "has none of the habits of a Southern woman," he guaranteed. Indeed, the young lawyer assured his uncle that all the women of the whole far-flung Middleton clan were "utterly far from that indolent helplessness & languid carelessness" that northerners believed characterized women in slave societies.¹⁰

The long and happy marriage of Elizabeth Middleton and Joshua Francis Fisher established a lasting connection between the two large families that survived the Civil War. One friend of Elizabeth accused the dashing young Pennsylvanian of the "great offence you commit in taking away Mrs. Fisher," asking him to "delay . . . the misdemeanor" of removing her to her new home "as long as possible." While Emma Izard complained melodramatically that her friend "was no longer our own, but subject to the will of another," her misgivings were misplaced, not to say overblown. Not only did the Fishers make frequent trips between Middleton Place, Charleston, and their properties in and around Philadelphia, but their connection strengthened the already existing network of Carolina-Pennsylvania bluebloods. Nearly a decade after Fisher and his sister

¹⁰Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher, Box 10, Cadwalader Collection; Fisher Diary, September 12, 1838; Joshua Francis Fisher to George Harrison, 21 September 1838, Box 18, Joshua Francis Fisher outgoing correspondence, Brinton Coxe Collection, all HSP.
took their vows, Williams Middleton wrote from his family's Combahee plantation, anticipating the end to the busy planting season when he could "look forward with no little pleasure to the time now not many weeks distant when I may rejoin you all" in Philadelphia.

Joshua exchanged frequent letters with his wife's male relatives, who often left Elizabeth completely out of their correspondence, writing instead to their esteemed Philadelphia relation. Indeed, the Middletons looked to Fisher as the northern nexus of their far-flung family and as a source of social news and fashionable trends. Apparently he was a far more faithful correspondent than most of the Middletons' blood relations. Williams declared himself "indebted to you for our last news from Philadelphia, "having received no letters from his intrepid brothers or sisters for weeks. "The other members of the family appear to have forgotten us," the amiable Middleton complained.11

Besides these family connections, the Fishers' southern circle embraced a number of eminent southerners bound not by blood nor marriage, but by friendship and station. The descendants of Major Pierce Butler occupied a rarified place in Philadelphia's social firmament by virtue of their ancestor's hugely profitable rice plantations in lowcountry Georgia. The Major was an absentee owner, visiting his holdings for at most a few weeks a year for an annual inspection. Like many lowcountry planters--including the

11Emma Izard to Joshua Francis Fisher, April 24, 1839; Williams Middleton to Fisher, March 25, 1848, both Box 20, Joshua Francis Fisher Section, Coxe Papers, HSP. Catherine Clinton argues that southern women's submission to their husbands and fathers often entailed unwilling relocations far from kin and friends, but in this case Emma Izard's complaints were probably in jest. Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon, 1982), 166-168.
Middletons—he found the coastal climate both too uncomfortable and unhealthy for permanent residence. But while most rice barons divided their time between their coastal plantations, upcountry holdings, Charleston, and a summertime jaunt to the northern springs, Butler settled his family on the Delaware. The Major's descendants remained prominent members of Philadelphia society for generations, though their ties to their ancestral Georgia lands weakened after his grandsons, Thomas and Pierce (Mease) Butler, squandered the family fortune and forced the sale of almost all the family's human property in 1854. The southern source of the family's wealth made them attractive to celebrity-watchers in the city. One pamphlet publicizing Philadelphia's wealthiest citizens suggested that John Butler, who "married a southern lady," was worth "at least . . . $50,000." Another put Eliza Butler's fortune at $150,000, pointing out her relation to her nephews John and Pierce and highlighting her Palmetto State parentage.12

Thomas and Pierce Butler were the sons of Sarah Butler, the Major's daughter, and Dr. James Mease, a socially prominent Philadelphia physician whose sister, Isabella, was on friendly terms with the Manigault, Izard, and Iredell families. Butler did not

12A Member of the Philadelphia Bar, Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia, Containing an Alphabetical Arrangement of Persons Estimated to be Worth $50,000 and Upwards, with the Sums Appended to Each Name: Being Useful to Bankers, Merchants, and Others (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber & Co., 1845), 6; A Merchant of Philadelphia, Memoirs and Auto-Biography of some of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia, with a Fair Estimate of their estates—Founded upon a Knowledge of Facts (Philadelphia: Published by the Booksellers, 1846), 11. See Edward Pessen, Riches, Class, and Power before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass: D.C. Heath, 1973), 310, for the popularity of this genre in the 1840s. On the Butlers, the latest work is Malcom Bell Jr., Major Butler's Legacy: Four Generations of a Slaveholding Family (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1982).
approve of the match, having the "profoundest contempt" for his son-in-law, but he monitored his grandsons' educations closely. He enrolled them in the school of John P. Espy, a favorite of the city's smart set. In his will, Major Butler left his grandsons the lion's share of his property with the stipulation that they formally renounce their father's name and adopt the surname "Butler." Apparently, neither of the Mease boys were close to their father; at any rate, the temptation of their grandfather's fortune was probably too great to resist. With little compunction they took the Major's name and inheritance, giving them a fortune to match their pedigree. The yearly income from their rice estates allowed the brothers to maintain a position in society from which their personalities and intellects alone would have disqualified them. Joshua Francis Fisher, upon hearing of John's death in the Mexican War, mourned him as "a friend of my boyhood," yet admitted that "since I was 14 I have known little of him--nor desired to." Rebecca Gratz contrasted Pierce's own defects of personality with his wife's "noble qualities, her brilliant talents, and ardent love and practice of rare virtues." In voicing these judgements, Fisher and Gratz were merely expressing commonly held sentiments within the Butlers' circle.\(^{13}\)

If the Butler brothers maintained their social position by virtue of their fortunes

---

\(^{13}\)Fisher, "Recollections," (first quotation); Joshua Francis Fisher Diary, January 20, 1848, Joshua Francis Fisher Papers, both HSP (second); Rebecca Gratz to Miriam Gratz Moses Cohen, quoted in Bell, Major Butler's Legacy, 299 (third). James Mease was the author of several works, including ---. Joshua Francis Fisher claimed that Philadelphians considered Mease "a mean-spirited contemptible man" and "excluded [him] from the society of honorable people" after he attempted to publish an anonymous attack upon his mentor, Governor George Mifflin, in William Cobbett's Porcupine's Gazette. As Fisher relates, Cobbett double-crossed Mease by printing "the private note which accompanied [Mease's article] enjoining secrecy." Fisher, "Recollections," HSP.
and their gentlemanly habits, qualities that owed little to intellect or virtues, the women of the family commanded the esteem of all fashionable Philadelphians. Fanny Kemble, the daughter of English thespian Charles Kemble and herself an acclaimed actor, married Pierce Butler after a whirlwind courtship in 1839. Both were impulsive, willful, and romantic, yet Pierce had neither the intellectual qualities nor the compassion that made his wife nearly universally beloved in Philadelphia circles. Their divorce was finalized ten years later, after producing two children and a decade's worth of gossip. When a friend, a niece of Pierce, "confided" to Charlotte Wilcocks that "Mr. [Pierce] Butler kept a mistress," she resisted the urge to tell her that "her Uncle kept two." Sidney Fisher mocked Pierce's application for divorce on the grounds of his wife's "Willful and malicious desertion," for "it is quite notorious that she was driven from his house by his own barbarous treatment."¹⁴

Amazingly, Fanny Butler claimed to be ignorant of the source of her husband's fortune when they married, for she was implacably opposed to slavery. Her antislavery principles exacerbated their personality conflicts, but her dignified demeanor throughout her ordeal won her the respect of Philadelphians, despite (or perhaps because of) their familiarity with Pierce. Even before the ordeal of her divorce, however, Fanny had won over most cultivated Philadelphians by her sociability, high spirits, and sharp mind. "She is a very gifted person," Sidney Fisher recorded in his diary after a pleasant visit to Butler Place, "& her qualities of heart & character are as excellent as those of her intellect."

¹⁴On the Butlers' divorce, see Bell, Major Butler's Legacy, Chap. 17; Charlotte Wilcocks Diary, September 10, 1842; Fisher Diary, July 7, 1848, both HSP.
Though he sometimes found her "the reverse of feminine in her manners & conversation," Fisher nevertheless sought out her company and noted her absences when the necessity of making a living forced her back onto the stage after her divorce.\(^\text{15}\)

Though she lacked the intellectual qualities that made her sister-in-law a sought-after guest and popular hostess, Gabrielle Butler, John Butler's wife, possessed the social grace and personal splendor that Fanny lacked. John Butler's wife came from peerless Philadelphia-Carolina stock, being the daughter of Lewis and Elizabeth Morris, the daughter of Margaret and Gabriel Manigault. Gabrielle spent many of her summers with her Aunt, Harriet Manigault Wilcocks, at her Philadelphia home, where she met John Butler. Though the match was socially and financially beneficial--Gabrielle being the "southern lady" to which the author of the *Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia* credited John Butler's fortune--it was, to all interested observers, loveless. Even his friends described John Butler as incapable of bestowing genuine affection, except on himself. Upon his death, Sidney Fisher remembered Butler as "a hard, selfish, profligate fellow," whom he judged "of no loss to anyone perhaps," the diarist pondered doubtfully, except "his wife, daughter, & brother." Fisher assessed Gabrielle Butler considerably better than her husband. Renowned for her beauty, Gabrielle mastered the social niceties at an early age. Always "suburb" in company, she relied on her beauty, grace, and accomplishments rather than her intellect. Dressed as a

\(^{15}\)Fisher Diary, October 24, 1839; see also Rebecca Gratz to Ann Boswell Gratz, September 15, 1848, December 11, 1848, and 29 January 1854, in Rabbi David Philipson, ed., *Letters of Rebecca Gratz* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1929), 351-353.
peasant girl at one sumptuous costume party, her modest disguise only highlighted her beauty. "[H]er appearance was as good as any in the room," recorded the diarist, who had a sharp eye for the women of his circle. "I think her beauty is more conspicuous in a simple dress than in any other, altho'," he reconsidered, "it is also well suited to a rich costume."16

Besides these regular members of Philadelphia's fashionable world, other prominent southerners were an ubiquitous presence during the winter season. In late 1839, Sidney Fisher encountered Hugh Swinton Legare, the South Carolina jurist and publisher, at one polite affair. Though he noted Legare's "coarse features, thick lips, and . . . sensual, gross expression about the lower part of his face," Fisher nevertheless admired his "talents, literary acquirements, [and] agreeable powers in society." Despite his physical limitations, Legare won Fisher's admiration as a genuine aristocrat, "one of the few eminent men left who combined talents of a high order with the culture and attainment of a gentleman." In 1837 Fisher attended a ball given by Moncure Robinson, the Virginia gentleman scientist then living in Philadelphia. "All the Virginians in town were there as a matter of course," he observed. More often than he liked, Fisher encountered Robert Tyler, the son of the President, in his social rounds. Though "more gentlemanlike and more intelligent than I expected," Fisher still judged his "vulgarity & folly," vices rooted in his democratic politics and lack of learning, "bad enough" in a man

16Fisher Diary, January 20, 1848, January 18, 1846. On Gabrielle's visits to Philadelphia, see the 1820 correspondence in the Manigault-Morris-Grimball Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
of his station. At one wedding party in honor of Dr. Charles Carter, the Philadelphians were outnumbered by the Virginians, including Carter himself, St. George Tucker, Edward Coles, William Rives, and William Byrd Page, the last a former medical student at the University of Pennsylvania.17

Publications trumpeting the riches of Philadelphia's upper crust made frequent references to southerners living in the city. Their authors pandered to the craze for wealth and celebrity that energized America in the 1830s and 1840s. According to an anonymous lawyer's Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia, Henry Atherton, attorney, had "married an heiress from the South." Before moving to Philadelphia, Henry Ewing was a "broker from Nashville," according to the guide. Both William Lehman and Thomas Mellon were reported to have made their fortunes in New Orleans before retiring to the city. The merchant who penned the Memoirs and Autobiography of certain wealthy Philadelphians made similar note of expatriate southerners. J.M. Barclay, his pamphlet noted, "married the daughter of a rich planter in Louisiana, by whom he acquired a fortune." Despite his prosaic profession, the Virginia-born dentist J.T. Caldwell, it was claimed, "possess[ed] the true characteristics of a Virginian in his genuine hospitality." The Memoirs noted Charles Ingersoll's marriage to "Miss Brown," though it failed to point out her Mississippi/Kentucky lineage. Indeed, these gossip

---

sheets actually under represented the southern roots of Philadelphia society. While both took note of Charles Short's substantial fortune, neither noted that Jefferson's former secretary was Virginia born and bred. Similarly, Nathaniel Chapman's Virginia roots went unremarked, though not by his southern students. And while the Memoirs of Philadelphia's smart set put Rene LaRoche's fortune at $50,000, it failed to allude to his marriage to Mary Jane Ellis, step-daughter of southwestern landholder and adventurer Nathaniel Ware.¹⁸

Published guides to Philadelphia's leisure class typically reserved their descriptions for rich men, but the southern contingent of Philadelphia high society featured prominent women as well. Sidney Fisher attended an exclusive and tasteful party in the winter of 1837 thrown by George Harrison, "one of the few houses left in the city, where one does not meet these vulgar, nouveau riche people," at which he noted the presence of Mrs. Trudeau of New Orleans, whose similarly rarified gathering he had attended a few nights before. In 1847 he attended a party at Henry Atherton's house in honor of some Georgians Atherton had befriended in Saratoga the previous summer. The company included Mary Telfair, a Savannah lady whose fortune and personality merited Fisher's approval. The Butlers' Carolina and Georgia relations made frequent trips to Philadelphia, usually staying with the Major's spinster daughter Eliza. Phoebe Rush's weekly salons, as well as her yearly ball, the social highlight of the season, regularly

¹⁸Member of the Philadelphia Bar, Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia, 4, 9, 10, 16, 19 (on Short); Merchant of Philadelphia, Memoirs and Auto-Biography of some of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia, 6, 13, 32, 35 (LaRoche), 56 (Short).
included the women of the Izard, Middleton, Drayton, Telfair, and Carter families when they were in the city.\(^{19}\)

The inclusion of such a large number of southerners in Philadelphia's beau monde did not come without its strains. Philadelphians neither welcomed all southerners as a matter of course nor excluded them reflexively. Rather, they embraced all those who met their exacting standards of taste, pedigree, and sociability. Others were excluded or, in attempting to enter the inner circle, forced to conform to established tradition or face derision. Southern manners, though consistent with acceptable standards of genteel behavior, were observed to be distinctive in some respects that made many Philadelphians uneasy with their slaveowning friends. On the other hand, planters possessed many traits that their Quaker City friends craved, having (they believed) been eroded in their more democratic milieu. Attention to the more glaring differences between northern and southern manners intensified during the 1850s, but leisure-class Philadelphians continued to look to their southern peers as genuine American aristocrats. Though they sometimes looked with distaste at the less refined manners and sentiments of southern men and women, they also saw in them a core of aristocracy purer, in some ways, than their own.

Much of this ambivalence regarding the slaveowning gentry was bound up in Philadelphians' image of the southern gentleman and southern lady. To refined

\(^{19}\)Fisher Diary, January 15, 1837; December 12, 1847; Misses Middleton to Phoebe Rush, n.d.; Misses Izard to Phoebe Rush, n.d.; "List of names of persons in Philadelphia kept by Mrs. Rush for the convenience of inviting to parties between the years 1830 & 1840," MS in Phoebe Rush Papers, Library Company of Philadelphia.
Philadelphians, planters seemed to embody a vulgar masculinity, even mindless savagery. Yet by no means did they by no means reject the southern ethical code and the kind of men it produced--indeed, the vitality, confidence, and easy manners of planters often inspired a kind of jealous fascination in their more genteel northern peers. The ideal of gentility originated partly in European martial traditions increasingly alien to their bourgeois world. Still, southern gentlemen commonly offended the more refined sensibilities of their Philadelphia friends by their anti-intellectualism and coarseness.²⁰

Some Philadelphians recoiled from the southern penchant for violence and intolerance of the southern mentalité that defied the true spirit of refinement. When a mob largely composed of southern medical students burned down Pennsylvania Hall during a meeting of antislavery women, abolitionists ridiculed southern pretensions to gentility. "It was undoubtedly 'a proper respect for the right of property' which induced these chivalric gentlemen to destroy our Hall, which was our property, honestly purchased from the original owner," mocked the Hall's owners, caricaturing notices posted by the students urging the defense of "sacred" honor and property. Sidney Fisher complained that southern gentility fell short of its romantic image. "If you go to the South," he observed in an 1844 diatribe, "you have disease, the heat of Africa, mosquitoes, slavery, ferocious & vicious manners, a low & degraded standard of morals & opinion." Upon finishing Olmestead's Cotton Kingdom in 1856, he deplored "the

²⁰On the northern preoccupation with genteel honor see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 91-92.
ignorance, poverty, & barbarism that slavery had produced among the whites." Ten days later Fisher's declining regard for southern gentility was confirmed by news reports on "the atrocious outrage on Sumner" by Preston Brooks in the Senate chamber. "The worst feature in the case," Fisher exclaimed, "is the diabolical manner in which the Southern papers all sustain & praise Brooks for the act."²¹

Dueling, which many southerners identified with refinement and gentlemanly behavior, came under special censure in some Philadelphia circles. To be sure, the duel was by no means an accepted means of settling disputes, even in the deepest South. William Grayson of South Carolina charged that the practice "is the product of a barbarous age and flourishes in proportion as the manners of the people are coarse and brutal." Nevertheless, southern men believed the duel defended personal valor and family reputation, and also upheld the rules of gentility, requiring self-control and attention to manners. Most Philadelphians, especially respectable middle class sorts, thought otherwise. Rebecca Gratz, a friend of the Butlers, related an account of a young man in her circle, Isaac Moses, who found himself challenged by a hot-headed young German. The foreigner claimed that Moses had maligned his native land through some critical comments on waltzing. The charge was groundless, but Moses only avoided a mortal confrontation by twice thrashing the hapless immigrant in the street. Gratz found another incident, the Clay-Turner duel of 1849, less humorous. She had little sympathy for the

men, both of whom were killed, but despaired instead for "their unhappy wives in such desolation & ruin." Echoing other critics of dueling, North and South, Gratz rejected any relation between dueling and gentility. By their devotion to "honor, false honor against every principle of right--either religious or moral," Clay, Turner, and other duelists "mingle[d] wrong & right together . . . do[ing] a wicked thing to prove that [they] are brave."22

Rebecca Gratz and her family moved in rarified circles in Philadelphia, Lexington, and Savannah, but other, more popular, voices made themselves heard against the aristocratic practice. In 1826, the Philadelphia Album, a predecessor to Godey's, fought a campaign of sorts against dueling. "Harriet" portrayed dueling as the destroyer of gentility, not its guardian as its defenders claimed. The fatal challenge, the poet warned, slew "The graceful, beautiful, and brave/He fell for honour's empty name." In phrases designed to appeal to men and women of rising fortunes seeking respectability by aping elite manners, she admonished the "name of honour" as the wrongheaded principle that "prostrate laid . . . That graceful form--that glowing cheek/Those glossy curls--that noble brow." Later that year, "A Lady" of Charleston, whose southern milieu perhaps

---

gave her more credibility on the subject, condemned dueling in more prosaic, but similarly sentimental, terms. "[I]n this enlightened age," she declared, "we no longer consider success (the soul shudders at the term) as the test of innocence." While the honorable lady expected no gentleman to "sit down tamely under his wrongs, and, by acquiescence, invite aggression," she urged the formation of a "court of Honor. . . . comprised of men of the strictest impartiality" to adjudicate "those injuries and insults which are now submitted to the Court of Death." Opponents of dueling, North as well as South, faced an evil they characterized in class as much as sectional terms.23

Their censure of violence-prone northern gentry was actually well-placed. Members of Sidney Fisher's circle, including the diarist himself, were themselves prone to the same fits of intolerance and "refined" violence they claimed to abhor in their southern friends. Abolitionists were the most conspicuous targets of their censure. Philadelphia socialites excommunicated them from polite society, believing their single-minded zeal made them poor conversationalists, especially in a community so popular with slaveowners. Sidney Fisher observed that Pennsylvania Hall had been "burnt, in broad day, by a mob of well-dressed persons, the police scarcely interfering & the firemen not being allowed to play on the fire." While the lawyer deplored such disdain for "the supremacy of the laws," especially in his own circle, he was more than usually forgiving of the arsonists. "To be sure there was great provocation," he mused. "The

23Harriet, "On a Young Gentleman who was Killed in a Duel," Philadelphia Album, and Ladies' Weekly Gazette 1 No. 9 (1826), 8; A Lady (Charleston, S.C.), "On Dueling" Ibid., No. 22 (November 1826), 2-3.
cause itself is unpopular & justly so, and the fanatic orators openly recommended
dissolution of the Union, abused Washington &c. Black & white men & women sat
promiscuously together, & walked about arm in arm." Both the ardor of abolitionists and
the lawlessness of the rioters struck Fisher as contrary to a proper spirit of moderation.
"Such are the excesses of enthusiasm," he concluded laconically.24

Fisher and other men of his circle even expressed ambivalence over dueling. While they deplored violence, they continued to view the duel as the prerogative of
wronged gentlemen, the procedures and rules of the code duello as guarantors of civility.
The Marquis de Chastellux, in Philadelphia during the winter of 1780, spent a pleasant
afternoon with the "amiable family" of General George Cadwalader, a Philadelphia clan
that retained its preeminence well into the nineteenth century. "It is this gentleman
[Cadwalader]," the French aristocrat observed, "who had a duel with Mr. C[onway] and
severely wounded him in the jaw with a pistol shot." In 1830, a Philadelphia friend of
Joel Poinsett expressed his disgust at "much jarring in the elements of society,"
manifested in "[t]ract societies, temperance societies, antisabbath mails, antimasonics,
&c," whose bourgeois "spirit unfortunately has received much plausibility in this city
from a very fatal duel which took place last week & which has raised a great feeling in

24Fisher Diary, May 19, 1838. Samuel Webb claimed that the crowd that torched
the Hall was made up of "a number of well-dressed men." [Webb, ed.], History of
Pennsylvania Hall, 142. On the difficulties faced by abolitionists in Philadelphia, see
Mary Lesley Ames, ed., Life and Letters of Peter and Susan Lesley (New York: G.P.
Putnam's Sons, 1909), 1: 380; and Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Philadelphia Protestantism
React to Social Reform Movements before the Civil War," Pennsylvania History 30
(1963), 192.
the community." Professor Keating objected less to "religious" opposition to dueling than to the grass-roots political activism, scornful of the moderating hand of gentlemen, that the contest prompted.25

Participation in dueling lent a romantic aura to Philadelphia gentlemen. The Wealth and Biography of Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia intimated, tabloid-style, that Benjamin Smith Barton, worth "$100,000," had "[o]nce killed a gentleman in a duel," an act that, apparently, neither prevented the acclaimed naturalist from "marr[y]ing a fortune" nor from becoming "a Democrat." Other genteel voices recognized, with some reluctance, the necessity of dueling in resolving conflicts between gentlemen. Sidney Fisher, no champion of the practice, nevertheless approved of the course of Edward Middleton, Fisher's client in pursuit of a divorce from his Italian bride Edda. The unfortunate Edda, as all connected Philadelphians and Carolinians knew, had engaged in a scandalous affair with Harry McCall, the husband of Charlotte Manigault Wilcocks. With mixed admiration and disdain, Fisher heard that "Middleton had determined not to challenge McCall," understanding that his client had "conscientious scruples on the subject."26


Nevertheless, Fisher doubted "whether [Middleton] can maintain his position in the Navy or among gentlemen, particularly in the South, unless he" made himself available to his wife's lover. The lawyer assumed with the rest his circle that Middleton "will fight after he obtains a divorce," though his reluctance had led to the voicing "of many severe things . . . here [Philadelphia] & in Carolina." Fisher endorsed his patience as proof of Middleton's good breeding. "In the Southwest . . . a man would be permitted . . . to shoot or stab his injurer wherever he should find him without notice," he recorded with the disdain he reserved for all things western. "In the North, such a course would be regarded as barbarous, but," Fisher wrote with similar contempt, "except perhaps in Boston, a duel would be quite necessary." While excessive violence stymied the progress of gentility in the South, a prudish, bourgeois spirit corrupted it in the Northeast. "If you go to the North," he penned after a diatribe against the South, "you find the cold of Iceland during half the year, a society without refinement of elevated feelings, absorbed in money-getting & living without social intercourse in selfish isolation, and democracy with its mobs, riots, demagogues, & corruption." Members of Fisher's Philadelphia circle mourned the mean state of civilization in the South, but they also disapproved of northern customs. Repulsed by violence and ignorance in the South and West and disdainful of popular vulgarity, Philadelphia gentlemen maintained their way of life in Charleston, Natchez, and Philadelphia. In their own ways, the mass of whites in both great sections undermined the true spirit of cultivation. Which of the two is worse," Fisher concluded
despondently, "is difficult to determine."²⁷

Philadelphians also questioned the refinement of southern gentlemen. Besides being hot-headed and irascible, southerners--especially those from the best families--often seemed contemptuous of intellectual and cultural pursuits, less generous than profligate, and sensual to the point of indulgence. As in the case of dueling, northern genteel attitudes evidenced a blend of repugnance and grudging admiration. While Philadelphians trumpeted their own cultivation, love of science and belles lettres, and overall civility, they could not dispel the suspicion that the southern aristocratic spirit, for all its coarseness and rude vitality, was somehow more genuine than theirs.

Compounding their dilemma was an ongoing redefinition of the "gentleman" under their influence of republicanism and popular culture that reached into the upper crust itself, as evinced by Benjamin Rush's thoughts on the subject. "[T]o be a gentleman," asserted the Philadelphia doctor, "subjects one to the necessity of resenting injuries, fighting duels and the like, and takes away all disgrace in swearing, getting drunk, running in debt, getting bastards, etc. It makes nothing infamous but giving or taking the lye. . . . They lie to their creditors, to their mistresses, to their fathers or wives, or to the public." Rush's criticism formed part of a popular revulsion against the leisure and sensuality of traditional ruling-

class culture. Abhorrence of work, like a separate standard of morality, seemed out of place in a nation committed to equality and majority rule.28

If leisure-class Philadelphians had taken to heart some of the post-Revolutionary criticism of gentlemanly behavior, it seemed to some of them that southerners remained unreconstructed aristocrats—gentlemen without refinement. To conservative Philadelphians, a gentleman was one who maintained a balance between older values of elitism, honor and leisure with more "refined" attributes such as intellectual achievement and cultivation. Hence during his cousin's Grand Tour, Sidney Fisher agreed that "however delightful it may be to see cities & buildings & works of art, . . . To succeed in commanding attention & engaging interest, in a distinguished & brilliant circle, is to gratify no insignificant ambition & improves the possession of qualities and acquirements, with which few are gifted." In this vein, the Butler brothers, John and Pierce, came in for particular censure. Early in his acquaintance, when his opinion of Pierce Butler was at its highest, the Philadelphia diarist thought he "has a great deal of energy . . . tho' entirely without education." After a visit to Butler Place outside Philadelphia, Fisher praised the "qualities of heart & character" of Fanny Butler that he

found "as excellent as those of her intellect." About her husband Fisher took note of his
"great energy & firmness," with scant comment about his intellectual capacities. For all
his brother's shortcomings, John Butler made a worse impression. Upon hearing news of
his death in Mexico, Fisher reflected only that "[n]o man ever threw away his life more
foolishly. . . . he was . . . totally without education or intellect." 29

Southerners' penchant for anti-intellectualism seemed to go hand in hand with an
arrogant and indolent deportment. Joshua Francis Fisher recalled Major Butler as
"beyond all men violent, contrary, and tyrannical. His braggadocio deportment was, at
times, supremely ridiculous. There was," Fisher recalled, "some stateliness, but no
elegance or appearance of taste in any thing about him," though he conceded that "[h]e
had fine horses, and fine wine." Similarly, J. Francis Fisher also found fault with his old
friend George Izard's "haughty demeanor." His diarist cousin frequently recorded his
admiration for the Cadwalader family. He had mixed feelings for the scion of the family,
George Cadwalader, a Philadelphia resident who owned farms in Maryland worked by
slaves. Cadwalader's boundless energy, physique, military bearing, and sensuality struck
the diarist of something short of genteel, although there is something of a hint of jealousy
in his observation of Cadwalader as a "man of the world, a man of pleasure, shrewd,
practical, with much business ability, no education, but a good deal of experience in life,
very gentlemanlike & easy in his manners . . . the most successful & fortunate person I

29 Sidney George Fisher to Joshua Francis Fisher, March 8, 1831, Box 9, J. Francis
Fisher Section, Coxe Papers; Fisher Diary, November 2, 1836, October 24, 1839, January
21, 1848, both HSP.
know of in all his undertakings." Almost every element of Cadwalader's character--his exuberance, business acumen, success, hospitality, and lack of education--contrast sharply with Fisher's own experience. Fisher's ambivalence about Cadwalader speaks to genteel Philadelphians' uncertainty about planter class manners and reveals insecurities about their own compromises to bourgeois convention.30

For all their limitations, no Philadelphian could deny that southerners like Cadwalader and the Butlers were of the highest rank. Perhaps their worldliness and attachment to leisure made them more so. Everyone recognized that southern gentlemen were a breed apart, though their distinctiveness in no way implied inferiority. J. Francis Fisher qualified his condemnation of his uncle's friend George Izard's haughtiness by noting that he had "polished manners" and, unlike some unqualified gentleman-officers in the War of 1812, "enter[ed] the American Army with more than usual professional attainments." For Sidney George Fisher, the differences between northern and southern gentlemen were epitomized by two great lawyers of the day, Horace Binney and Carolinian William C. Preston. "Binney is a Tuscan or Doric temple, simple & elegant, massy & plain; Preston a Gothic cathedral, grand, strong, & vast, but encrusted with rich decorations and lighted by windows of painted glass." The manners--not the mind--made the gentleman. For all Pierce Butler's limitations, the Fishers' circle never challenged his

30"Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," Box 10, J. Francis Fisher Section, Cadwalader Collection; Fisher Diary, April 17, 1839; see also August 12, 1849, both HSP. Because of his southern sympathies and relations to the Butlers by marriage, Cadwalader was mobbed and forced to declare loyalty to the union after news broke of the shelling on Fort Sumter. See Fanny Kemble Wister, "Sarah Butler Wister's Civil War Diary," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 102 (1978), 276.
social position nor his worthiness to occupy it. While bereft of education or strong habits of mind, the elder Butler brother was "extremely gentlemanlike in manner," possessed of "many excellent traits of character." Even his universally reviled brother John, the Fishers believed, comported himself with "the manners of a gentleman & exhibited great taste in dress, house, & equipage." Sidney Fisher identified the peculiar institution as the determining influence on planter-class manners. On a trip to Baltimore, he observed "a thousand evidences of the influence (good and bad) of slavery. . . . The men have a more indolent and well-bred air than with us and look as if they were accustomed to take their ease and enjoy leisure."  

Such distinctive habits, however admirable Philadelphians found them, were overshadowed by the common leisure-class culture shared by American gentlemen from all sections. Many in Fisher's circle were openly contemptuous of dominant middle-class morals, and the popular magazines of the day, especially the Philadelphia-based *Godey's Ladies Book* and *Graham's Magazine* (and its predecessor the *Gentleman's Magazine*), relentlessly derided upper-class pretensions.  

Both Philadelphians and their planter-class

---

31"Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," Box 10, J. Francis Fisher Section, Cadwalader Collection (George Izard); Fisher Diary, March 20, 1839 (Binney and Preston); October 24, 1839 (Pierce Butler); January 21, 1848 (John); June 17, 1848 (Baltimore), both HSP.

friends were committed to an aristocratic spirit totally failed to meet the middle-class
gentility celebrated in popular magazines, sentimental fiction, etiquette books, and female
academies like Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary. Sometimes, Philadelphia
gentlemen imitated the boorish behavior of southerners, as in 1802 when a coalition of
mechanics and manufacturers in the city protested horse racing by the gentry down city
streets. The pastime "may be agreeable to a few landed gentlemen, who bestow more
care in training their horses than in educating their children," the artisans protested, but it
revealed the contempt in which the gentry held ordinary people.

Though the gentry renounced such brazen acts of public disruption soon after the
mechanics' protest, leisure-class Americans continued to adhere to standards of
amusement that failed to meet middle-class principles of respectability. Much to the
chagrin of editorialists and writers of sentimental fiction, the elite held on to its time-
honored distractions of gambling, drinking, and womanizing. Such persistence only
encouraged the pedantry of the champions of respectability. In 1838 Philadelphia's
Gentlemen's Magazine published a temperance story based in the "Old Dominion"—a
land, as well known, of traditional hospitality, of generous feelings, exalted talents, and
of bad habits," in which a "young gentleman . . . of education, wealth, and high family"
succumbs to drink alone, forlorn, in a strange inn where a sober young northerner records
his story for the benefit of posterity.33


33David Hoffman, "The Young Inebriate, A Tale of the Old Dominion,"
Gentlemen's Magazine 2 (1838), 251.
Despite—or perhaps because of—middle class disapprobation, the gentry clung to their sensual, leisure-loving ways. Visiting gentlemen of a literary or scientific bent might find amusement at the city's celebrated Wistar Parties, but a different kind of recreation could be indulged in at the exclusive Philadelphia Club, a favorite stopover for sojourning southerners. In fact, many visiting gentlemen enjoyed both affairs during the same visit. Organized by George Cadwalader and his card playing friends as the Adelphi Club in 1834, these "haters of change," as the Club's historian, Butler-family descendant Owen Wister, described them, moved into Thomas Butler's mansion in 1850. One member suggested the Club be renamed the Philadelphia Literary and Social Institute in an ironic commentary on the manor's four floors of billiard rooms, card rooms, dining halls, wine cellars, and servants' quarters. A failed proposal in 1847 called "for members to contribute books toward the formation of a library," but that year is best known for the talents of a new member, George Chapman, who entertained his colleagues by "drinking a glass of madeira while standing on his head." The Club opened its doors to "guests from the North and South with names well known in their days": Coupers and Kings from Savannah, Middletons, Heywards, Alstons, Pringles, and Rutledges from South Carolina, Carrolls and Carters from Virginia, "in short, the leading social names from wherever there were any." In 1834, of 287 visitors, 40 were southern; in 1850, 54 of 326; and in the secession year of 1861, 20 of 396. These southerners had to have a member sponsor their visit, but this presented little difficulty; the club roll included Pierce and John Butler, as well as Sidney George Fisher, George Mifflin Dallas, Henry Drayton,
Benjamin Wilcocks, and Joseph Ingersoll.34

Northern and Southern men of note found that they shared a common commitment to leisure and sociability. Soon after entering Princeton, a magnet for southern collegians, a friend of Carolinian James Chesnut wrote to ask him about his experiences in "Yankee Land," being especially curious if "them Yankees... appear to be gentlemen in their ways & manners?" Chesnut's friend Manning feared that being surrounded by a "Company of Strangers" and his "habitation in a far land [had] injured [Chesnut's] spirit for fun & amusement," but he need not have worried. Not only was the young man one of many southerners at Princeton, but the northern students were but little different than himself in values and aspirations. James Pleasants spoke to the importance of sociability and patronage in recommending Major Thomas L. Smith, a fellow Virginian, to his friend Langdon Cheves while the latter resided in Philadelphia. Pleasants endorsed the Major "as a gentleman of great respectability & intelligence & of extensive & highly respectable connections in this state," qualifications that would take him far either in his native state or in Philadelphia, particularly if the well-connected Palmetto State bank president took a liking to his new acquaintance.35

34Owen Wister, The Philadelphia Club, being a brief History of the Club for the First Hundred years of its Existence, Together with a Roll of its Officers and Members to 1934 (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1934), 21, 32, 38-39, members on 81-143.

35"Your Affectionate Friend," M----G (Manning), Camden, SC, to James Chesnut, Princeton, 15 January 1832, Chesnut-Miller-Manning Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston (microfiche copy at University of Florida library, Gainesville); James Pleasants, Richmond, Va., to Langdon Cheves, April 13, 1823, Langdon Cheves Papers, South Carolina historical Society, Charleston (microfiche copy at University of Florida library, Gainesville).
Like Cheves, Sidney Fisher knew that his circle of Philadelphians chose their peers based on a common commitment to sociability, conservatism, and family name. He ascribed the "great degree of intimacy among the different families who compose our society" to the urbanity of early republican and colonial society in Philadelphia, whose "fathers and grandfathers knew each other & associated in former years." Fisher failed to stress the importance of wealth, but he was himself living testimony to the crucial significance of family connections and social continuity. His friendship with the Middleton and Izard families can be traced back to the friendship of his uncle, George Harrison, to those families in the early years of the century, when he was a frequent guest at Clifton and on Spruce Street. Williams Middleton succeeded his father Henry as the family patriarch. Like the former South Carolina Governor, who treated his Quaker City friends "with kindness, friendship & liberality," the son held a love for Philadelphia and its elite society. Dining with Middleton at Avelthorpe, his cousin's estate west of Philadelphia, Sidney Fisher saw a model American gentleman--North or South. "He is very gentlemanlike in manners & character, well educated & has tastes that agree with my own. His life on the plantation at home, and abroad in the best society of England & St. Petersburg have formed him into a very different sort of person from the young men of this place. He is the best horseman I ever saw." Middleton's southern manners, if anything, only underscored his essential gentility.36

36Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 344; Francis J. Grund, Aristocracy in America: From the Sketch-Book of a German Nobleman (1839; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), 214-215; Fisher Diary, February 9, 1837 (on wealth), June 28, 1840; Joshua Francis Fisher to George Harrison, September 14, 1838, J. Francis
Philadelphia gentlemen viewed southern women of their caste with a similar ambivalence. They assumed plantation mistresses to be inferior to northern ladies in certain respects, but found themselves charmed by the distinctive manners of the individual southerners in their circle with whom they shared a leisure-class culture. This common female gentility had special significance for elite manners for Philadelphians and their southern friends. Upon the shoulders of colonial women, as Cynthia Kierner has shown for the eighteenth-century South, lay the responsibility for planning and managing the "exclusive sociability rituals"—salons, teas, balls, and the like—that lay at the heart of upper-class identity. Before and just after the Revolutionary era, these "select companies," as Richard Bushman has styled them, served the elite as a forum for displaying gentility and authenticating their political, social, and cultural preeminence. These political designs had largely disappeared by the second decade of the nineteenth century, at least in the North, but exclusive social affairs directed by women continued to be of crucial importance in reinforcing class cohesion among the leisured set.37

Philadelphians in the Fishers' circle entertained the prejudice that most southern

---

women suffered cultural handicaps that rendered them unfit for such important duty. When he became engaged to Elizabeth Middleton, Joshua Francis Fisher assured his uncle that his bride-to-be exhibited none of the ignorance and lassitude "characteristic of women bred up among slaves." Joshua's cousin had the highest opinion of Moncure Robinson, the southern-born engineer, but thought his wife Charlotte Taylor Robinson "a small, thin, languid looking woman." He was similarly disappointed in the Mason sisters, of Alexandria, Virginia, whose features epitomized the flaws and merits of southern ladies. Fisher "engaged in a good deal of talk with. . . the prettier" of the sisters. The young lady struck the sharp-eyed bachelor as "pretty, certainly, [with] a good figure, regular features, fine complexion, pleasant smile, & intelligent expression." Better, she did "not want for cleverness either, and has a good deal of vivacity." But in one essential aspect--manners--Fisher judged her "thoroughly Virginian," lacking "dignity and grace. . . . careless in dress & person, affected, familiar, badly educated & without the appearance and manner of a high bred lady." A strong indictment from one otherwise disposed to smile on southern foibles.38

A southern visitor turned Fisher's comments on their head by giving Philadelphia ladies a backhanded compliment of his own. Though he judged them "intelligent and accomplished," the privileged ladies of Penn's city lacked "the liveliness, the vivacity, the simplicity, the ease and expression of a Southern lady when engaged in conversation."

---

38Joshua Francis Fisher to George Harrison, September 21, 1838, Fisher Section Box 18, Brinton Coxe Papers; Fisher Diary, March 16, 1837 (Charlotte Robinson), April 28, 1838 (Masons), both HSP.
Philadelphia women, the traveler implied, were too much like Philadelphia men. "They have the *substance*" of womanhood, he asserted, "but want the *soul*." Fisher might have agreed with this judgement, with a less sanguine judgment of southern superiority, but his criticism of southern manners in no way implied that northern women inwardly achieved true refinement. On the contrary, the deficiencies of the South's women merely represented a sectional variation on a general decline in upper-class cultivation. In their vulgarity, the young Mason ladies struck Fisher as "like all that I have seen. . . . bred at the South" but for "one or two So. Carolinians." Yet he reflected that a genuine lady, like a true gentleman, "to be sure is met rarely enough, anywhere."39

In their own way, most northern and southern women were equally unrefined, even in the best society, if Fisher is to be believed. Politeness compelled Charlotte Wilcocks to pay a visit to Miss Cutts, an acquaintance from Washington, when the latter visited Philadelphia, even though Wilcocks found her "a frightful vulgar looking Washington girl" with "such feet. . . . [that] she *must* have been born a scullion." A prominent belle in the Capital, Cutts's invitation could not be ignored despite her dubious claims to gentry status. Like his friend Charlotte Wilcocks McCall, Sidney Fisher had to repay social obligations he preferred to ignore. Responding to an invitation from Mrs. Thomas Wharton, Fisher sweated through ten minutes--the polite minimum--with the rather eminent lady and her circle consisting of "the blue school of mawkish, sentimental, would be literary ladies lately got up here." Wharton committed the social sin of being

39J.Q.P. from N.C., "Extracts of Gleanings on the Way," 250; Fisher Diary, April 28, 1848, HSP.
too fashionable by half. This was the same failing of another Philadelphia lady duped by a visiting Italian woman into presenting her to society as a descendant of Amerigo Vespucci. She was just one of many who, hoping to create a sensation for themselves, "take up every new or notorious person in the most violent manner . . . and often find at last that they have been humbugged." Planter-class women were hardly unique in failing the test of cultivation; they merely fell short in a distinctively southern way.40

As with southern gentlemen, however, genteel Philadelphians were often beguiled by the characteristics of the slaveowning ladies of their circle. For all their peculiar habits and sometimes annoying mannerisms, as many southerners as northerners were unmistakably gentlefolk who deserved to be treated with respect. Besides, behind the moonlight-and-magnolias facade lay an American essence. Philadelphia ladies and their southern sisters shared the same conservative assumptions and refined pretensions. A Boston women's journal unintentionally testified to the marginality of their own city's society when they likened New York and Charleston women to Philadelphians who, unlike learned Boston ladies, were "adepts in dress and other frivolities, connoisseurs in . . . modish fabrics for dresses," who instead of learning useful skills as teenagers "begin to

40Charlotte Wilcocks Diary, October 13, 1842; Fisher Diary, December 28, 27, 1838, both HSP. On the significance of small hands and feet to the refined self-image, see Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Vintage, 1992), 294-296. John F. Kasson argues that "in the rapid transition to an industrial economy and a burgeoning urban society, the traditional modes by which individuals defined themselves . . . seemed to fall apart." This ambiguity, suggests Kasson, provided opportunities for "social counterfeits" and confidence men to exploit the expectations and pretensions of well-to-do urbanites. Kasson, Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Noonday, 1990), Chapter 3 (quotation on 93).
look out for what are termed 'establishments,'--that is for husbands who can give them fine houses, fine furniture, fine frocks and fine bonnets." Philadelphians and their southern friends would have objected only to part of that indictment as unfair. They regarded attention to appearance and manners as a part of their leisure-class lifestyle, but only as prerequisites, however indispensable, for the pursuit of more important ends--sociability, conversation, and exclusiveness.\(^{41}\)

Though the Fishers' circle disparaged southern ladies' intellectual failings, they also admired their seemingly instinctive good manners and aristocratic bearing. For all their educational weaknesses, the planter-class ladies seemed to dominate whatever parlor or ballroom they entered. Three years after meeting the Mason sisters in Philadelphia, Sidney Fisher encountered them again during a trip to Newport, Rhode Island. This time the circumstances were different. The intervening period had transformed the insecure girls into radiant young women. The eldest, Betty Mason, was "a celebrated Belle" at the exclusive resort teeming with aspirants. Bet Mason retained her good looks, which no longer seemed to Fisher Virginian but cut from "the regular, classic style," but her social maturity registered most starkly. Her clumsy deportment had been replaced by "manners . . . admirable; graceful, easy, and ladylike." The young Matilda Mason, her years as a belle still ahead of her, showed promise as a "rosy, laughing, beautiful . . . girl with an exquisite figure."

In the Fishers' intimate circle, Elizabeth Middleton Fisher maintained her family's

\(^{41}\)"Boston, the Literary Emporium." American Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette 6 (1833), 140.
position partly through her mastery of the genteel accomplishments. Equally proficient in conversation, the cotillion, or at the piano, she was the primary reason that Sidney Fisher believed his friend and cousin "enjoys as happy a position as anybody I know." Ranking above all others, in his estimation, was the Gabrielle Manigault Morris Butler, the wife and (later) widow of John Butler. Naturally and effortlessly "beautiful," and "magnificent" when dressed for company, Gabrielle Butler embodied the best features of the genteel southern lady. Her beauty, of which she seemed "totally unconscious," was unmatched, having "the best figure [Fisher] ever saw." She gave her full attention to company, being always "very amiable, lively, & pleasant" regardless of ill health, fatigue, or marital unhappiness. And "tho' she had no mind," like some other southern women Fisher encountered, she had something perhaps better: "the ease & high breeding of the southern aristocracy, a manner produced by birth, early habit & wealth." In fact, out of all the women of his circle--including his wife, to whom he was devoted--the cerebral Fisher idolized Gabrielle Butler above the rest. Her lack of mental gifts did not enhance her attractiveness to the men of her cohort, as some historians would assert, but neither did they detract from them. Gabrielle Butler was the acknowledged master of one essential aspect of upper-class culture--female sociability. Her skills complemented those other women who chose to engage in verbal tete-a-tete with the literary and scientific men of the circle.\footnote{Fisher Diary, August 8, 1841 (the Masons); November 11, 1839, January 1, 1840 (Elizabeth Middleton Fisher); January 24, 1841 (Gabrielle Butler). Catherine Clinton, in \textit{The Plantation Mistress}, exaggerates the preferences of planters for intellectually deficient wives. See also Anne Frior Scott, \textit{The Southern Lady: From}
The North Carolinian who reported his visit to Philadelphia in the *Southern Literary Messenger* implied that the bookish Philadelphia belle and her coquettish southern counterpart were actually two sides of the same coin, and he had a point. While bluebloods admired (and envied) Gabrielle Butler's social acumen, she clearly lacked the one crucial element—wit—that would truly have made her a hostess to be reckoned with.

A powerful mind in a leisure-class lady served two functions. First, as in the case of Margaret Manigault early in the century, it enabled women to engage in conversations and administer pointed barbs in polite society. By such means women could influence society on various matters and, incidentally, enhance personal and family reputation. Second, it provided the acumen necessary to plan and administer the select companies that formed the heart of leisure-class culture in the United States as in all the Western world. George Izard's wife was such a lady. Born Elizabeth Carter, she buried two wealthy husbands, including Philadelphian Thomas Shippen of the prominent Quaker family, before marrying Alice Izard's son. Like Gabrielle Butler she was "very handsome," but unlike her fellow southern lady she was everywhere "distinguished for her conversation and wit." Elizabeth Middleton Fisher lacked Gabrielle Butler's physical charms but shared an active mind and pleasing countenance with Elizabeth Izard that rendered her distinguished in company. "[C]lever, cultivated, accomplished, and agreeable," Henry Middleton's daughter suffered for having "no beauty and . . . red hair."

Still, besides being "[v]ery well bred, & of soft winning manners," her face had "a

---

pleasing expression & her figure is good." Breeding and education could make up for some of the physical limitations imposed by nature.43

Elite southern women adapted effortlessly to the semi-public social milieu of leisure-class Philadelphia because their own social world served the same purpose. The salon, dining room, parlor, and ballroom were limited to the upper crust itself, and such exclusion—or the lack of it—itsel carried social meanings to be read by the public. In their internal workings, however, such affairs served to impart a certain character to genteel men and women. They enforced standards in the accomplishments—musical skill, dancing, and conversational acumen, among others—distinguished by the expense and leisure required for their acquirement. These grand events were by and large managed by women who had an ideological project in mind. They sought to maintain standards of thought and action rooted in the colonial and European past that stressed not only the acquirement and display of wit, knowledge, and opinion, but its content. Hostesses aimed to preserve a distinctly conservative sensibility in their set, one that merged continental elitism with American republicanism.

In society, leisure-class women were expected to combine the complementary goals of easy elegance and enlightened sociability. Some social climbers overwhelmed their guests with food, drink, and atmosphere, revealing themselves as social frauds. Such was the fate of Samuel and Maria Davis, Natchez nabobs who relocated to Philadelphia to claim the high social status they apparently felt their cotton wealth

43"Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," J. Francis Fisher Section, Box 10, Cadwalader Collection; Fisher Diary, September 12, 1838, both HSP.
qualified them. Sidney Fisher attended a "small party" thrown by the Davises at which they clumsily tried to ape the manners of the upper crust. "They spend their money like all people in half-civilized countries," Fisher grumbled. Their furniture, "in very bad taste, and inelegantly and inappropriately arranged," and the refreshments, "served up in a profusion of plate, china, and glass of the most costly description," struck the socialite as "out of all keeping with the houses, fortunes, and habits of our society and indicates a truly parvenue spirit, which mistakes glitter and gaudiness for taste and elegance." A party given by the former Frances Butler, Mrs. George Cadwalader, the next year provided a stark contrast to the Davis's extravaganza. These planter-Philadelphians "have been accustomed to [entertaining] all their lives, and do it with ease, propriety, & grace." Perhaps Fisher had the Davises in mind when he observed that the Cadwaladers' affair seemed "[v]ery different from the gaudy show, crowded glitter and loaded tables of certain vulgar people here, who by mere force of money have got into a society to which they are not entitled by birth, education, or manners."  

Not only were the women of Fisher's set expected to entertain with ease, elegance, and propriety but it was assumed that women of their station could ignore some of the social restraints imposed by the more exacting standards of middle-class morality. Upper-class culture allowed women a license in both mind and body that pious folk found at worst immoral and at best contrary to feminine nature. Before her marriage to

---

44Fisher Diary, March 18, 1838, March 4, 1839. The Davises mansion sat at Broad and Poplar Streets, a newly fashionable area of the city far removed from the older townhouses of the established elite. Personal communication of Kathie Blankenstein, Natchez, Mississippi, February 10, 1994.
Harry McCall, Charlotte Wilcocks attended a round of parties at which she took liberties with young men that in other, more "respectable" circles would have considered scandalous. At a party at the capitol, the young woman refused to "stay plastered against the wall the whole evening," and drafted her uncle Joseph Ingersoll to make the appropriate introductions. Soon she and her friends "all launched off with different men."

Two days later she encountered a Philadelphia beau, Dick Bache. "Dick & I flirted," she gushed to her diary, "we did there is no doubt about it, & I am not a bit ashamed. Surely I am not engaged to Harry [McCall]," she declared, "& I may flirt with whom I please."

Upper-class women's self-assurance in society stemmed from a sense of financial and social independence. While Charlotte Wilcocks's coquettishness reflected the relative libertinism that her class considered its prerogative, her circle also expected women to shine intellectually in the more sober confines of the salon or tea party. Sidney Fisher enjoyed lavish affairs, but he reveled in the company of the articulate, informed women of his circle. Susan Brown Ingersoll and Elizabeth Middleton Fisher enlivened one otherwise dull affair. After their arrival Fisher enjoyed "a very pleasant evening, as I always have in the company of these well-bred accomplished women." The tradition of bringing together cultivated gentlefolk from North and South, started by Margaret Manigault, was continued by Phoebe Rush after her return from an extended trip to Europe in the late 1840s. Though she gave one spectacular ball every winter, she was more fondly remembered for her informal weekly salons at which she invited her local

---

45Charlotte Wilcocks Diary, January 14, 16, 1842; Fisher Diary, both HSP.
favorites, visiting artists, musicians, and travelers of note. When Middletons, Izards, Heywards, Carters, and other first families of the South came to Philadelphia they invariably received invitations to her salon.  

Popular exponents of refinement judged upper class sociability ambivalently. On the one hand, they had nothing but praise for the self-confidence, learning, and erudition that a successful salonnière embodied. A writer in Godey's found Madame de Staël in "a class with the most powerful intelligences and eloquent writers of the age," and another believed the renowned Frenchwoman ranked among the two "greatest women of genius the world has ever produced." But the quasi-public stance the position entailed made critics uneasy. Just as Phoebe Rush's penchant for "drawing together the wise and learned as well as the gay and pleasure-loving" had won for her a "title to distinction," advocates of feminine respectability found de Staël "far less respectable, as she must have found herself, with all her celebrity."  

To many critics, the overtly heterosocial nature of elite salons made their mistresses seem downright masculine. Middle-class hostesses were admonished to mind the "want of delicacy and conduct" that too many salonnières exhibited, and to plan their own affairs with an eye to "strengthen the sacred delicacy of the sex, and to teach the true ends of female ambition." An unchecked affection for the company of learned men

46Fisher Diary, August 31, 1839.  

47"Madame de Staël," Godey's Lady's Magazine 11 (1835), 219 (first and last quotations); "Lady Notables of the French Salon: The Art of Conversation," Literary World 8 (March 1851), 185 (second); Wharton, Salons, Colonial and Republican, 266 (third).
tended to "degenerate almost always into that monstrous anomaly, a blue stocking." In keeping with the dictates of the domestic creed, female sociability was to serve male comfort and improvement. "Nothing is better adapted to give the best polish to the education of a young man," assured one columnist, "than the conversation of elegant and virtuous women." So long as a woman "successfully cultivated her mind, without diminishing the gentleness and propriety of her manners," asserted a prize-winning essayist, she would always find the approbation of men "of sense and liberal politeness."

Female leadership in society had to stay within these well-guarded parameters lest it evoke the swift condemnation of the guardians of female decorum. Elite women provoked their particular ire not only because their prominence defied middle-class notions of domestic propriety, but because bluebloods' advocacy of leisure, sensuality, and display directly contradicted their religious and class conventions.48

Balls and parties embodied those aristocratic notions of pleasure divorced from enlightened discussion. In this respect, the coquette, as she appears in advice literature, represents the swinging sister to the masculine salonnière. A familiar figure in the sentimental fiction of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the coquette embodied the dangers of fashion, gaiety, and vanity. Devoted to the social whirl and her place within it, the coquette exploited genteel artifices to undercut female competitors to public esteem, as well as to attract (only to dismiss) a succession of beaux. Inevitably,

the coquette succumbed to the stresses brought on by these contradictions to feminine nature. "Sophia," went a tale typical of the genre, was "divested of those refined and generous feelings which constitute the greatest charm of woman," and, true to form, "died the victim of her own vanity and coquetry." The coquette represented much that middle-class critics found objectionable in the lifestyle of genteel women. "Half their day is devoted to shopping, dressing, paying and receiving visits," complained one commentator, "and all their evenings to parties, balls and public places." Such a busy social schedule distracted privileged women from the proper concerns of their sex. "There is indeed something unfeminine in independence," asserted one manual whose advice, the writer predicted, would "be despised by the gay and fashionable." Truly "refined society" was not to be found "in the ball-room, in the theatre, [or] in the crowded party," but among those "of all classes" who "think and feel [and] possess correct ideas and noble sentiments." As this advice implies, middle-class gentility did not enjoin women's attendance at public entertainments, but it channeled their participation into sites that reinforced devotion to piety, modesty, and domestic accomplishments. The upper-class coquette, grounded in the parlor and ballroom, found her antithesis in the respectable lady of popular advice literature, who even while in public embodied the virtues of the hearth.49

49Harriet, "Sketch--the Coquette," The Philadelphia Album, and Ladies' Weekly Gazette 1 No. 9, 4-5; "Boston, the Literary Emporium," 140; Ladies Vase: or, Polite Manual for Young Ladies, Original and Selected, by an American Lady (Lowell: N.L. Dayton, 1843), 56, 8, 22, 13-14. Hannah Webster Foster's The Coquette (first pub. 1797; New York and Oxford, 1986) was an immensely popular work that remained in print throughout most of the nineteenth century. See Claire C. Pettengill, "Sisterhood in a
When the guardians of bourgeois propriety censured their social betters for their lax morals they made no distinction between North and South. Slavery and its allegedly corrupting effects on southern society were severely denounced, but they recognized that planters and the northern elite shared a common cultural style that deviated from the conventions of middle-class respectability. Gender relations, in particular, inspired their indignation, but this was just one particular facet of a leisure-class style of life they thoroughly deplored. Whether in New York, or Charleston, Philadelphia or Cincinnati, two visions of gentility faced each other; one committed to leisure, privilege, and exclusiveness, the other tempering gentility with piety, industry, and a leveling spirit.

For the same reason, Philadelphia remained a favorite retreat for the planter social set up to the Civil War. Southerners recognized that they and their Philadelphia hosts shared a commitment to standards of sociability, artistic and scientific patronage, and political conservatism rooted in the colonial and Revolutionary pasts. With but little difficulty elite southerners blended into the beau monde in the Quaker City. Philadelphia's exceptionalism, however, need not be overstated. Some southerners found other cities, especially New York, equally congenial, and Philadelphians and other northerners enjoyed southern hospitality. What united them all, and distinguished them from middle-class communities in cities all over the United States, was their attachment

to an increasingly anachronistic lifestyle and worldview. If Philadelphia remained the
social capital of the young nation, as the splendor and sectional diversity of Sidney
George Fisher's circle suggests, it was because those men and women of tradition
recognized that the city's aristocracy constituted the largest haven for gentility amidst the
teeming host of respectability.
CHAPTER 5
FEMALE ACADEMIES
AND THE TRANSMISSION OF CLASS IDENTITY

When Susan Gaston, the beloved eldest daughter of North Carolina jurist William Gaston, came of age in 1822, her father sent her to the French-speaking academy of Aimée Sigoigne on Washington Square in Philadelphia. Following the fashion of other planters, he might have enrolled her at the respected Moravian Academy at Salem, far closer to the Gastons' New Bern. Institutions like Salem Academy, where young women boarded while learning mathematics, history, botany, and geography along with "ornamental" courses such as French, voice, and drawing, proliferated in the decades before the Civil War. These "French" schools, as they were called, did not prepare their charges for a life in the working world. Such a lifestyle was unsuitable for a wellborn lady North as well as South. Still, these schools offered courses that could also be found in men's colleges of the era. But gentlefolk did not disparage the value of female education because of its impracticality, as some contemporary critics complained.

On the contrary, the American gentry embraced finishing schools precisely because their teaching was ornamental. Fathers and husbands wished their daughters and wives to make strong impressions on other families by their outward signs of virtue, cultivation, and social grace. These qualities were also essential for the execution of
genteel women's public responsibilities—exhibiting the superior taste and intellect of their class to the multitude and orchestrating social functions, the stage of cultivated conduct. Knowledge of European literature, languages, standards of sensibility, dress, and comportment was thought essential to that purpose. Training in these subjects and behaviors was the province of the finishing school, usually located in or near a major city where cultural resources and high social life were readily accessible. Thus, in the age of egalitarianism, wellborn Americans endorsed a mode of schooling that reproduced the criteria and curricula of aristocratic Europe. The utility of such an education for young women had nothing to do with piety, hard work, domesticity, or other middle class virtues. William Gaston, other southern planters, and their northern friends sought a genteel education for their daughters that fitted them as well for a life in London as for one in New Bern or Philadelphia.

Whether one already enjoyed membership in refined circles or aspired to join, knowledge of the ins and outs of parlor behavior was necessary to sustain a claim to privileged status. The family was, of course, the most important institution for transferring class principles from one generation to the next. From the moment their toddlers could walk and prattle, blueblooded parents prepared them to act in ways that marked them not only as different from others, but as better—in dress, education, hygiene, and intellect, but more importantly superior in mind, morals, and pedigree. Indeed, even as all sorts of schools emerged after the turn of the century, some parents insisted that school-age children remain in the home lest they be contaminated by the vulgarity of popular culture. The brazen behavior of one Philadelphia belle scandalized Alice Izard,
the aristocratic Carolinia-Philadelphia matron. "Boarding Schools are not proper places for the education of young ladies," the opined to her daughter. Yet she saw "the home education that [had] succeeded so well" with her granddaughters spurned by an increasing number of parents in her circle, who patronized the French schools once they became fashionable. "Nothing could be worse than what we see," she observed with a tinge of bitterness. "Young ladies always in the streets, gallanted by Gentlemen, & sometimes alone with them, or only one of them." Ladies' academies, to some members of the elite, seemed symptomatic of an age eager to discard the etiquette of a more refined, elegant--and hierarchical--age.¹

None of these gentlewomen denigrated women's minds, their capacity for enlightened talk, nor even the enterprise of female learning. They worried that boarding schools, once become fashionable with aspirants to privileged status, would inculcate the forms of gentility without attention to its fundamental precepts--elegance, good breeding, and conservatism. The families who patronized the genteel academies of Philadelphia did so because they wished to sharpen their daughters' minds, to prepare them for a lifetime in the parlor, ballroom, and nursery. And, of course, they sought to furnish their girls with the means of taking personal fulfillment from the life of a cultivated lady by enjoying music, entertaining, conversation, and reading in the time-honored tradition of the European aristocracy and colonial American gentry.

Samuel Brown's dilemma epitomized the choices most parents faced. Following

¹Alice Izard to Margaret Manigault, March 23, 1808, Manigault Family Papers, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia (hereafter SCL).
the death of his revered wife, Brown resolved to educate his "children in some part of the world where Religion morals & social order were better established than they are soon likely to be" in the rough frontier communities of Natchez and Lexington, where the doctor owned plantations. Fearing that his daughter Susan would be impaired by the "mental inactivity" of the Kentucky town, he concluded "that Philadelphia would on many accts. suit us best." Brown had received his medical training there at the University of Pennsylvania under Benjamin Rush, so he knew that, short of sending his daughter to Europe, the city afforded Susan the best opportunity of "acquiring the principles of a better taste & more delicate manners than those which prevail in Kentucky." Scores of parents throughout the Old South reached the same conclusions as Sam Brown.

Education emerged as crucial element in the emulation of genteel fashions and the construction of a national leisure-class identity. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton served this purpose for young men, preparing them for the ministry, law, or medicine. Enrollment into French schools in Philadelphia promised to secure for young women entry into the ranks of the urban gentry by passing on to them the manners of the European aristocracy.2

For the most part, academies institutionalized and elaborated upon educational practices experienced by many privileged girls throughout the eighteenth century. In colonial times, few boys outside of the wealthiest families enjoyed any kind of formal schooling. The most fortunate learned with the aid of a tutor like Philip Vickers Fithian, the Princetonian brought to Nomini Hall by Robert Carter in 1773. It was not unusual for

the family's girls to share in their brothers' education if a tutor boarded with the family. Even without outside guidance, most privileged girls read the Bible, learned basic mathematics, reading, and writing at home. A few schools existed for those willing to pay. Richard Bushman observes that "[t]he proper education of planters' and merchants' daughters became a minor industry in colonial cities." If the majority of wealthy young ladies did not receive a seminary education, their parents were still most unlikely to raise them unlearned, for the simple reason that "personal refinement," the collection of cultivated persons in a "select company," and the preparation for such assemblies--the "three interrelated aspects" that according to Bushman constituted the "ideal of cultivation" for the colonial gentry--required skills bequeathed by education. To raise ignorant daughters was, in a very real sense, to endanger the future of the family name and fortune. Such a reckless course of action was unthinkable when instruction for daughters as well as sons was so readily available.3

Private academies, especially those for boys, became even more popular in the years immediately following the Revolution. The establishment in Connecticut of twelve private schools, funded by subscriptions over the past five years, prompted Ezra Stiles to

---

observe happily that "[t]he Spirit for Academy making [was] vigorous" in his state⁴

Several factors prompted this development. Progress in industry made fundamental academic skills—literacy, arithmetic—essential for both managers and workers. More importantly, Revolutionary leaders recognized that the republican experiment necessitated an informed citizenry. Jefferson thought "a useful American education," one in which citizens were "instructed in general, competently to the common business of life," would guarantee a self-reliant body politic, secure from the dependence and ignorance of the European masses. Good republicans hoped that Latin and Greek could be purged from the curriculum. These languages, first installed in European schools to prepare young men for the clergy and then established at great universities as a "puberty rite" from which "young men were introduced into an exclusively male world of scholarly learning," comprised the gateway into the other genteel professions, the law and medicine. The time and expense required for the study of the ancient tongues effectively limited their knowledge to the leisured classes. Few Revolutionary leaders regarded knowledge of the dead languages as prerequisites for sound deliberation. Indeed, Benjamin Rush found the classics so mystifying that he pronounced them anathema to the "language of reason and nature." Rush accused aristocrats of using "Latin and Greek as scuttlefish emit their ink, on purpose to conceal themselves from an intercourse with the common people." The eminent doctor and his Revolutionary generation committed

themselves to providing American men with a "useful" education, ensuring proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and leaving the classics to professionals or aristocratic imitators.5

Yet their commitment a more utilitarian brand of learning proved a bit shaky, especially when common people took up the attack on elitist learning to lengths that shocked even men like Rush. For all their doubts about the classics, they had received "a learned education." Genteel reformers only meant to point out that the classics need no longer be venerated. Observing with alarm the increase of college enrollments in the early nineteenth century, Rush warned James Hamilton that "[s]hould it [enrollment] become universal, it would be as destructive to civilization as universal barbarism." Most republican ladies and gentlemen assumed that "reading, writing, and arithmetic [should be] as common and as cheap as air. . . . a kind of sixth or civil sense" the knowledge of which "no voter or juror" should be without, but they assumed with equal conviction that higher learning ought to be reserved for those in the upper echelons. While dedicated to a greater degree of liberty and equality than any other group of upper class men in the Atlantic world, the Revolutionary generation nevertheless assumed that deference and hierarchy were necessary, even inevitable, social qualities. Latin and Greek remained important subjects in boys' schools before the Civil War, and new colleges emerged to

meet the increasing demand for education from Americans who saw formal schooling as an important step on the road to social respectability.6

Despite the ardor of some founders, state support for elementary education progressed unevenly at best. Some states, like New York and Connecticut, allocated substantial sums to local schools, while others, like Virginia and Pennsylvania, failed to supply state aid to localities until as late as the 1870s. In most states, however, local taxes, together with private philanthropy and tuition, supported the establishment of at least a charity school system. By the 1830s, and sooner in some states, educational reformers had concluded that the ramshackle system of charity schools, day schools, and dame schools had failed to supply the degree of stability and enlightenment thought necessary for the operation of a democratic, industrial society. The state schools that emerged, especially in the North and West, served the needs of mainstream middle-class culture. "The homilies of native Protestant belief," concludes Carl Kaestle, "became both the justification and the message of common schools." The reformers who designed the common schools of nineteenth century America crafted the systems in their own image. They disregarded the opinions of other groups, the very rich and the poor, allowing those who could pay the option of attending private schools more to their liking and leaving the rest no choice but conformity.7

The traditional curriculum prepared young men for careers in politics, or the


7Kaestle, Pillars of the Republic, 7, 79.
professions, or as gentlemen of leisure. Few families were willing to expend the resources to educate women in the classical vein when they could expect no practical benefit. "Academic study," Linda Kerber concludes, "a meritorious male pursuit, seemed self-indulgent when found among women." Advocates of female education had to overcome this persistent bias against the practicality of female learning as well as the hostility of men reluctant to surrender this traditional male preserve.8

Women like Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More who pushed for female inclusion in the routines of intellectual life could expect to be tarred with the traditional British epithet "Blue Stocking," with its implications of homeliness and masculinity. "To be lovely," admonished "Alphonse" in the American Magazine, women should remain true to their feminine nature, leaving "the masculine virtues, and the profound researches of study to the province of the other sex." Likewise, men who minded the servants, doted on the children, or spent too much time in the kitchen risked being branded a "Betty." "The same principle which excludes a man from an attention to domestic business," reproached Alphonse, "excludes a woman from law, mathematics and astronomy." The Revolution that promised liberty to white men only reluctantly promised to free American women from the constraints of tradition. Still, schools catering to the women of the young nation's wealthy families grew increasingly popular in the first decades of the new century. A plantation mistress commented approvingly in 1819 that "things are happily taking a change. Daughters as well as sons are now thought of by the kind parent.

---

8Kerber, Women of the Republic, 190.
Education is now considered equally their due.\(^9\)

Other voices appealed for a practical, republican education for American women. Judith Sargeant Murray promoted women's schools to act as "the catalyst for a new female self-reliance that would free women from the constraints of the marriage market and prepare them to be economically independent." She expounded on these themes in a series of publications in the 1790s. Murray argued that in withholding education from women, society "bred [them] up with one particular view, one monopolizing consideration. . . [a]n establishment by marriage." Women with marketable skills, able to provide for themselves, she reasoned, would be less likely to enter into loveless marriage to escape the insecurity and disgrace of spinsterhood.

Murray's recommendations proved prophetic, being similar to the motivations of antebellum women educators like Mary Lyon and Catherine Beecher, but they were too radical to have much influence on the development of women's education in the early Republic. More conventional were the ideas of Benjamin Rush, the Philadelphia physician who evinced a lively interest in the relation of education to the health of the polity. In an influential address delivered to the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia and later reprinted, Rush argued that since "female education should be accommodated to the state of society, manners, and government of the country in which it is conducted . . . the education of young ladies in this country should be conducted upon principles very

different" from those found in Europe. He recommended that young women learn to write legibly, speak clearly and correctly, keep accounts, become acquainted with geography and the natural sciences, and practice voice. Since no American men lived lives of aristocratic leisure, Rush's scheme sought to train wives to be helpmates and companions. And since the republic required an enlightened electorate, educated ladies would be able "to concur in instructing their sons in the principles of liberty and government."¹⁰

Rush's program mirrored the curriculum of the Young Ladies Academy of Philadelphia, of which he was an original trustee. The school opened in 1787 and received a state charter five years later. Prominent merchants and professionals of the city served on its board and oversaw its public examinations. The school was interdenominational, though lessons in reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, astronomy, composition, and geography all inculcated the merits of what one graduation speaker called "Christian knowledge." The curriculum was diverse enough that it had the potential for "practical application, not just to develop character and accomplishments, but also to prepare in case a girl needed to work."

But while a few of the students came from German and Scotch backgrounds, for whom employment may have been a necessity, the bulk of the students came from the urban elite. Indeed, the school attracted students from as far as "Cape-Florida, Georgia,

Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New-Jersey, New-York, Connecticut, Rhode-
Island, Massachusetts Bay, the Province of Main, Nova Scotia, Canada, from several of
the West-India Islands, and from various parts of the state of Pennsylvania." These
students did not make the long, expensive voyage to Philadelphia to prepare themselves
for employment. They came to become republican wives and mothers, "educated women
who could be spared the criticism normally addressed to the Learned Lady because she
placed her learning at her family's service." John Swanwick, addressing the graduates,
urged that women receive educations "%o give us happiness . . . and to enable [men] to
support the vicissitudes and misfortunes of the world." The curriculum of the Young
Ladies Academy was also animated with the egalitarian spirit of the Revolution, however,
which promised to free women from the constraints imposed by less enlightened ages. In
her valedictory speech, Ann Loxley celebrated that "now daily experience and common
observation teach us, that the paths of science are laid open and made plain to us--that no
age, sex or denomination, are deprived of the means whereby a sufficient knowledge of
the different branches of the arts and sciences may be acquired." The Academy was
hardly a hotbed of radicalism, however. Women used the rhetoric of republicanism to
justify their entry into hitherto limited spheres, but they were careful to identify new
freedoms with the cause of domesticity and traditional feminine values. Hence Anne
Loxley continued, "it be the opinion of the public in general, that the plan of female
education, now in vogue, is the most eligible of any hitherto practiced; and that the veil of
female ignorance will be laid aside, and our tender intellect be gently led forth by our
kind instructor, in the flowery fields of knowledge, where they shall ripen with golden

If the Young Ladies Academy set ambivalent goals for its students, the influential schools of a later generation did not hesitate to claim a role for women in the workplace. Emma Willard's Troy Female Seminary, founded in 1821, "was the first permanent institution offering American women a curriculum similar to that of the contemporary men's colleges," and explicitly set out "to educate women for responsible motherhood and train some of them to be teachers." The same goals animated other prominent reform-oriented female seminaries of the era, especially the Patapsco Female Institute in Ellicott Mills, near Baltimore, run by Willard's younger sister Almira Lincoln Phelps, and Mary Lyon's Mount Holyoke. While these schools expanded the boundaries of women's experience, they did so always while professing allegiance to the domestic faith. Their champions maintained that men and women shared the same capacity for intellectual improvement. The insisted further that women should attain skills, specifically those that qualified them to teach, so that they could remain independent if they so chose.

Yet these reformers also accepted conventional gender proscriptions--that the proper place for women was in the home, that women possessed a special gift for Christian piety, and that women ought to be subordinate to men. "The only natural government on earth," Willard wrote Catherine Beecher, "is that of the family--the only
natural sovereign the husband and father." While the exercise of power by women contradicted the divine order, the exertion of influence in the home, school, church, or reform society emerged naturally from their domestic and pious inclinations. The ladies' seminary," one scholar concludes, "was not merely an expression of domestic piety... A graduate could become a mother, teacher, or missionary, all three being agents of moral regeneration through female influence." Despite being grounded in middle-class concepts of the female character, these schools challenged gender boundaries by claiming for women a place in the working world and by offering an honored place in society outside of marriage. In addition, female academies introduced reform-minded women to a national network that "in time contributed to the great nineteenth-century movement for the 'elevation of woman' and changed important aspects of American society."

Schools like Mount Holyoke and the Patapsco Female Institute have received much attention from scholars precisely because they prepared their charges for lives of feminist reform and thus seem to have anticipated the path of late nineteenth and twentieth-century women's activism. But another group of women's schools existed alongside these progressive institutions. While professionally-oriented academies presaged the feminist future, French schools were avowedly reactionary. Contemporary critics were quite aware of the threat that genteel finishing schools posed to middle-class culture. By 1824, argues Richard Bushman, "castigation of female boarding schools was

---

already a stock critique of gentility." The same middle-class parents who devoured stories ridiculing fashionable education in *Godey's* sent their daughters by the thousands to less pretentious academies where they learned a modified brand of gentility that combined refinement with, as Abigail Mott described, "the virtues of frugality, temperance, and economy."\^13

Those who sought such a program were well advised to look elsewhere than Philadelphia. Ansley Hall, business manager for Langdon Cheves while the planter and lawyer served as president of the Second Bank of the United States, asked his employer to recommend a Philadelphia school at which to place his niece. Hall, however, advised Cheves to exempt from consideration "all French Characters." He explained, "I cannot approve of . . . the fashion of introducing French manners & customs, to the observations of young ladies," though he conceded that "it appears to be the fashion of the present times." Cheves had a great deal of difficulty complying with Hall's request—he lamely suggested that Hall look into the Moravian academy in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. While the two corresponded on easy terms, a social chasm separated the lowcountry patrician from the upcountry factor (Hall lived in Columbia). Besides, while in Pennsylvania Cheves sent his daughters to the school of Madame and Monsieur Picot, Gallic spirits from St. Domingue with both feet planted firmly in the Old Regime.\^14

---


\^14Ansley Hall to Langdon Cheves, March 10, 1819, Langdon Cheves Papers, SCHS.
Progressive opinion derided the anachronistic goals of Philadelphia's French schools. A Boston magazine maintained that in Philadelphia's French academies, "little attention is paid to any thing but fashion and folly;--the pupils acquire, to be sure, some smattering of the ornamental branches, [and] become adepts in dress and other frivolities." The journal found such a program "unfeminine" and "modish," frivolous yet enticing, demanding the opposition of those by whom "the business of education is so well understood." French schools, Almira Phelps warned, turned innocent girls into "artificial creatures, made up of artificial looks and smiles." If historians have not seem fit to take fashionable boarding schools seriously, contemporaries saw them as a real threat to their vision of a pious, moderate, and democratic republic.15

Such an education appealed to conservative and wealthy Americans from all parts of the young nation. The existence of boarding schools for young ladies speaks not only to the depths of European-style gentility in America but to the existence of a national culture of cultivation concentrated in the cities, and especially the centers of trade and culture in the northeast. Regardless of where they might live, refined ladies and gentlemen looked to the great metropolises of New York and Philadelphia, and beyond them London and Paris, to set the standards of intellect, manners, and fashions. The great planters of South Carolina were, as Harriott Ravenel remarked, "as much town folk as country gentlemen." The same held true for the landed gentry throughout the Old South. Spending most of their time in the country, they maintained a cosmopolitan sensibility

15 "Boston, the Literary Emporium." American Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette 6 (1833), 140; Mrs. [Almira Hart Lincoln] Phelps, The Female Student; or, Lectures to Young Ladies on Female Education (New York, 1836), 366.
through correspondence with family and friends, subscription to national magazines and newspapers, and frequent sojourns to Philadelphia, Newport, and Ballston Springs, where they would hobnob with others of their set. Not all southerners were, as one historian asserts, "destined to live their lives in the relative isolation of the rural South."¹⁶

The South's planter class, like wealthy women and men from across the nation, saw themselves as members of a national, urban elite, superior in mind, morals, and manners, and deserving of deference from social inferiors. As members of this rarified cohort, they were eager to pass on the ways of their caste to their progeny through a finishing school education. "[M]any elite parents," one student of antebellum southern education concludes, "supported institutions as a clear sign of class cohesion" because their expense, exclusiveness, and "ornamental" curriculum served as "evidence of elite position and power." By the 1830s hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of academies had been established in every corner of the republic. The best and most fashionable operated in the large cities, especially Philadelphia, New York, and Charleston.¹⁷

¹⁶Harriott Ravenel quoted in Steven M. Stowe, "City, Country, and the Feminine Voice," in Michael O'Brien and David Molke-Hansen, eds., Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston (Knoxville; University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 295; Clinton, "Equally their Due," 59. Steven M. Stowe similarly argues that "the particular duties of southern women and men, and therefore their particular educational advantages and limits, were situated in a rural life praised by those who formulated education's deepest value. The ways of rural life presented difficulties never fully resolved, however, or even fully confronted. Though protecting morality, rural life might somehow sap the vitality of those who led society. Indeed, social influence was a problematic quality in a rural world in which the self-conscious social "events" of spas, visiting, and the hunt substituted for true social intercourse." Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 131-132.

¹⁷Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 132.
Not all southerners were pleased to see the flower of the South sent out of Dixie for their educations. One Alabama planter sojourning in the North expressed a fear that southern "girls here are imbibing habits and manners not perfectly congenial with those of the people of the South." Such inhibitions were likely to be expressed by those living far from urban centers or those relatively few southerners whose antagonism to the North preceded the late 1850s. More common was the sentiment of John William Walker. The Alabama senator anticipated visiting his friends in the "Quaker City," where he could deposit his daughter at school as well as "let [his wife] her figure away among the great." The consciousness of belonging to an urban upper-class, not the vicissitudes of sectional politics, defined the values of the American gentry. Thus while sectional partisans, wary of the insidious influence of Yankee principles on impressionable Dixie minds, thundered for a "southern education for Southrons," their dire warnings went unheeded by most mothers and fathers who could afford a northern education for their children. After all, the southern gentry found among their northern friends individuals with the same notions of privilege, the same conservative inclinations, and the same expectations for their daughters future--marriage within the tiny but national circle of elite families. Such parents were likely to have ties of business, kinship, and friendship to the seaboard states and were anxious to strengthen these bonds through the integration of their children into the social life of the great northeastern cities.18

Planter families did not need to send their daughters to Philadelphia to receive a seminary education. St. Mary's and the Salem Academy in Raleigh, the Montpelier Institute in Savannah, and of course Madame Talvande's in Charleston, where the famous diarist Mary Chestnut received her education, all offered southern girls a curriculum similar to that they would receive in Philadelphia, and all within the bosom of the sunny South. Yet many parents sent their daughters away, for up to three years and at great expense, to academies on the banks of the Delaware in order to place them in a more cosmopolitan atmosphere. Thomas Percy's efforts to secure the educations of his friends' daughters exemplify the hardships parents willingly faced. With his wife and young son, Percy made the "laborious & slavish journey" overland from Huntsville, Alabama to Philadelphia with a large party that included his friend Samuel Brown, his daughter Susan, and Percy's niece Mary Jane Walker, in order to install the girls in an academy.¹⁹

Though they placed the girls at the famous academy of Madame Sigoigne, she hardly represented their only choice. In the early Republic, Philadelphia emerged as a center of aristocratic education partly because of the presence there of a large colony of exiled French aristocrats fleeing democratic revolutions at home and in St. Domingue. They included Aimée Sigoigne and Deborah Grelaud, exiles from the Caribbean, and Marie Rivardi, who during the Terror fled the Seine for the Delaware. Despite being separated from ancestral lands and other sources of income, many of the émigrés refused to give up their aristocratic habits and adopted teaching as a necessity. Marie Rivardi's

experience was typical. During her twenty-one years in the United States, the former habitué of the Hapsburg court found it impossible to live "within a budget commensurate with her means." In opening a seminary for young women the Rivardis chose a path familiar to many exiles. The life of a headmistress proved congenial to cultivated souls like Marie Rivardi, for it encompassed habits and rituals they had experienced frequently before the Revolutions of 1789 and 1791. Entertaining, conversing, flirting, dressing elegantly, dancing, and similar genteel talents were, after all, second nature to these former aristocrats. Their continental elân proved to be a commodity much in demand in the new world, and nowhere more than among the "mercantile and professional elites of" Philadelphia, who "were anxious for their children to be exposed to the sophisticated culture of Europe." The fame of Philadelphia's genteel finishing schools quickly spread beyond its borders, but not because they promised an education appropriate to a society committed to equality, openness, and opportunity. The French community of Philadelphia, the largest in the nation, produced academies in which the women of the most democratic nation of the age learned the manners and morals of aristocratic Europe.²⁰

The women and men who administered the boarding schools of Philadelphia may have boasted impeccable credentials, but no responsible parent would part with a daughter, for such a length of time at such a distance, without a firm sense of her security and prosperity. To this end, Philadelphia again possessed unique advantages. The city's upper crust enjoyed a myriad of connections with elites throughout the United States by virtue of its social preeminence. Families within the upper strata were ever anxious to strengthen these ties by introducing their children to the social scene of the eastern cities. The presence of friends and family in Philadelphia gave planter families the knowledge that their children would be both closely monitored and initiated into the beau monde. Such was the intent of North Carolina Whig James Iredell, Jr., whose friendship with Philadelphia physician James Mease helped his daughter Annie adapt to life at the academy of Monsieur Picot. Mease's sister Isabella recommended the Picots' school to her brother's friend, assuring him that "Mr. & Mrs. Picot are devoted to their pupils, & their requirements are solid & in some instances astonishing." Isabella Mease, like many Philadelphia guardians, welcomed the opportunity to safeguard the children of friends. The responsibility signified the esteem with which others viewed them.

Moreover, it afforded them the opportunity of strengthening connections with similarly refined and wealthy families. "If you should conclude on entrusting one or more of your daughters to Mr. P[icot]," Isabella promised, "I need scarcely assure you now, of the pleasure it would give me & my brother & his family to render her residence there as comfortable as possible, [since] our friendship, is of too old a date to need any

110.
professions." Dr. Mease expressed similar sentiments to his friend, assuring him that while young Annie was under his care he would consider her "My daughter." The young Iredell dined with the Meases on Saturdays and through the well-connected doctor's initiative gained introduction into the parlors of the city's eminent medical establishment. Lawyer Joseph Hopkinson provided similar services for his college friend William Gaston. Since the North Carolinian could not "enter into the details of [his daughter Susan's] education," he explained to his colleague, "I ask it of your friendship from time to time to inquire into them . . . and to direct such changes and give orders for such helps as a Father on the spot would deem himself authorized to make." The assumption of responsibilities *in loco parentis* emerged from the friendships forged between ladies and gentlemen of similarly genteel sensibilities. Well placed as they were in the metropolis, the Philadelphia gentry recognized their duty to socialize their friends' children into the ways of their caste. Elizabeth Bordley's promise to watch over her friend Eleanor Parke Lewis' daughter echoed that of James Mease over Annie Iredell. Bordley pledged to protect "our daughter" Parke from the "Syren [sic] voice" of the big city while the young lady boarded at Madame Grelaud's school in 1815. Despite the hyperbole evident in her friend's plea, Elizabeth, like most Philadelphia guardians, carefully monitored the girl's behavior. They took the reproduction of class identity as a serious responsibility.\(^{21}\)

Guardianship involved a number of mundane but crucial responsibilities.

---

\(^{21}\)William Gaston to Joseph Hopkinson, August 26, 1823, Joseph Hopkinson Papers (photostats), Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill (hereafter UNC); Eleanor Parke Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley, Jan 3, 1815, Eleanor Parke (Custis) Lewis Letters (typescripts), Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
Managing youngsters' money was a common task. When Susan Shelby lost a substantial amount of cash just a few days after boarding at Picot's academy (she accused the servants of stealing), her mother advised her to "call upon Mr. White stating that you have been robbed" and seek an advance. Just as important, guardians supervised their charges' education, making sure daughters minded their studies. They might also hire tutors to inculcate skills outside the normal academy curriculum. Mary Gill explained to the parents of Mary Wiley, a student from Macon, Georgia, that her uncle "has authorized us to engage Herelle (probably the most skillful master in the country) to give her singing lessons." The uncle's word in this matter had parental authority. "[W]e shall [retain the singing master] with as little delay as possible," Gill pledged.22

Similarly, William Gaston charged Joseph Hopkinson to help with Susan Gaston's literary studies. "No doubt you have in Philadelphia Libraries of all sorts to which access may be had for a small charge," Gaston began. "I wish Susan to have an opportunity of reading the best works of Bourdalaire [sic], Massillions & Bousset in the original and have recommended them to her for her Sunday reading." Emma and Annie Shannon, the daughters of Vicksburg Whig publisher Marmaduke Shannon, benefitted from their father's numerous contacts in Pennsylvania while they boarded at St. Mary's Academy. Mississippians passing through the city provided the girls with newspapers from home as well as issues of DeBow's Review. Unwilling for them "to be without something whilst among others that received presents," at Christmas, their father "sent to William Stuckey

---

22Virginia Shelby to Susan Shelby, November 23, 1845, Grigsby Family Papers, Folder 137, Filson Club; Mary H. Gill to Mr. and Mrs. Wiley, November 17, 1853, Charles J. Harris Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University (hereafter Duke).
of Philadelphia, to send you some things," having dispatched the money for the purchases to his friend. Stuckey sent along a large package of apples, dried beef, fruit cake, crackers, and pickles in time for the holiday, but volunteered to visit the girls in person so he could "give [Shannon] a statement of them." Stuckey's motivation for going beyond his friend's limited requests exemplifies the responsibilities most guardians--kin and friend alike--felt toward their young charges. "We all feel so much anxiety to see them & know how they do. . . . We will take the first opportunity to See them . . . so Rest Satisfied and make Mrs. Shannon's mind easy." Stuckey concluded with words that must have done much to set his friends' minds at rest. "Should they be sick, you will be Speedily informed. I have had children," he empathized, "and I know what a Parent's feelings are."\(^2^3\)

Other cities hosted communities of French refugees, though none perhaps as large as Philadelphia's, and planters established social, business, and family connections with like-minded bluebloods throughout the young republic. The Philadelphia area welcomed so many daughters from around the country, but especially the South, because of its cosmopolitan atmosphere and the pro-southern, conservative cast of its upper crust. It was the ideal place for young ladies to receive an education, in and out of the classroom, befitting their esteemed status. Susan Petigru King, daughter of South Carolina unionist James Louis Petigru, finished her education at Madame Guillon's school in Philadelphia

\(^{23}\)William Gaston to Joseph Hopkinson, September 21, 1823, Hopkinson Papers, UNC; Marmaduke Shannon to "Dear Daughters," December 1, 1857; William Stuckey to Marmaduke Shannon, December 14, 1857, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, box 3, folder 34, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson (hereafter MDAH).
after several years at a Charleston seminary. King understood the preeminent place of William Penn's city in the nation's hierarchy of finishing schools. In her novel Lily, Alicia Clarendon, her parents, and the heroine travel "in every direction... inquir[ing] about schools" before "meeting some friends now settled in Philadelphia, they came to the conclusion that the city of straight streets and very clean bricks was the favored spot for female education." R.S. Roberts sought to capitalize on this reputation for excellence in female learning. Roberts assured prospective patrons that his "School has already acquired a character which commands the esteem and confidence of the public, as its liberal patronage testifies." To dispel any lingering doubts that his academy would not "equal the best institutions of the city," the neophyte schoolmaster affixed the names of fifteen "references" to his advertisement, including that of Edward Biddle. Not only could parents rest assured that the city offered the finest French schools and an urbane society, but they could be sure that their children would suffer no exclusion or ridicule because of their southern heritage. Indeed, for many students the experience was quite the opposite. "You can't think in what estimation Southerners are held here," gushed Emma Shannon to her mother. "They are looked up to as superior beings."

Philadelphians were typically enthusiastic in welcoming southern guests into their parlors, but more comforting to students entering boarding schools was the presence of

---

friends already enrolled. In selecting Philadelphia schools for their daughters education, parents were exposing them to a wider world, but they also could be confident—if they did not know for certain already—that their girls would meet and befriend others from their locality and region. These acquaintances welcomed new girls into the unfamiliar environment of the classroom and city, easing their transition away from their home, friends, and family. New students identified not with fellow boarders from the South generally but with those from their own states, towns and neighborhoods. Jennie Ellis's experience was typical. Of the almost fifty boarders (not including day scholars) at Madame Sigoigne's school, she identified six as fellow Virginians. "Clannish as ever we are generally together, and among them I gave chosen my favorites, the Bradford's of Lynchburg," she reported. Margaret Mordecai related much the same story to her sister Ellen. She felt nervous as she arrived at the school of the Hawks sisters, where her sister had received her education. "You do not know how much my heart did beat when we drove up to the door," she admitted, though a familiar face soon assuaged her fears. "Sus an Polk was the first person that I saw she carried me up into her room which is the same as when you were here," she practically gushed on the page. "You have no idea of how kind every body has been to me," Margaret recounted with obvious delight. "[A]ll of your old friends received me as kindly as if they had known me all of their lives."25

In this nurturing environment, students made deep friendships bound not by their

25Jennie Ellis to Powhatan Ellis, January 2, 1837, Jane Shelton Tucker Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (hereafter VHS); Margaret Mordecai, Phila., to Ellen Mordecai, Raleigh, September 29, 1837, Margaret (Mordecai) Deveraux Papers, UNC.
place of origin but their common condition as women of the privileged class. This companionship reinforced the lessons of the classroom and parlor that turned shy, awkward girls into refined ladies. Some of these relationships were extremely intense, a quality by no means exceptional in relations between women, but one often begun and nurtured within the walls of boarding schools. Parents expressed satisfaction at these friendships, proof as they were of the esteem their daughters received from the girls of elite families. William Gaston assured his daughter Susan that he approved of her friendship with a Pennsylvania student, for "[t]o be honoured with her friendship is no small proof that my child deserves the affection of the good."^26

Students, of course, did not enter into intimate relationships to receive the approbation of their parents. Yet youngsters were hardly insensitive to the appeal of the same qualities their parents found attractive in families of their station. As their mothers and fathers wished their daughters to make connections with cultivated, elegant young ladies, so too were girls attracted to a fellow student's skill at the piano, conversational acumen, congeniality, or similarly refined attribute. Hester Van Bibber's friends felt "surprise" and "disappointment" when her parents pulled her out of school during the summer recess. "How cruel in you to leave us thus, at a moments warning, besides the loss of your society out of school, what shall we do without you in?" asked her friend Elizabeth Buchanan, who had more than hurt feelings on her mind. "All our plans for

^26The seminal work on this subject remains Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America," Signs 1 (1975), 1-29. William Gaston to Susan Gaston, December 9, 1822, Gaston Papers, UNC.
reading French our broke, I must now hobble through the French book all alone!"\(^{27}\)

Sharing close quarters—a study, bedroom and quite often a bed—for a year or more goes far toward explaining the depth of affection between former schoolmates. A former classmate of Lizzie Spragins, of Halifax, Virginia, wrote her after one night at her home in Lexington, Kentucky when "Liz, Mary, and myself all three slept in one bed, just imagine us all in one bed we kicked laughed talked nearly all night about different things, particularly about you and the old Madam's when we were all there together." The sleeping arrangements, she remarked, "really reminded us of old times." It is hardly surprising that such close contact, protracted over months and even years, produced such intense, long-lasting friendships.\(^{28}\)

The cement of these relationships was their awareness that their schooling, as their family life before, was inculcating in them an upper-class sensibility. Like other women, their lives would be defined by their role as wives and mothers. Yet these two roles were themselves transformed by the circumstances of their privileged social position. Boarding school girls and the genteel ladies they became did not share

\(^{27}\)Elizabeth Buchanan, Phila., to Hester Van Bibber, North End, Matthews County Virginia, August 27, 1816, Hester E. (Van Bibber) Tabb Papers, Duke.

\(^{28}\)Sally W. Clay to Lizzie Spragins, September 22, 1842, Spragins Papers, VHS. Steven M. Stowe argues that "the true purpose of schooling was not to encourage a world of sisters. Academies seem to have acknowledged this tension by formally structuring a young woman's bond to her parents, thus attempting to balance sisterhood with a compelling bond to the world outside the school. The schools did this primarily by insisting on the duty of writing letters home." Stowe, "The Not-So-Cloistered Academy: Elite Women's Education and Family Feeling in the Old South," in Walter J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn, eds., The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), 94.
friendships with women below their station. Bluebloods might interact with other women as servants, as objects of charity, even as fellow members of reform societies, but—at least to their mind—the relation always remained one between superior and subordinate.

Central to this development of an upper-class consciousness, North as well as South, was the bonding experienced by elite women within academy walls.

After her marriage, Elizabeth Spragins' former classmate Millie reminisced of how they had often dreamt of marriage as boarders at Sigoigne's academy. "Lilie, you do not imagine what a happy state this which you and I have often dreamt [of] together." While their schoolgirl musings that "a good husband, makes one happy beyond all things else" turned out to be correct, marriage did not necessitate that, as Susan Petigru King maintained, women "shut the piano, never open a French book, give their paints away, and might a great deal better have had all the money spent on thee accomplishments put in the Savings' Bank instead." Indeed, marriage only heightened Millie's appreciation of her education, for it ensured that "strangers are always pleased with" her rural Virginia home, several of these "fashionable . . . valuable acquisitions" having received entertainment and conversation from their hostess. Finally, her skills helped both she and her husband, a physician, live together as a leisured gentry couple. In private hours, she wrote, "the Dr. plays on the violin, & I on the guitar and piano, so you see we have a plenty of music, which," she reminded her friend, "is the spice of love."29

Like letters from home and visits from friends and relatives traveling through the

29Mattie [?] to Eliza Spragins, March 14, 1843, Spragins Family Papers, VHS; King, Lily, ed. Pease and Pease, 72.
city, the fellowship between students helped them adjust to their new environment and learn the ways of their social class. On a more practical level, however, personal contacts helped students handle the difficult and diverse finishing school curriculum. The course of instruction at most French schools paralleled the course of studies young men pursued at most of the colleges of the era, although of course the quality of instruction varied widely. Schoolmasters went to great lengths to assure parents that their institutions possessed all the necessary accouterments of the arts and sciences. One headmaster of a new school boasted that his school was "furnished with Maps, Globes, a Cabinet of Minerals, Philosophical Apparatus and a Library." The finishing school curriculum, as this list implies, embraced letters, the sciences, and what critics referred to as the "ornamental" branches of education--voice, piano, dancing, and--most important--French. For all the derision that finishing schools received at the hands of their critics, teachers, students, and parents viewed the curriculum with the utmost seriousness, both for its own sake and for the advantages it brought to young women. One father believed that "a girl will be more respected with an education than with wealth," though most suitors looked for both.30

Despite finishing schools' commitment to serious educating, critics condemned the their curriculum because it failed to prepare young women for independent lives in the working world. Bluebloods, however, judged the curriculum by a different--but not less rigorous--scale of values. They expected classwork to inculcate in their daughters an

30Elijah Fletcher to [?], October 1, 1810, in Clinton, "Equally their Due," 42; "Young Ladies Seminary" circular, LCP.
upper class identity. To this end, classwork worked in conjunction with girls' experiences outside the classroom—with schoolmates, family friends, at church, and in fashionable parlors and public spaces—to awaken in them a consciousness of the duties and entitlements arising from their privileged position. As one historian remarks, "even rote learning in this world apart reinforced the sense of shared values and the existence of shared values and the objective fund of knowledge to be steadily acquired."  

Parents, teachers, and students all shared an awareness of the significance of this daily routine and the lessons it conferred, yet they interpreted the meanings behind these conventions rather differently. A brief look at three perspectives of seminary routines—from Mary Gill, a headmistress, William Gaston, a parent, and Emma Shannon, a student—will be instructive in appreciating the tensions as well as the common assumptions inherent in the enterprise of educating American girls to the manor born.

Mary Gill, who administered her school along with her sister Sarah and brother Sidney, described a typical day for Mary Wiley for the girl's parents. During school hours, which ended at 2 p.m., Mary received instruction in moral philosophy, French, ancient and modern history, and the "Analogy of Religion to Nature." Penmanship along with "occasional exercises in Spelling, Grammar, Geography, and composition" rounded

---

31Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 141. The ardor with which both southern students and parents approached lessons suggests that Christie Anne Farnham' judgement that "the Southern belle as an intellectual was inconceivable. A belle could be silly but not serious—at least not serious over her studies," needs to be reexamined. To pick only one example, the essayist Louisa McCord, daughter of Langdon Cheves, attended the Picots' school in Philadelphia. Farnham, The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 128.
out the week. Dinner followed class, after which Mary joined her schoolmates in a healthy walk. Afternoon tea was sandwiched between music lessons and time for private study. In the evening the girls retired to "the private parlor with Sister Sarah [to] mend their clothes while she reads or talks to them." The scholars retired at nine, to be awakened by the school bell at six a.m. "so that they have a full eight hours' sleep."

Educators adopted such regimens because they had relatively little time to turn young girls into cultivated ladies. "By these regular arrangements a great deal can be accomplished without late hours or any undue pressure," Gill explained. Regular habits disciplined the mind and hastened the process of maturity, teachers believed. Mary Wiley, like many children accustomed to lives of leisure, needed to be "restrain[ed]" lest she "keep herself in a continuous excitement." Moreover, headmistresses sought to ensure parents that their daughters were in capable and safe hands. To this end, the routine of academy life substituted for parental love. The seminary community became extended relations. "We were very much gratified when we received Mary into our family," Mary Gill assured the Wileys, "In promoting the welfare of your dear daughter we have a great and common interest and one that requires cordial cooperation."

William Gaston exhibited no concern with whether Madame Sigoigne treated her charges like an extended family. He sent his daughter from New Bern to Philadelphia to learn how to be a lady, not to form new relations, real or constructed. Gaston spilled much ink reminding Susan that her only real family remained in North Carolina. Besides, Gaston had his close friend Joseph Hopkinson to act as a father in his absence. To

---

32Mary H. Gill to Mr. and Mrs. Wiley, November 17, 1853, Harris Papers, Duke.
Madame Sigoigne Susan owed respect and attention, but from her guardian she could expect the concern and scrutiny of a parent. "Should you discover any thing relating to her which you deem not exactly as it should be in mind manners habits," Gaston assured his friend, "fear not to let me know." Susan's father expected her seminary routine to produce results, not family-style warmth. "You delight me by saying that the three months of our separation have passed away rapidly, her father exclaimed, for he regarded it as "a certain proof that they have not been spent idly."

Gaston expected the supervision of his friend and the routine imposed by Madame Sigoigne to make a lady of his daughter. But Gaston himself took an active part in superintending his child, trusting her to pass on accurate reports of her progress. "I should be pleased to know your employments somewhat in detail," Susan's father wrote. "Could you not give me a sketch at the end of the week of what had been your studies during it, and at what hours they had been presented? I should be able to say to myself occasionally throughout the day now my Susan is saying her French lesson, now she is playing on the piano. Information on these subjects would help me tho' far distant to accompany you in mind through the occupations of each day and make me feel as though I were nearer to you."

Gaston expected his daughter to return to him a polished lady, but he also anticipated that by sending her far from home she would come to appreciate for herself the value of aristocratic standards as well as the skills of the parlor. The North Carolina

---

33 William Gaston to Susan Gaston, December 9, 1822, Gaston Papers, UNC.

34 William Gaston to Joseph Hopkinson, March 1, 1823, Hopkinson Papers, UNC.
jurist, explains one scholar, "inhabited a moral and emotional landscape in which the qualities of courage, honor, and (perhaps above all) duty were the natural and unalterable foundations of human life, as were folly and self-interest." He expected Susan's academy routine to inculcate these ostensibly "southern" values, principles that were actually embraced by elites like William Gaston throughout the young nation and that would indelibly mark Susan as a gentlewoman in whatever circles she traveled.35

Emma and Annie Shannon traveled from Vicksburg, Mississippi to Burlington, New Jersey to enter St. Mary's Hall in 1857. While the girls joined a large colony of fellow "Vicksburgers," as they called them, at the school, Annie and especially Emma remained antagonistic to teachers and administrators. While they approached their studies with the utmost seriousness, receiving excellent grades and frequent praise from their instructors, both girls bitterly resented the routine imposed upon them. "You sleep here nearly half your time, from eight o'clock at night until half past six," complained Emma. "Then the bell rings. . . . It is very cold." Serious but not overly devout Methodists, the girls enjoyed ridiculing the frequent services built into the routine at the Episcopal school. "Sundays you must go to church twice. . . . [T]he church is built in the form of a cross . . . you can't catch a glimpse of anybody, and half the time don't see the minister, so going to church is not the fun it is at home." One"duty" followed another with numbing regularity--after Church came dinner, "grace before and after each meal. After dinner church and shopping if anybody wants to go. Then supper at six. There you can dance if you have the spirits." The school day mirrored Sundays, with classes filling

35Stowe, Intimacy and Power, 167.
in for mass and recreation. Of the two hours ostensibly reserved for "rest" in the late afternoons, one was devoted to musical "practice."

The girls did not approach the academy routine with the trusting acceptance teachers expected--and, the latter assured parents, they received. "I don't think my constitution, for one, can support more than five months of such unremitting study," Emma claimed, "and as to learning, I don't believe we will learn, because we have so many long lessons that we can't profit by them." Despite their insubordination, the Shannon ladies soon came to enjoy their classes, schoolmates, and even their teachers, though they never reconciled themselves to the daily regimen. Their resentment underscores the negotiation that necessarily belied the ideal of academy life presented in the glowing letters that passed between headmistresses and parents. But while the model of school life resembled the reality only awkwardly, teachers, students, and parents shared consistent goals and identical notions of the good life for a young woman of the upper class. All aimed toward the same end: the blossoming of a girl into a refined lady of leisure.36

The core of the traditional curriculum--the liberal arts--served this much-desired goal. Finishing schools normally offered their pupils instruction in ancient and modern history, rhetoric, composition, mathematics, geography, moral philosophy, along with modern and occasionally ancient languages. Schoolgirls commonly expressed reluctance to discuss their formal studies unless prodded by an adult, since they thought other

---

36 Emma Shannon to Mother, October 21 and November 7, 1857, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, MDAH.
aspects of academy life, especially their relations with other students and their adventures in the city, were far more interesting to their correspondents. Y.E. Transou explained her failure to write her cousin about her life at a Philadelphia academy because, she claimed, she had no "interesting matter" to relate, although she went on for four densely-packed pages about her observations of the belles and beaux at a nearby museum. Similarly, Virginia King had little to say to her mother about her days at the Picots' school, even though Anna King had been "educated in Philadelphia in the French fashion" and likely had much in common with her daughter. "Mother really I do not know [what] to tell you," ended one typically brief epistle, "for there is nothing here which will interest you."  

Far more often than children, parents seized the initiative in discussing schoolwork. Richard Arnold advised his daughter Ellen regarding the importance of a wide variety of studies, including Latin, which the doctor believed "facilitates the acquisition of all the modern languages." Arnold was quite aware that the pursuit of the classical tongue by a lady was considered inelegant in some circles, and even implied that she felt some pressure to drop the subject, yet he urged his only child to persist. "I would not laugh at you," he assured her, "but rather encourage you to persevere in your attempt to acquire [Latin]." Arnold was similarly eager in urging Ellen to improve her penmanship and letter writing, skills that most parents encouraged to ensure a steady flow of correspondence, confirming their child's health, safety, and progress, and also

---

37 Y.E. Transou to Julie Conrad, Stokes County, North Carolina, October 25, 1848, Jones Family Papers, UNC; Stowe, *Intimacy and Power*, 224; Appie [Virginia King], to Anna King, March 21, 1852, Thomas Butler King Papers, UNC.
establishing a connection with the family during a time when girls could, potentially, develop independent identities.

Arnold hoped Ellen would not "find it irksome or difficult to correspond to me. As for my part, I could write pages to you, for what is a letter but a conversation on paper?" He exhibited the same concern in admonishing his daughter to study arithmetic and read, under her teachers' supervision, the proper authors. The Spectator, he maintained, "would afford excellent reading," as would "a knowledge of History to enable you to understand the allusions and references with which you continually meet in reading." Lest this list intimidate Ellen, Arnold cautioned her that "your principal attention shall be devoted to your elementary subjects," proper concentration on which would render the study of weightier matter in later life "an amusement and not a task." In laying out his reasons for recommending to his daughter such an ambitious list of readings, Arnold pithily summed up the value most elite parents placed upon a liberal female education. It would, he assured Ellen, "make you an accomplished and ready woman."38

For the same reasons, schoolgirls devoted much time to the study of botany, conchology, natural science, and astronomy. Despite their exalted place in the pantheon of education, however, they still lacked the prestige that the study of letters enjoyed. William Polk's daughter Mary studied a variety of sciences along with other courses at

Miss Mallon's academy until her father reconsidered the benefits of her regimen. "I have come to the conclusion, that the study of Philosophy astronomy & chemistry by young ladies, is nearly nothing more than an idle waste of time," he admonished, "and wish you not to lose any of your time in acquiring a further knowledge of them . . . but that you fill the space that they would occupy, in the study of grammar, geography, Arithmetic . . . & historical reading, with French."  

Few parents dismissed scientific subjects as cavalierly as did William Polk. They expected that their children's study would allow them to display their talents in the semi-public settings of the parlor and ballroom, and this required at least a conversational knowledge of the sciences. Mary Wiley's former teacher urged her to "acquire solid knowledge and enlarge your views, and . . . to mature your taste and make yourself easy and graceful in the conversation of polished society." For these ends, the best subjects to pursue were "Science and History," although they were best studied with an eye towards the maintenance of proper feminine delicacy. Hence Miss Gill recommended scientific works with such unthreatening titles as "Nicholl's Architecture of the Heavens . . . Dick's Celestial Scenery and Sidereal Heavens [and] Hunt's Poetry of Science," although she also suggested such rigorous works as "Gould and Agazzi's Zoology."  

Most finishing schools similarly conflated the social and intellectual goals of their scientific programs. Schools that expected their young women to display their learning in

---

39 William Polk to Mary Polk, July 1, 1823, Polk, Badger, and McGehee Family Papers, UNC.

40 Mary H. Gill, Phila., to Mary Wiley, June 21, 1855, Harris Papers, Duke.
the parlor as gentlewomen took science as seriously as those that trained women to apply it in the classrooms as teachers. "The advantages which result to a female whose education has been well secured, are incalculable," explained one commencement speaker. "From it she derives amusement in solitude and consolation in the hour of neglect and grief. In society she has other themes to engage the conversation than those which reptile scandal or protean fashion supply." Teachers were quite aware that American parents expected their children to be well-versed in scientific matters, and large academies capitalized on their resources to appeal to them. "Full courses of lectures in Natural Philosophy and Chemistry, with a complete apparatus, and also in Botany, will be delivered annually, in addition to the instruction in those branches," boasted St. Mary's Hall.41

Even small finishing schools exposed girls to a broad range of scientific subjects, both because of their utility and the enjoyment students took from them. Moreover, standards of genteel conduct required both ladies and gentlemen to converse on a wide variety of topics, ranging from ancient to modern literature, science, history, and even politics. The goal was a cultivated social circle. "[C]onversation," argued one writer, "is what the arts are to refinement and civilization." Enlightened talk, he maintained, was the *sina qua non* of a "refined, an elegant, a[nd] tasteful" cultural life. Finishing schools presented young women with the study of science because knowledge of it distinguished

---

41[Staughton, William], *An Address, Delivered October, 1807, at Mrs. Rivardi's Seminary, on the Occasion of the Examination of the First and Middle Classes* (Philadelphia, 1807), 8; George Washington Doane, *An Appeal to Parents for Female Education on Christian Principles, with a Prospectus of St. Mary's Hall, Green Bank, Burlington New Jersey* (Burlington, N.J., 1837), 23.
the cultivated from the vulgar, but students pursued it much as they did Latin and Greek, as much out of the personal fulfillment gained as the social benefits conferred.\textsuperscript{42}

The honored place given to what both patrons and critics of finishing schools called the "ornamental" branches of women's education truly distinguished them from progressive institutions like Troy and Patapsco. The rubric embraced a wide variety of subjects characterized, depending on one's perspective, by frivolity or elegance. They included training in instrumental music, usually the piano but often the harp and guitar; voice and dance lessons; and instruction in a European tongue, perhaps Italian or Spanish, but always French. The zeal with which students and teachers pursued these subjects belied their ostensible superficiality. "I have improved in my playing" of the piano, complained Julia Watson to her aunt, "but not near as much as will compensate me for all the practicing I do. I give every minute I can to the piano, and play one line over and over again, and sometimes I feel as if I would give up in despair." Still it was not enough. "[W]hen I come home I shall practice still more than I do now," she pledged. Another student confided to her brother, "French and music are you know my chief studies, and indeed I may almost say my only ones. Music I practice two hours a day, and take lessons from the same lady who taught sister."\textsuperscript{43}

One student of Madame Sigoigne described her daily regimen, in the process showing how "ornamental" subjects were intertwined with the "serious" work of

\textsuperscript{42}James Brooks, "Conversation," \textit{Ladies Companion} 8 (January 1838), 123.

\textsuperscript{43}Julia Marie Watson to Eliza Riddle, June 5, 1839, Claiborne Family Papers, VHS; Jennie Ellis to Powhatan Ellis, January 2, 1837, Jane Shelton Tucker Papers, VHS.
educating wealthy young women. "I recited Rhetoric, Scientific Dialogues, Spelling and took arithmetic, drawing, singing, harp, and piano. Writing lessons on Tuesday, history, geography, dancing, astronomy, & painting. Music I have every day two or three hours," she added, perhaps breathlessly. Despite the extraordinary efforts required to master musical skills--costs that turned Benjamin Rush against their study, believing them unfit for frugal republican women--students eagerly sought, and found themselves encouraged to pursue, musical competence. Not only did it offer an enlightened and entertaining domestic pastime but it marked its possessor as a lady of discernment and cultivation. One former student of a Philadelphia academy praised her cousin for following her example in learning the guitar while she studied at the Gills' school. "I am gratified to learn that you take so deep an interest in your music. [T]he pleasure that it will afford you in years to come," she promised, "will fully repay you for the trouble of acquiring [it]. I find it a happy exercise, in many hours of bodily indisposition, & equally a solace when my mind is anxious." Ornamental studies like dancing, voice, and drawing fitted the aristocratic temperament particularly well because their possession seemed to signify a natural superiority that could be heightened but never awakened by training. Hence peers encouraged their attainment at every opportunity. "[Singing] is an exquisite accomplishment," advised Mary Wiley's cousin, who then thought better. "[O]r I should say gift of nature, for cultivation never endows a voice; it only cultivates, when possessed."44

Linked to voice, dancing, drawing, and similar pursuits by its ornamental character but towering above all other subjects in importance was the study of the French language. Critics of French schools derided its study because of its impracticality in an English-speaking country and because of its aristocratic associations. Benjamin Rush believed that "the English language certainly contains many more books of real utility and useful information than can be read without neglecting other duties by the daughter and wife of an American citizen." A far more beneficial project for the cause of republicanism, Rush suggested, would be "to make it necessary for Frenchmen to learn to speak our language in order to converse with our ladies than for our ladies to learn their language in order to converse with them."^45

Genteel Americans, of course, set out to master it precisely because the language of Moliere and Racine conjured up visions of the ancien régime. Maria Walker boasted to her father that "Mrs. Sigoigne says that I am a perfect French girl." She now preferred "the openness and urbanity of the French character" to English moderation, "a reserve which excites my contempt not my respect." Maria, unlike most schoolgirls, expressed some trepidation when the time neared for her to leave Philadelphia for her Alabama home, worried that "backwoods" people lacked the sophistication to appreciate a manifestation of pre-Revolutionary France in their midst. "I expect all the people will stare," she concluded laconically. The boarding school program--intimate associations, strict rules, a dawn-to-dusk regimen, and constant exposure to aristocratic values--was

designed precisely to work the same transformation that rendered Maria Walker, a timid Alabama girl, into an affected, refined, and city-loving lady. The study of French was much more than an intellectual pursuit. It heralded the initiation of wellborn young women into different world from most Americans, a world of deference and sophistication, of condescension toward those outside the **beau monde**. 

The very structure of the boarding school experience seemed designed to produce Francophiles. Not only did girls live together for years alongside French teachers and their families, persons whose foreign demeanor and strange ways evoked a romantic aura, but many schools required students to speak French throughout the day. Rosalie Calvert sent her daughter to Deborah Grelaud's French-speaking academy "after tr[ying] two different tutors during two years" from which her children "could not learn French." Two years later she declared herself "quite satisfied" with the products of Grelaud's Gallic environment. John Walker faced a similar dilemma. For his daughter's education he desired a teacher "who can read & write & above all speak French. [W]hat would induce such a one to come out here [Alabama] with us?" he wondered. The solution reached by both Calvert and Walker was to place their girls at French-speaking environments in Philadelphia. 

At Jennie Ellis's school, students spoke French "when addressing the teachers

---

46 Maria Walker to "My dear Mama," February 8, 1824, September 11, 1824, Walker Family Papers, ADAH.

themselves or when at table." Most native French speakers required students to converse in their tongue at all times. Isabella Mease assured her North Carolina friends that "the French language is learned so as to be spoken with ease & fluency in six months" at the Picots' academy. Perhaps the most genuinely "French" school of all was run by Aimée Sigoigne and her daughter Adéle. Students there not only took classes in the language but lived a sort of colonial existence. As a rule, boarders "read and write French every day" and, moreover, took "a lesson twice a week from a gentleman," according to Susan Gaston. "Of course," she added, "it is spoken in the house." Classwork only passed on the mechanics of language. Appreciation for the aristocratic principles behind the words and grammar required that schoolgirls become French, that their Walnut Street townhouses become Parisian salons. Young ladies not only had to speak French but to live it--in class, over meals, in conversation, and in parties and salons--that is, in public.

Salons, ballrooms, parlors, and fashionable promenades constituted the public spaces in which genteel women displayed their cultivation. These arenas also served to broadcast the cohesion and preeminence of the upper crust to the lower orders. Grand affairs performed crucial hegemonic work for the elite, representing their superior cultivation, taste, and wealth not for their own sake but for the elevation, as they saw it, of American culture, even trickling down to the lower orders. This function persisted but became less important as common folk, swelled with a sense of their own dignity and power, captured the cultural mainstream, heaping derision on the pretensions of the

---

48 Jennie Ellis to Powhatan Ellis, January 2, 1837, Jane Shelton Tucker Papers, VHS; Isabella Mease to James Iredell, Jr., May 24, 1830, Iredell Papers, Duke; Susan Gaston to William Gaston, December 28, 1822, Gaston Papers, UNC.
select set. Fanny Fern, the popular mid-century columnist and novelist, warned mothers that their daughters would not find "the blushing country maiden, with her simple wardrobe, and simpler manners," if she went away to school, but would be surrounded and molded by the "over-dressed, vain, vapid, brainless offshoot of upstart aristocracy, who would ridicule the simple gingham in which that country girl's mother studied geography." Fern's tirade was part of a broader assault on upper-class ways that took special aim at genteel learning.\textsuperscript{49} Despite this pervasive ridicule--or perhaps because of it--the gentry held on to their traditional ways, in which individual and family worth was conferred and confirmed by the approbation of one's peers. They sought for their children a genteel education precisely because the abilities learned would allow them to shine in the eyes of others. The so-called ornamental branches, of course, were particularly well suited to the demands of parlor conversations, musical recitals, and dancing assemblies. As one father admonished his daughter, "no lady is considered well bred who cannot converse and correspond in" French. A woman without some degree of learning could not be regarded as genteel.\textsuperscript{50}

Much of the hostility directed at finishing schools by middle-class writers reflected their antagonism to a cultural style alien and antagonistic to their own. Almira Phelps alluded to such a rift when she asserted that "the fine ladies [finishing schools] send into the world feel themselves ridiculously exalted above all sensible conversation, or all attempts to be useful." But elite parents did not want their daughters to be sensible

\textsuperscript{49}Fanny Fern, \textit{Fresh Leaves} (New York: Mahlon Day, 1857), 68.

\textsuperscript{50}[?] to Lucy [?], June 21, 1805, in Clinton, "Equally their Due," 51.
or useful in the way Phelps intended. The entire object of genteel women's education before the Civil War aimed toward placing women squarely where middle class gender conventions said they did not belong: in the public eye. Parents expected their daughters not just to attend classes but to mingle in Philadelphia's high society, considered the most cosmopolitan in the nation. James Louis Petigru sent his daughter from an academy in Charleston to one in Philadelphia, where she "sees better society than she would do at home." Social life in and outside the school was so pervasive that it constituted a sort of informal curriculum whereby classroom exercises could be applied and new lessons learned. Susan Petigru was a frequent visitor at the Drayton home in Philadelphia, which pleased her father. "[S]he could not have a better model nor visit a house by which she will improve so much," he believed. Friends and relations like the Draytons did much more than keep a watchful eye on the daughters of associates. Philadelphia hosts introduced boarders into Philadelphia social circles. James Mease, besides his connections with gentleman physicians, enjoyed close ties to the affluent, socially prominent Butler clan, having wed the daughter of South Carolina planter Pierce Butler. His sister Isabella had access to the city's most fashionable parlors, being on intimate terms with the Manigaults, Lenoxes, Craigs, Biddles, and Hopkinsons. "Miss Mease accompanied your Br[other] (George Izard) & us," reported Alice Izard to her daughter of a gathering with the eminent Craig family. "She has a very general acquaintance & seems to enjoy the good will of everybody." Isabella Mease, in short,

---

was the ideal friend for a boarding student.  

Southern parents were eager to exploit this "good will" in their Philadelphia friends, who were usually happy to oblige. Joseph Hopkinson practically had to plead with William Gaston so Susan could accompany his daughter Elizabeth and his family to social functions. Gaston, like most parents, worried about the corrupting effects of "dissipation," or an unhealthy attachment to fashionable life, upon their children. Once initiated into the parlor scene, he believed, "serious studies are regarded as irksome--and she is too apt to fancy herself a woman. My dear daughter has years yet in which I wish her to be considered, and to consider herself, a girl." Yet there were mitigating considerations. Association with the Hopkinsons was a fortuitous circumstance, for their house was perhaps the most fashionable in Jacksonian Philadelphia. Hopkinson thought it better for Susan "to be drawn into the world and its customs, among which, she is hereafter to live, than to be restrained from them." The Philadelphian thought that his fellow lawyer's caution might do Susan some real damage--socially and psychologically--if he did not relent. "This is a point on which I fear you are under some mistake," he advised. "She seems to be cramped by a timid reserve, which ought not to be increased, but rather relaxed" by the pleasures of fashion, to which she was entitled. Eventually Gaston relented. "I am well aware that many advantages may be derived from [social life] which she needs," he admitted, while remaining nervous about the effects of "excess

---

52 On James Mease's relations with the Butlers, see Malcolm Bell, Jr., Major Butler's Legacy: Four Generations of a Slaveholding Family (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982). [Alice Izard] to Margaret Manigault, August 26 1805, Manigault Family Papers, SCL.
which an association with the fashionable and the gay might threaten."

Gaston knew when he was bested in debate, and Hopkinson's arguments were incontestable. While exposure to public scrutiny might spoil impressionable minds, isolation was fatal. Only by mingling in the fashionable scene could young adults learn its ways and hazards. Besides, association with others in their circle awakened wellborn youngsters to a sense of their privileges and responsibilities. Overprotection could produce children awkward and unsophisticated in company, personally embarrassing but potentially damaging to a family's standing within the elite community.\footnote{Joseph Hopkinson to William Gaston, September 2, 1823, Gaston Papers, UNC; Gaston to Hopkinson, June 4, 1823, September 21, 1823, Hopkinson Papers, UNC.}

Few parents expressed as much reluctance as William Gaston about sending their daughters in to the fashionable world. Most regarded it as an essential part of the leaning process—a sort of informal curriculum—and a determining factor in sending their daughters to Philadelphia. As one Georgian explained his motivations to his daughter, "our entire object in this world is to fit you to move with grace and credit to yourself in your appropriate sphere as a Lady." William Polk was characteristically more blunt. "In sending you to Philad[elphia], Polk stated, he "had two objects in mind: the first for the improvement of your mind & acquirement of knowledge generally; the second, the attainment of Musick, drawing, French, and mixing with the fashionable world as far as your other duties would permit." As it turned out, he thought that Mary's duties at the Miss Mallons' school would permit quite a lot of "mixing with the fashionable world."

The week he brought Mary to the city, Polk used letters of introduction to attain entrance
to at least ten houses of "the most respectable citizens of this place." Mary must have made a good impression, since her new acquaintances, all "fine, fine women," among them the wife of Langdon Cheves, were "pleased to say that they will send often for her."\(^5^4\)

Polk gave his daughter careful instructions lest she fail to appreciate the opportunity before her--instructions that included an admonition to balance her schoolwork with her social duties. "You have been introduced into a polite circle and amongst the best standing in the city & I have no doubt but you will cultivate the acquaintance in such manner as will make you ample amends for any temporary privations you may experience in being drawn from the society of your young friends at Mrs. Mallons," he explained. "Be very careful of your dress & person & above all of your conversation & politeness to your superiors in age." Mary's father was by no means insensitive to the benefits of a solid education, having interviewed personally the heads of several schools--including Deborah Grelaud--before settling his daughter at the Mallons'. Like Joseph Hopkinson, however, Polk knew that a young lady of the upper crust could only improve so much from schoolbooks. By securing her welcome "in the first circle in the city," William Polk was acting on his belief that his Mary would "gain as much from their society as from her school."\(^5^5\)

---


\(^5^5\)William Polk to Mary Polk, March 18, 1822, Polk to "My dear wife," March 12, 1822; Polk, Badger, and McGehee Papers, UNC. Polk did not exaggerate the character of the houses into which he introduced Mary. His sojourn to Philadelphia included visits to
Parents lavished much time and treasure on the public aspects of their daughters' educations since they regarded their Philadelphia years as a sort of dress rehearsal for their lives as wives, mothers, and cultivated ladies. When Lizzie Spragins entered Sigoigne's academy in 1839, her father not only paid out $425 for her tuition, board, and washing, but $196.28 for an assortment of corsets, wraps, dresses, shoes, and opera tickets. Her combined bills of three years later totaled an incredible $772.55, including payments for Italian, singing, dancing, piano, and guitar lessons (as well as the instrument itself), books, musical scores, shoes, summer and winter bonnets, and carriage rental. Between 1841-1842, Miss Spragins spent $91.59 at five different city shops on silks, muslins, frocks, dresses, gloves, and capes. Preparing a young lady for a life in the fashionable world was not an exercise that invited parsimony. When Nathaniel Ware of Natchez placed his stepdaughter Mary Jane Ellis at Mrs. Phillip's school, his business partner agreed that "with Mary Ellis's fortune, her education and the proper formation of her mind to fit her for society and happiness in mature life is of much more importance than a few thousand dollars."56

Girls needed expensive clothes and accessories not for class but for the eyes of the outside world. Chestnut Street was the favorite venue for wealthy young people in Philadelphia, and academy ladies walked its blocks both to shop in its expensive stores and to see and be seen by the members of their estate. In 1817, students at Miss Lyman's

the Mifflins, Sergeants, Duncans, Bartons, and Ingersolls, all families in the first rank of Philadelphia society.

56 Accounts of Eliza Ann Spragins, 1839-1842, Spragins Family Papers, VHS; Elijah Smith to Nathaniel Ware, October 29, 1820, Samuel Brown Papers, Filson Club.
school "consider[ed it] as a great deprivation" when their teachers "prohibited the girls from walking in Chestnut St[reet]," since "it is the most fashionable street in town."

Forty years later students still promenaded down the avenue. Emma Shannon and her schoolmates "went tearing down Chestnut Street [and] saw a great many sights. Everything is so splendid and imposing," she reported, "the teachers are not willing to take us to any but the finest stores."57

Monitors kept a close eye on where their charges shopped and walked because the quality of the purchases and clothes reflected on the girls, their families, and the school. More important, shopping constituted a lesson within the informal curriculum. Teachers accompanied students to show them the latest fashions as well as to make sure they understood what distinguished quality from tawdry merchandise. The same applied to the company girls kept. Teachers exercised caution when girls sought to enter the society of families outside their circle. Very often, headmistresses themselves conducted salons in their homes or at least cultivated connections with elite families in their neighborhood.

Aimée Sigoigne exemplified the former approach. Acquainted with most of the

---

57Elizabeth Buchanan to Hester Van Bibber, April 18, 1817, Tabb Papers, Duke; Emma Shannon to "My dear Mother," April 8, 1858, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, MDAH. Interaction with the lower orders on public streets was a tricky problem, especially since the well-to-do—especially women—often faced ridicule and insults from the poor. In Lily, Madame admonishes the precocious Alicia as she prepares to venture out to shop on Chestnut Street: "I advise you, my girl, to follow the example of my dear Lily. Walk like a lady of good breeding, and pay no attention to the loafers." (Je te conseille, ma fille, de suivre l'exemple de ma chère Lily. Promenez-toi en demoiselle bien élevée, et ne regardez point les flaneurs.) King, Lily, ed. Pease and Pease, 73. According to John Kasson, "Social inferiors in the city no longer doffed their caps, bowed low, and averted their eyes before superiors, nor did children 'mind their manners.'" Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 93.
respectable families of the city, she and her famously beautiful daughter Adéle had a special connection with the family and in-laws of Nicholas Biddle. Moreover, Madame's sister had married the elder Dr. René LaRoche, whose son regaled her guests with his almost professional skill with the violin and piano. Sigoigne "gathered intellectual friends in her salon," most of whom "possessed deeply conservative and European convictions." Still, the spirited lady was most generous with her attentions and exposed at least some of her students to this sophisticated crowd. These assemblies were by no means unique to Sigoigne's school. They were most effective in teaching students the rules of the parlor, and might even have longer lasting consequences. Mary Jane Ellis so impressed the Gallic company that she caught the eye of the younger Dr. René LaRoche. The two married in 1824. LaRoche, meanwhile, was a close friend and colleague of Samuel Brown, whose daughter Susan wed the prominent Philadelphia lawyer Charles Ingersoll.\(^5\)

Most girls, however, did not enter Philadelphia society to find well-to-do husbands but to train themselves for fashionable life once they returned home. The example of Philadelphia ladies showed southern girls the proper way to enjoy the leisured lifestyle to which they were entitled. A former pupil at a Philadelphia academy wrote her cousin, a new student at the same school, of how she found "the life of a 'young lady. . ."

---

\(^5\)Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 98. A former schoolmate of Eliza Spragins "read the death of Mr. Nicholas Biddle. . . . Really Lilie are you not sorry? if it were only for the sake of Miss Adele & Mme. Sigoigne, he was so very kind to them, I knew no one will lament his death more than they." Mattie [?] to Eliza Spragins, March 14, 1843, Spragins Papers, VHS.
delightful—emphatically delightful." Despite some innocent fears of "entering the world, of being hardened and chilled by its cold influences, of being infected by the corrupt atmosphere around me," she found instead "a joyous, happy life." She urged her cousin to anticipate the time when she came home to be an "important member of the family circle, as a 'young lady' is necessarily obliged to be. It is pleasant too to mingle in the world, and know that you are no longer a mere spectator of the busy scene but one of its actors."

The gay world, the friend suggested, constituted a ritual space whose frivolous facade belied a more serious purpose. Social life awakened in the wellborn a sense "that you have interests in common with the thousand bright eyes and brilliant forms around you, and that in spite of the declarations of wiser persons than yourself under the gay and apparently careless exterior of the fashionable, there are many hearts beating light with love and warm affection." In and out of the classroom, girls inculcated the lesson that they were deservedly privileged, that the virtuous life demanded that they strike a balance between piety, enlightenment, and sensual entertainment, that inequality and hierarchy were not only divinely ordained but socially beneficial. If activist schools produced agents of Christian renewal, finishing schools yielded champions of reaction.  

Middle-class women were to exercise "influence" upon their families but could

---

59[?] to Mary Gill, February 11, 1855, Harris Papers, Duke. Edward Pessen, in Riches, Class, and Power before the Civil War (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1973), argued that the elite controlled the great reform movements of the antebellum era. A more nuanced appraisal is found in Stuart Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1780-1920 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), which finds that while the leaders of reform societies were disproportionately wealthy men and women, they seldom were identified—by themselves or by others—as members of the fashionable world.
reach a wider audience through churches and certain reform organizations that seemed to be a natural extension of their domestic inclinations. Still, concludes Mary Ryan, while the "gender system was full of tension, ever-changing. . . . middle class women . . . remained shackled by the limitations and contradictions of the doctrine of the spheres." Some women, like Emma Willard, supported reform endeavors while hoping that activism might also serve the more subversive purpose of awakening women to the injustice of their subordination. Progressive schools trained girls to change the world—toward the liberation of their sex, the abolition of slavery, and the progress of evangelical Christianity. French schools, too, produced agents of change—of the reactionary sort. Their graduates were advocates of a traditional way of life that recognized the good arising from natural inequality separating women from men and families of greater and lesser wealth and standing from each other. As graduates of Patapsco were expected to plead their cause in designated spaces—schoolrooms, societies, churches, and in print—genteel ladies defended hierarchy in their own public spaces, in ballrooms, parlors, salons.

The few elite women who did apply their skills in print almost invariably attacked the agents of gender, race, and class liberation. Louisa McCord, a former student of Deborah Grelaud, "pled the causes of the Southern conservative--the traditional role of the woman, proslavery, class distinction, free trade--with the excited indignation of the reformer." In defending the order of social ranks, of course, elite women were thereby vindicating their own subordination. Class, not gender, provided the grounding for both men and women of the upper crust from both sides of the Mason and Dixon line. Thus,
what Steven Stowe characterizes as the "organization of gender" in the "planter's view" can also be understood as the governing sexual ideology of bluebloods all over the young republic: "Sexual priorities were thereby established . . . but more important the sexes discovered their respective tasks and identities jointly within their class. Though far from equal in most respects, men and women shared elite standing which appeared to give them a similar stake in the survival of elite authority."^60

So while some middle class women ventured into the world as missionaries and teachers, dedicated to advancing the cause of Christianity and domesticity, their elite sisters conducted salons and threw dances and parties that celebrated the ways of leisure and enlightenment. With values so much at odds, it is not surprising that some critics of French schools simply did not realize that they were talking past a significant part of their audience. "It is not enough," asked Fanny Fern, "that you say to" your daughter "My dear, be careful of your choice of companions," when she has no choice; when her bed-fellows and room-mates—the latter often three or four in number—are what chance and the rail roads send. . . . That the distant home of her daughter's room-mates is located within the charmed limits of fashion; that a carriage with liveried servants (that disgusting libel on republicanism), stands daily before their door; that the dresses of these room-mates are made in the latest style, and their wrists and ears decked in gold and precious stones—is an affirmative answer to these questions to satisfy a true mother?

What Fern did not realize, or did not care to consider, was that there existed a significant group of American mothers, South and North, for whom the answer was a resounding "yes."\textsuperscript{61}

\textsuperscript{61}Fern, \textit{Fresh Leaves}, 69. On the different principles motivating northern and southern reform that mirror class divisions, see Barbara L. Bellows, \textit{Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670-1860} (Baton Rouge; Louisiana State University Press, 1993).
CHAPTER 6
THE "REPUBLIC OF MEDICINE"

Between 1800 and 1861 young men from all corners of the Old South left home to study medicine in Philadelphia. All but a few attended one of two schools: the University of Pennsylvania, which traced its pedigree to 1765, and the Jefferson Medical College, which opened its doors in 1824 and consistently attracted legions of southern pupils. These students traveled north in defiance of two powerful cultural trends. The first was a bias against the morality and efficacy of professional medical training, indeed a rejection of the very idea of institutional medical education. This prejudice was itself integral to a larger revolt against authority attacking other supposedly elitist vestiges of colonial life, such as the professional bar versed in the common law and a formally educated, didactic ministry. The second trend discouraging northern training was the partially successful effort of certain southern physicians, politicians, and nationalistic agitators to promote--for various reasons--a "southern education for southern youth."

Most of the young southerners who attended lectures in Philadelphia were sensitive to these concerns. Most ultimately found them unpersuasive, for they saw advantages to a Philadelphia degree even more powerful than populist and nationalist appeals. A college degree was unnecessary to practice medicine in most parts of America, but t doctor who sought the status of a gentleman required formal credentials.
The idea of a locally based medical education was appealing, but until the very late antebellum years few southern schools could approach quality of instruction and practice available at Philadelphia. Moreover, for the most ambitious and cosmopolitan southern students, the University of Pennsylvania or Jefferson was their entree to a wider community of medical gentlemen united by cultivation, wealth, status, and professional interest—a community that Benjamin Rush, the dean of Philadelphia medicine, dubbed the "republic of medicine."¹

If the medical republic encouraged national, and even international, identifications, it also celebrated the lifestyle of gentlemen and the cultivation of male company. Leisure lay at the heart of the gentle code, but leisure was an ambiguous concept. It could include both a high degree of learning and the aggressive pursuit of pleasure, the essential element being choice: that is, the leisured gentlemen could choose to become learned, or to pursue gambling or other sensual diversions, or both. He had wealth and status enough to attend to his own interests without regard to making a living or submitting to vulgar popular opinion.² Medical education in Philadelphia encouraged the life of gentle manhood just as its French schools maintained standards of genteel womanhood. There were obvious differences. In the formal curriculum—learning acquired in the classroom—medical men were being trained in a practical craft. They could earn a living as doctors, treating patients for a fee and building a practice. Their

¹Benjamin Rush, Philadelphia, to Dr. James Currie, Liverpool, 27 April 1800, Joseph Lyon Miller Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (hereafter VHS).

classroom education had indirect benefits, too, as their learning qualified them to take their place as honored members of their community, but for most the pecuniary benefits were probably paramount. In female seminaries, on the other hand, classroom instruction in French, dancing, and even ostensibly conventional subjects like Latin and History was never intended for application in the workplace. Instead, young southern women learned to think and comport themselves in the time-honored ways of the European aristocracy, and with their northern classmates they helped construct an American leisure class. Both men and women, though, learned skills in Philadelphia schools that the less privileged in their communities disparaged as elitist and corrupt, as when a practitioner of Thomsonian medicine ridiculed "the refined taste of the learned Latin and Greeklings of this learned age."³

If their medical learning qualified students for future membership in the community of physicians, their activities outside the classroom prepared them to be a gentleman of leisure in other ways. Like finishing school ladies, they mingled in society and the company of cultivated Philadelphians. Unlike women, however, medical students exploited the male code of conduct that excused, even encouraged, sensuality and excess. Gambling, soliciting prostitutes, and heavy drinking did not, of course, distinguish young men as gentlemen. College students throughout the United States were renowned for their incorrigibility, and while students necessarily came from wealthier segments of American society, they were not necessarily gentry. For the select few students ranked

among the upper crust, the pursuit of pleasure merged with socializing, shopping, touring, and the company of similarly privileged men to fashion a genteel masculinity. For many of the rest, freedom from family restraint allowed indulgence in diversions not available at home. Mothers and fathers expected their sons to attend to their studies, live frugally, go to church, and avoid the temptations of Babylon. While they anticipated that their sons' degrees would qualify them to take their place as gentlemen, they feared that peer pressure toward city vices might subvert that goal.  

A substantial number of medical practitioners in the first half of the century never had to face such temptations, for they rejected the practice of institutional medical education as contrary to the egalitarian spirit of the American Revolution. Regardless of their background, graduates of antebellum medical schools represented privilege simply by virtue of their university degrees. Most practitioners in both cities and small towns practiced traditional medicine through knowledge culled from books, apprenticeship, or observation, without formal training. In the early national period most states issued medical licenses to graduates who passed examinations administered by a state board or medical society. Even then these requirements were largely ignored, but states gradually

---

repealed licensing laws anyway after 1820. By 1870 states had virtually ceased to issue licenses. Officially, states recognized a medical degree from nearly any institution, regardless of merit, as sufficient qualification to practice.⁵

Most Americans, especially rural folk, patronized traditional practitioners instead of university graduates. Not only were they reviled as elitists, but they were popularly--and not unfairly--identified with their dangerous and unproductive methods. Though there were thousands of such folk physicians, Samuel Thomson emerged as the single most influential, and reviled, practitioner of natural healing. Thomson dismissed professional training as aristocratic arcana, designed to keep medical knowledge in the hands of a learned elite. Even though the Massachusetts Supreme Court acquitted him of murder in 1809 after a patient died under his care, Thomson continued to advocate his system of botanic medicine and oppose conventional "heroic" treatments like blistering, bleeding, and the application of mercury. Thomson and his followers penned a battery of pamphlets and journals combining democratic rhetoric and natural healing advice. He urged that "in medicine, as in religion and politics," Americans should "act for themselves." Thomson and other naturalists openly linked folk medicine with republican themes, accusing professionally trained doctors of conspiring to keep medical knowledge

out of the hands of ordinary people.\(^6\)

Not surprisingly, the medical establishment resisted strenuously such attacks. Few exhibited the grace and frankness of Benjamin Rush, who admitted that, but for professional hubris, academic doctors would learn much from traditional practitioners. Medical schools North, South, and West promulgated professional orthodoxy to the last. One student fresh at the University of Pennsylvania expressed pleasant surprise to his mentor that "every thing with respect to the university has surpassed previously conceived notions of" it, he having "not an adequate idea of the utility and indispensab"e necessity of a course of lectures." The medical colleges attracted not only young men from the towns and cities of the Old South, but those from the countryside as well. A Kentuckian reported that both sophisticated southerners and Philadelphians mocked students from Tennessee and his state as "Back Woods boys" because of their rural awkwardness. A North Carolina student related to a friend how "one of the greenest fellows here from N[orth] Carolina you ever saw" had just arrived in the city, carrying "his clothes in a pair of old Saddle bags." Young men flocked to Philadelphia lecture halls from town and country alike, rich and poor, defying the perception that they thereby maintained a

privileged institution.7

Southern and Philadelphia professionals fought off the elitist stigma in other ways. They published journals and formed societies that preached the professional gospel, forming a medical united front in defense of institutional and class prerogatives. Samuel Brown, the planter-physician of Alabama and Kentucky who trained under Rush before accepting the professorship of Theory and Practice of Medicine at Transylvania University, founded the Kappa Lambda Society of Hippocrates. Its members, "especially, in the western and southern portions of the United States," pledged "the best members of the profession" toward "every feasible and honorable plan for elevating [the profession's] dignity." Though founded in the South, Kappa Lambda published The North American Journal of Medicine and Surgery in Philadelphia to "bring harmony to the profession" and to see "every worthy physician in America enrolled among the members of the society." Societies like Kappa Lambda and, later, the American Medical Association, fought to maintain professional standards. What made their efforts particularly difficult was that these standards were easily stigmatized as privileged and elitist, associations not likely to win much sympathy in public opinion.8


8[Daniel Drake], "Obituary of Professor Brown," Western Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences 3 (1831), 607; Rene LaRoche, "Dr. Samuel Brown as an Author," Western Journal of Medicine and Surgery 2 n.s. (1854), 182.
Yet what must not be overlooked is that many who identified both Philadelphia and its medical institutions with elitism and aristocracy were simply dazzled by the association. Students made the long journey to its lecture rooms to become not just doctors but gentlemen. After all, even early in the century there were closer alternatives than Philadelphia for most aspiring doctors in the South, none of which enjoyed the prestige of the northern schools. The refined atmosphere of the city, the social status of the faculties, especially at the University of Pennsylvania, and the reputation of the schools themselves all imbued the graduate with gentility. When Alfred Stille asked Richard Arnold for help in attaining a professional position, the latter replied that "[i]t would give me the greatest pleasure if I could in any way assist you in attaining the object of honorable ambition at which you now are striving. As a mere provincial, a kind of outside professional Barbarian, I feel flattered that you should have thought I might in any way contribute to that end." Acute observers could not help but notice the ties between the city's medical establishment and its social elite. "I have heard much of the temper of the trustees at the University of Pennsylvania," a Philadelphian confided to a Virginia friend, a candidate for a professorship, and was "induced to believe that they are influenced very much by the power of old families in Philadelphia." His confidence was designed both to encourage his friend to pursue the chair, coming as it did with a certain amount of social prestige, and to imply that qualifications alone would not sway the committee. "It is said," he intimated, that "to [social contacts] Dr. Hare owes his
Ambitious men felt keenly the association of Philadelphia and its medical schools with gentility. When Daniel Drake tried to lure Samuel Brown away from Philadelphia to Cincinnati, he framed his appeal in distinctly Augustan, Federalist terms that viewed honor and personal glory as the due rewards to those doing the heroic work of nation building.\(^9\) Drake did not "solicit [Brown's] cooperation in a transient or insignificant undertaking," but in one "we regard as commensurate with your elevated talents and aspiring ambition." Mentors made the connection between professional training and gentility explicit in the letters of introduction they wrote for their proteges. One William Merriweather, who "in the winter of 1816 and 1817... attended the medical lectures in Philadelphia," was introduced to Samuel Brown as "a polite, intelligent, & gentlemanly man." John Schaffner's mentors described him in similarly genteel terms when he applied for a residency at Philadelphia's Blockley Hospital. Edward Warren found him "a Gentleman of talents and industry and will fill the place he seeks, with honor to himself and usefulness to the institution." In letters home, too, students proudly boasted of their schools' social status. One North Carolina student described the "grand


commencement" of the University of Pennsylvania, featuring "a procession formed at the Medical College of the Trustees, Select & Common Councils, of Military officers of rank, of respectable citizens & graduates & medical students, & faculty." This "very respectable & imposing procession" marched to a "room filled with ladies & gentlemen," received their degrees, and later attended "an excellent cotillion." Such pomp and affectation were hardly unique to the Philadelphia schools, but only that city combined the academic regimen, reputation, and social preeminence that made good the pretension and made doctors into gentlemen.\textsuperscript{11}

Just as young men flocked to Philadelphia in defiance of egalitarian trends that mocked formal instruction as elitist nonsense, so too did most aspiring southern doctors ignore the critics in their section who insisted that southern doctors train in the South. The second quarter of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a number of new medical schools in Dixie, many founded explicitly to rival the Pennsylvania schools. The Medical College of South Carolina, the Medical College of Virginia, the University of Virginia Medical School, and the New Orleans School of Medicine--the last the jewel in the South's educational crown--were all founded at this time, all at least partly to lessen the influence of Philadelphia. Ironically, its prestige was undiminished even in these hostile institutions, for many of their founders and faculty were bound to be Philadelphia graduates. As William Norwood, the historian of antebellum medical education,

\textsuperscript{11}Daniel Drake, Cincinnati, to Samuel Brown, Philadelphia 17 November 1818; JW Knight, Shelbyville, to Samuel Brown, 19 October 1820, Samuel Brown Family Papers, Filson Club; Edward Warren, Edenton, to Charles Ellis, Philadelphia 23 March 1860, Fries and Schaffner Family Papers, SHC; Fabius Haywood, Phila., to n.p., 10 April 1825, Haywood Family Papers, SHC.
observes, the "Pennsylvania and Jefferson men carried the medical doctrines of their professors throughout the country. They sent their sons back to Philadelphia for their medical instruction; they established schools patterned after their alma mater."¹²

These schools emerged to fill a real need in the South for quality medical instruction, but they were also inspired by and championed in a rhetorical frenzy that accused northern schools, especially those in Philadelphia, of a myriad of sectional sins: drawing men from their native land, pocketing their money, exposing them to urban vice, teaching them doctrines irrelevant to southern medical practice, and brainwashing them with abolitionist sedition. Generally, the criticisms fell into two categories, although they were usually leveled together. Some southern doctors maintained that effective practice in the South required education in the region. They argued that the South's unique disease environment, its rural character, and its large African labor force rendered much they would learn in Philadelphia irrelevant to the everyday practice of medicine in the South. Southern zealots, of whom many were also physicians, made nationalist appeals urging young men to patronize southern schools in the interest of sectional pride, wealth, and educational development. These arguments could consistently be found both in professional journals like Edward Fenner's Southern Medical Reports and journals of general interest like DeBow's Review, and they were consistently the product of physician-partisans like Fenner who opportunistically used both types of appeal. Also consistent was the penchant for southern medical students, in ever larger numbers, to

ignore their entreaties and study in Philadelphia.\(^ {13} \)

The clinical argument for a southern medical education for southern doctors actually emerged from conventional American doctrine that maintained that diseases and their treatments were highly contingent on climate and other environmental factors. What applied in one milieu might not pertain to another. "[T]here is a distinction between Northern and Southern medicine," a Louisiana physician insisted, "[a]s surely as there is a distinction between foreign and American medicine." Students would have to unlearn in southern practice much they had absorbed in the classrooms of Philadelphia. "It is in the South," insisted the \textit{New Orleans Medical Journal}, that "we must study Southern diseases." The New Orleans School of Medicine, founded in 1856, emerged as the South's center of clinical instruction and most conspicuous example of southern medical excellence. Other schools in the region recognized that they could not rival the school's resources. A Georgia journal admitted that "[w]hat can not be furnished by Charleston, Richmond, Augusta, Savannah, Atlanta, Mobile, or Nashville, can be found in New Orleans, where immense hospital facilities, and the greatest possible variety of disease, are spread out without obstruction to the enquiring student." The advocates of the fledgling University of Virginia medical school were less generous, claiming to have "founded a medical school, now in successful operation, which has always been, and is now, \textit{the best medical school in America}," though they lamely admitted that "the

The arguments of sectional partisans that southern nationalism demanded a strong home education for future doctors that circulated in popular journals, received far more attention than the appeals of physicians. Southern doctors grew strident on the subject of regional education because the yearly exodus of southerners to the Delaware implied that southern educators were inferior to their northern counterparts. In an appeal for the New Orleans School, a southern physician charged that "[t]he annual pilgrimage of Southern young men to the medical schools of the north is a humiliating sight, yet we have but ourselves to blame for it." Other sectionalists even contended that the reluctance of men to remain in their home region dishonored the South. "We certainly ought to patronize our own literary institutions in preference to those at the North," intoned J.D.B. De Bow, "when we know that our colleges and universities are equal, if not superior, to any in the United States." More practically, it was argued that a northern education drew vital resources from the South, money better spent in the strengthening of southern institutions. A Virginian argued that "[t]o those desirous of the advancement and improvement of the

community," medical schools "are objects of deep interest, and they are not the less objects of concern, for those who regard them merely as a means of increasing its wealth." In 1841-1842, he calculated, Virginians alone spent $56,500 in Philadelphia, money the Old Dominion could ill afford to lose to the wealthy Keystone State. The 700 or so students from throughout the South at both Penn and Jefferson spent $350,000 while at school at Philadelphia, it was estimated. As if the flight of hundreds of young men to northern schools was not indignity enough, the loss of their fees, boarding costs, and other expenses to the North provided further testimony to the South's relative weakness.15

Indignity and poverty--cultural and actual--were enough to inspire wounded southern pride, but the allegedly corrupt atmosphere of the North evoked sectionalists' most strident appeals for home education. In the South, young men could better avoid those "excesses, the indulgence in which too often, during a residence in large cities, lays the foundation for a life of dissipation and degradation." Worse, they charged, northern

medical schools were havens of abolition sentiment. James Billingslea accused northern doctors of looking down upon their southern students "simply because [they] are slaveholders." Another lamented the effects of the large southern presence in the "crowded lecture rooms" of Philadelphia, where impressionable young men were under the daily sway of "Northern men, who for the most part are inimical to the South and her 'peculiar institution.'" Better, charged J.D.B. De Bow, that southern men "remained in honest ignorance and at the plow-handle," than exposed to "doctrines subversive of their country's peace and honor."16

Historians have paid undue attention to the movement for southern education, reflecting as it does the sectional tensions of national politics, but other voices were more indicative of the spirit of national camaraderie prevailing in the medical community. Though they solicited articles from Virginia physicians, the editors of the organ of the Virginia Medical Society assured its readers that "we are far from wishing to convey the idea that our department of 'selections' is to be neglected. Many of the contributions of the Stethoscope have proceeded from gentlemen who reside beyond the limits of this state, and are therefore not members of its medical society. But we feel assured we shall

not lose their valuable aid: our pages are open to them now, as they ever have been.\textsuperscript{17}

Just as the medical establishment recognized regional diversity while maintaining a national community, students in Philadelphia retained their southern identity while they entered the medical fraternity. Sectional partisans railed for the politicization of intellect, young men ignored their appeals and came to Philadelphia in ever larger numbers. Table One details the graduates of the Jefferson Medical College from its founding until 1849. Though it took some time for the College to win a reputation—only 139 men took degrees in the first five classes—in ten years about one hundred doctors graduated each year. Though only 10\% of these men were from the South during 1826-1830, in the next five years the percentage more than doubled, to 25\%. By 1846-1849, over half of the graduating class—over 360 men—were southerners. Virginians led all southern states, their numbers gradually increasing until 1846-1849 when they represented a quarter of all graduates. They even rivaled the Pennsylvania contingent, outnumbering them 46 to 44 in 1847. Virginians alone consistently approached the numbers from all the northern states combined, less Pennsylvania. In 1846-1849, when 1/4 of the graduating class went home to Virginia, only 15\% went north of Pennsylvania.

As sectional tensions mounted and the calls for southern education grew louder and more frequent, more young southern men than ever came to Philadelphia lecture halls. Southerners filled more than half the seats until the 1860-1861 semester, when they represented 48\% of the class—an impressive number coming a year after the highly

\textsuperscript{17}"Editorial and Miscellaneous," \textit{Stethoscope and Virginia Medical Gazette} 4 (1854), 285.
publicized secession of southern students from the city. Table Two examines the 1850s in more detail, breaking down the entire Jefferson student body by state. In 1859-1860 just under 70% of the class was southern. Virginians continued to lead, though other states sent more of their men. More Georgians than ever attended classes, numbering 10% of the 1855 body. North Carolinians, too, came in ever larger numbers, never descending lower than 5% of the class and comprising 1/10th of the 1861 group. From the deep South, Mississippi and Alabama were well represented, together claiming 16% of the seats in Jefferson's lecture halls during 1859-60 and 9% four years before. Farther north, Kentucky and Tennessee boasted comparable numbers. The 1855-56 session was the low point for both states, when they represented 2% and 3%, respectively, of the Jefferson class, though their total of 25 students was one better than the combined numbers of New Yorkers and New Jerseyans. Professors could also expect to teach to the odd student from Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri every year.

As Table Three demonstrates, the University of Pennsylvania was at least as successful as its younger counterpart in attracting men of the South. Its 1860-61 session, when a healthy 42% of its student body was southern, represented the low point in the University's Dixie population. In the 1840-41 class, more than 3 of every 5 students had come north to learn their craft. When the fledgling Jefferson Medical College catered mostly to Philadelphians--only 10% of its class was southern between 1826-30--48% of Pennsylvania's enrollment came from the South. And of the 438 students in the 1850-51 class, 51% were southern. At the same time, southern schools attracted a negligible contingent of northern students. During the 1830s and 1840s, when sectional antagonism
remained at a fairly low pitch, Philadelphia schools matriculated a respectable body of southern men. But this number only increased as tensions mounted on the political front and as southern doctors honed their argument for southern medical education. The more the South's partisans talked, the less its aspiring doctors listened. On the eve of Civil War, in 1860-1861, the two largest schools in Philadelphia held 971 students. 45% of them were southern.

Students maintained the South's ties to Philadelphia medical schools in spite of sectional polemics for at least two reasons. The Quaker city was not unfairly identified with the movement to abolish slavery, but outside the Quaker community Philadelphians-especially those in the upper crust—were quite hostile to abolition and enjoyed close ties of kinship and friendship to the South. The city was thus a most congenial atmosphere for all but the most prosouthern men. Second, with the exception of the New Orleans School of Medicine after 1854, no school in the South could rival Philadelphia's two colleges. Even if they were reluctant to spend a year or more in the North, men of means were unwilling to compromise their education by training in the South.

Despite the relatively congenial atmosphere, there was of course much to offend sensitive southern sensibilities. Many students felt unappreciated, even hated, by their northern hosts. A Virginian claimed that the locals "seem to have a natural antipathy to the Virginians; so much, so that they would as soon [as]sociate with a parcel of Indians as with the students who come here from Virginia." A future Confederate physician trained at Jefferson recalled that "[m]edical students were regarded in those days as most uncouth and uncivilized specimens of humanity, and they were popularly rated and reviled as
Southerners. . . . The result was a perpetual state of war between the Philadelphians and the [students]." Others were more understanding about the root of Philadelphians' wariness. A Carolinian observed that the city's "two thousand medical students . . . deem it their especial prerogative, to create as much mischief, and to play the devil as much as possible," barring their attendance "in any Church, except the Catholic." Another wrote that "hardly a day passes but what some of students are bailed out of the Watch House," yet he too laid the blame squarely on his fellows' shoulders. "I am very sorry to say that I think nine times of ten the students are in fault." Indeed, he expressed his amazement that the Philadelphians treated the students with any hospitality at all. "I have been in a great many places in the city and never have I been the least insulted," he admitted. "At first I thought we were imposed on but now I think the contrary."18

Some men were offended, some even hurt, by hostility towards the student population, but no issue kindled rancor between the students and the city like the well-publicized abolitionist activities of a small number of local reformers. Opponents of northern schools were quick to seize upon antislavery agitation as evidence of general antisouthern feeling, a sure sign that southern pupils could never receive an adequate education amidst such hostility. Students, too, took offense at antislavery actions that seemed designed to insult their honor as southern men. One pious Virginian raged that "any southern person to go to church here . . . may confidently expect about every other

---

Sunday to have his feelings outraged on a subject that I think of all others should be kept out of the pulpit." He vowed to attend the distant Presbyterian church of Dr. Henry Boardman, a staunch union man who "never allud[ed] to the abolition question in the slightest degree," avoiding the nearby church of Dr. Albert Barnes, who "carries his abolition sentiments with him into the pulpit." Radical clergy presented only slight difficulties, outraging only the pious among the large student population who could easily choose a more congenial church. Everyday encounters on the street with antislavery zealots posed a more intractable problem. "[I]t is not a very unusual sight to see a beautiful young Quaker lady escorted in the streets by some of the coloured beaux," a student marveled to his cousin at home in Athens, Georgia. Those accustomed to the rigid, deferential social relations enforced by slavery often found the North's more informal code rather jarring. "One of the Miss Grimkys [sic] was married not long since," he related indignantly, "& at the party the whites & blacks mingled promiscuously." For the Georgian, as for others of his temperament, it was all a bit hard to bear. "I am a southron in soul & feeling," he averred, "& when I again [visit] my native soil, there will be gladness of heart & abundant rejoicings."¹⁹

Despite their frequent misgivings about Philadelphia's more liberal code of racial relations, most southern students soon found the city a most congenial environment. Just as relatively infrequent scenes of radical egalitarianism outraged proslavery sensibilities, so did more common crowd actions against abolitionists provide a glimpse into

¹⁹R N Venable, Philadelphia, to "Dear Father and Mother," February 19 n.d., Carrington Family Papers, VHS; [] Hamilton, Philadelphia, to Sarah Hamilton, Athens, Georgia, December 31, 1837; Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, SHC.
Philadelphians' true character. Hence the same Georgian repelled by Quaker familiarity with free blacks rejoiced when a crowd of locals and southerners razed Pennsylvania Hall, a newly erected abolitionist meeting place, in 1838. "Our city," he rejoiced, "has again resumed its characteristic order & calm & quiet after the tumultuous outbreaking of an enraged populace. An all wise & just God has kindly made mobocracy the instrument of his wrathful visitation." The crowd shouted down the speakers, insulted and beat sympathetic spectators, and eventually fired the building while the police looked on. "It was the grandest spectacle that I ever before witnessed," the student claimed, "Philadelphia has by the late proceeding raised herself in my esteem, although she before held a high station in my affections." Twenty years later another student confirmed Philadelphians' persistent animosity to abolitionist radicalism. Though he reported how "[t]he abolitionists hold meetings every few days," he added that not only the southern students, but "a large number of citizens attend," hissing and coughing to drown out the speakers. The student colony also enjoyed the collusion of the city police in enforcing southern-style race relations. "I tell you they make the free negroes walk a straight line," this Carolinian boasted. "One of the students knocked one down the other day and beat him like the notion and the police stood and never said a word."

Most southerners required a less extreme expression of Philadelphia's southern

\[\text{Hamilton, Philadelphia, to Sarah Hamilton, Athens, Georgia, 31 December 1837, 23 May 1838, Yancey Papers, SHC; Marmaduke Kimbaugh, Phila., to Nathaniel Hunt, NC, 17 December 1858, Hunt Papers, SHC. On the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall see [Samuel Webb, ed.], } \text{History of Pennsylvania Hall, Which Was Destroyed by a Mob on the 17th of May, 1838 (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838). On antiabolition mobs generally, } \text{Gentlemen of Property and Standing.} \]
character to realize they were on friendly ground. Students did not need to shed their southern identity for their year of medical training; they could be at the same time doctors, Philadelphians, and southerners, without contradiction. Most city dwellers viewed the antislavery minority as dangerously radical. Carrie Fries of North Carolina, in town for her fiancee's graduation from Jefferson, was shocked to learn that the polite young woman with whom she was having a conversation "was an abolitionist," and though they "got a little excited at first . . . we talked on for nearly an hour in totally good humor." After another member of their party silenced her with his powerful but civilly proffered prosouthern arguments, peace was restored. "All the other persons that I have seen here are warm friends of the South," she wrote home with satisfaction. Besides the congenial local population, of course, was the large southern population of students. Surrounded as they were by large numbers of Carolinians, Virginians, and Alabamians, with smaller numbers from other states, young men found it easy to resist what little compulsion they felt to put aside their southern identity. When threatened, the southerners looked out for one another. A student from the Old Dominion described professor Nathaniel Chapman of the University of Pennsylvania as "a real Virginian, . . . [who] has not deserted old Virginia principles." Not only was the old doctor "very polite indeed" to southerners, but upon hearing of a large number of Virginians being hauled in front of the mayor after a row, Chapman "went immediately to the Mayor's office and released them by giving them security to the amount of ten thousand dollars." It is not surprising that the shrill cries of medical sectionalists rang so hollow in Philadelphia.
lecture halls. Spending a year there was hardly like leaving the South at all.\textsuperscript{21}

The southern milieu of Philadelphia made students feel welcome in the city, but the high quality of medical instruction and practice attracted them in the first place and kept them coming until the cannon fired upon Sumter. Southerners were sympathetic to the establishment of quality schools in their home region, but the affluent were unwilling to sacrifice their training on the altar of southern pride. John Dabney was typical. He felt powerfully the distance from his family and Virginia soil yet resolved to stay in Philadelphia. "I must sacrifice my inclination to my interest," he admitted bitterly, "as I shall have a much greater opportunity here for acquiring information than I could have in Virginia." When Daniel Drake planned the establishment of a school for young men in the southwest, he thought in purely colonial terms. "I am convinced that Cincinnati is to be the Philadelphia of the West as to Medical Instruction," he told his friend Samuel Brown. "We must be contented to compose a school of preparation for our friends & masters the faculty of the Phila. school." Just as American-trained doctors

\textsuperscript{21}Carrie Fries, Philadelphia, to Francis Fries, Salem NC [March-April 1860], Fries-Schaffner Family Papers, SHC; Frank L. Grady, Philadelphia, to John L. Powell, Farquier County, Virginia, John L. Powell Papers, VHS. On the large proportion of southern students see, in addition to the above two letters, James Herbert Gregory, Philadelphia, to Francis R. Gregory, 12 November 1824, Ferebee-Gregory-McPherson Papers; and [] Hamilton to Sarah Hamilton, December 31, 1837, both SHC. Some students found it difficult to adapt to free servants. As Beverley Morris told a friend, "We have nearly all white servants here. A great many of those behind the counter are very pretty young ladies, a white man to black your boots, to shave you &c. I went into a clothing store in the most fashionable street in the city a few days ago to buy some shirts & a beautiful & finely dressed young lady came forward & took my measure. These are rather unusual doings to a Southerner but he soon becomes accustomed to them." Beverley Preston Morriss, Philadelphia, to Woodson, 8 October 1848, Beverley Preston Morriss Papers, Duke.
"formerly went from that City to Edinburg," so Drake hoped that "a considerable number of young men after attending lectures here will visit Phila." Whether or not his students went on to Philadelphia, Drake promised, "[i]t will be our constant endeavor to cultivate the good will of our great Alma Mater." Richard Arnold, a proud Georgian, expressed similar sentiments. After hearing of his election to the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, Arnold thanked a friend by admitting that "[t]o Philadelphia our profession in other parts of the Union looks for the beacons to guide us onward. A Fellowship with such lights of our profession as exist among you is then a matter of honorable satisfaction." Doctors and those in training were unsparing in their huzzahs for southern medical reform, but professional honesty and educational self-interest compelled their recognition of Philadelphia's supremacy.22

Indeed, few medical men bothered to pretend that the city had any serious rivals to medical preeminence. A Virginian recalled that as an apprentice he had deluded himself that by reading a few works "we would soon be Doctors yet when we hear a few lectures we find all we had read and all we knew were but as a drop of water into the sea." Although any number of schools could offer able lecturers, Philadelphia's offered much more. "As for learning the theoretical part of medicine and studying those branches on which we must found our practice (as Anatomy & Physiology) Philadelphia presents as many advantages perhaps as any other place in the United States." A colleague from

Raleigh agreed. He boasted of his "years residence in the Alms House where my opportunities were immense, in all the branches especially in Obstetrics." For such practical instruction the Philadelphia Alms House offered an "opportunity which no young man has" who lacked access to those "public institutions" available in large cities. An Alabama protégé of John Young Bassett was more blunt. He decided to remain in Philadelphia instead of returning to Huntsville because the University of Pennsylvania was "the oldest and best known school commanding the best talent of the country in its collection & in its anatomical & operations Library and chemical apparatus." Other cities boasted good schools, but William Penn's city was different. Its urbanity and sophistication went unmatched by any Old South locale. "The atmosphere of Philadelphia is medical," observed the Alabamian in 1842, and like legions of other southerners before and after him he "determined to remain within its influence."23

As students engaged in the routine of classes, revelry, and everyday life, issues of southern loyalty and identity faded into the background of their consciousness. Student life—academics, leisure, socializing, and professional fellowship—absorbed them completely. Classwork and medical practice, of course, demanded their closest attention and engaged the greater share of their time. "On Monday the lectures commenced and I have been busy ever since," was as typical a lament in 1838, when it was voiced, as any expressed in 1800 or 1860. "It is enough to kill a horse almost to set 8

23JN, Phila., to NM, 26 February 1830, McClelland Family Papers; Fabius Julius Haywood, Phila., to William Haywood, Jr., Raleigh 30 March 1827, Haywood Family Papers; Charles Bonner, Philadelphia, to John Young Bassett, Huntsville, Alabama 21 October 1842, John Young Bassett Papers, all SHC.
hours study every day upon hard benches I feel very much like resting at night but there is no rest for the wicked, or righteous here all fare alike." When young men wrote home describing their routine they invariably dramatized their predicament in extremist terms, emphasizing an industry and attention to their studies matched only by their dedication to attending church. "It is one Anatomical-Surgical-Physio-Chemical sing song from morning to night," moaned Neil McNair of North Carolina, "if Job himself was hear [sic] his patience would be wearied."24

With due allowance for hyperbole, the grind of classes, examinations, operations, and demonstrations was grueling. In Philadelphia institutions, as at most medical schools in antebellum America, students attended lectures in two four-month terms, studying seven courses: anatomy; physiology and pathology; materia medica; chemistry; theory and practice of medicine; surgery; and diseases of women and children. Students learned almost wholly through lectures, sitting through up to eight hours a day in crowded auditoriums. They then had the rest of their day to transcribe their scribbled notes, read assigned texts, reread the lectures, and take care of personal business. Moreover, many students enrolled in informal, nighttime lecture reviews offered by faculty and senior students. Robert Nelson of rural Jefferson County, Virginia found himself and his room mates "engaged as long as ten hours per diem attending lectures and quizzes, and besides this we have the lectures to study so you may guess that our time is well occupied." The hectic pace only exacerbated the difficult learning conditions

24Neil McNair to Annabella McNair, Robison County, NC, 4 November 1838, Annabella McNair Papers, Duke.
imposed by large numbers of rowdy young men enclosed in uncomfortable lecture halls for long hours. "Altho' nearly three hundred here" attended the lectures of Professor Cox at Pennsylvania," complained one student to his mentor, "they are generally moving about the room, chatting &c during lecture." Nineteenth century schools lacked research facilities, scientific instruction, written examinations, and imposed no sequence of courses. Students earned their degree by passing a perfunctory oral examination, though Jefferson and Pennsylvania demanded more than most schools by requiring pupils to write a thesis in consultation with a professor.25

All but a few antebellum medical schools lacked a strong tradition in clinical instruction, the New Orleans School of Medicine and the Philadelphia schools being notable exceptions. Large cities had the advantage of rural schools in this regard, with their large populations and festering disease environments. They also boasted large hospitals and plenty of cadavers for dissection, the latter often being the bodies of urban transients. Students eagerly sought out opportunities for clinical instruction, knowing not only that the experience was considered vital but that no education could be considered complete without practical, hands-on training. Young men came to Philadelphia with the expectation of hospital experience and were surprised and sorely disappointed when they could not practice. Hence one student complained that "Dissection has been a little

impeded from the very good health of the people" of Philadelphia, adding indignantly that "so great has been the opposition" of the healthy folk to the "resurrectionists" of the University of Pennsylvania that students felt "obliged to form themselves in companies for the purpose of conveying the subjects to the university." Lack of subjects seldom presented itself as a problem, as Philadelphia's large population consistently provided students with bodies for anatomical exploration.26

The city also furnished a plethora of live subjects. Students were spectators, watching their teachers perform operations, and residents, treating their own patients in hospitals for the poor and insane under the supervision of a professor. The former constituted an especially favorite method of instruction, being both inexpensive and informative, the indigent patient having little control over his or her treatment. One southern man described a particularly gruesome operation performed by Philip Sang Physick, perhaps the most renowned American surgeon of his generation. Even this laconic student admitted that it was "a most painful one, on a man who had luxated his Os Femoris, upwards & backwards seven months ago, in which state it has remained ever since." The "patient being secured on a table," Physick applied "the most powerful" efforts to restore the joints to full movement. Though "the man suffered very much and wished they should give it over, and let him remain as he was," the surgeon disregarded his cries. Alas, he described, "by great force, together with rotating the leg & thigh with the hands, the neck of the bone was unfortunately broken." Such brutality, while

26Ezekiel S. Tally, Philadelphia, to Henry Curtis, Richmond, 6 December 1822, Henry Curtis Papers, VHS.
wrenching, also served to condition doctors against allowing their patients' agony from influencing their judgment. "You may conceive that the force to" break the patient's neck, "he concluded drily, "was very great."27

The availability of residency—hands-on work at a Philadelphia hospital—also distinguished the city's institutions from all but a few southern schools. After 1811 residency at Pennsylvania Hospital was required of all University of Pennsylvania graduates, and both observation and residency at other area hospitals, especially the Alms House (later renamed Blockley Hospital) was widely available for other students. The easy opportunities for real practice elevated Philadelphia schools far above their southern counterparts. Josiah Nott cautioned James Gage regarding the disadvantages of attending Jefferson Medical College, pointing out that many treatments applicable in Philadelphia were inapplicable in his native South Carolina. Yet he also admitted that "[a]s to professional improvement there is no doubt you would incalculably benefit," admonishing him to "follow [Dr. ---] Gerhard unremittingly in his hospital. It will be well for you to become acquainted and if possible to make a friend of one of the resident physicians of the almshouse you will thereby be enabled to attend the surgical wards."

James Nisbet of North Carolina explained the advantages of Philadelphia in clinical

terms, pointing out that "besides the facility of obtaining dead subjects for studying anatomy, we are furnished with living subjects in the Almshouse." Nisbet unwittingly confessed to the incompetence of most of these procedures when he noted that "when [patients] die their bodies are opened and the effects of the disease on the different organs are brought to view."  

Unlike southern schools, hospital work in Philadelphia was part of students' routine. The absence of such an accepted element of medical education inevitably made the newer southern institutions seem absolutely primitive. Philadelphia schools, wrote a Virginia pupil, imposed an unforgiving schedule of lectures and reviews, complaining that "every night there is a lecture recapitulating what the Anatomist has said during the day," but boasted that "we also during the week attend the Alms House 4 times per week & hear a lecture at the bed side, besides." Though sectional partisans and southern physicians alike warned that experience in treating northern urban ailments would do southern practitioners no good, students paid them little heed. One graduate complained that the Blockley Hospital, where his father had studied a generation before, "abounds in poverty, misery, degradation, disease, & lice. . . . with the two latter I am thrown in direct contact." Nevertheless, he eagerly accepted a position when the directors offered it to him, resigning from a term at the dispensary because the hospital for the poor afforded "a more extensive field for practical instruction." Southern schools, especially those in small towns, suffered from their weakness in clinical instruction and tried to replicate

---

28 Josiah Nott, New Orleans, to James Gage, Unionville, SC, March [1837], folder 3, James McKibbin Gage Papers, SHC; James Nisbet, Phila., to Nathaniel McClelland, 26 February 1830, McClelland Family Papers, SHC.
Philadelphia's example when they could. Hence Daniel Drake, in forming his southwestern medical school, went through "very considerable exertion" to secure permission from "the overseers of the poor for the erection of a house similar to the Almshouse in Phila." where he and another professor could train students by "attend[ing] the paupers for an indefinite time." Only by such an arrangement could schools south of Mason & Dixon's line hope to match Philadelphia's standards and hold on to their region's best medical prospects.29

The routines of classroom and residency were central to the process through which southern men became doctors and gentlemen. But rowdiness--gambling, fighting, and womanizing--were at least as important toward fashioning a genteel masculine identity. Just as leisure class women in French schools looked beyond the classroom, to parlors and salons, to inculcate fundamental elements of feminine refinement, so did their brothers and cousins learn the forms of gentle manhood in taverns, gambling dens, and houses of assignation. It must be pointed out that such behavior directly contradicted the wishes of southern parents, including fathers. Some historians have argued that planter-class patriarchs encouraged their sons' misbehavior in college, believing that pursuit of sensuality was a privilege of their class and position and, further, that such license prepared them for lives as masters, accustomed to command. Certainly, the pursuit of pleasure had long been a traditional prerogative of upper-class youth, but responsible

---

29BR Owen to Mother, 1 November 1833; Robert L. Coleman, Blockley Hospital, Philadelphia, to Mary Ellen Fleming, 9 March 1853, Mary E. (Fleming) Schooler Papers, Duke; Daniel Drake, Cincinnati, to Samuel Brown, Philadelphia, 3 November 1818, Samuel Brown Papers, Filson Club.
adults could hardly endorse it. The latter, even while believing a discreet profligacy to be a class right, nevertheless encouraged the development of responsibility, moderation, and family stability.\(^{30}\)

No one knew these expectations better than their children, who invariably filled their letters with accounts of endless days spend at desks or pews. They reserved their more colorful accounts of vice and pleasure-seeking in letters to brothers, friends, and cousins. James Brannock assured his father in Tennessee that not only had he left his boarding house because "there were a good many wild students in the house," but that he had "no time for idling" once lectures commenced at Jefferson. Nevertheless, when his brother mentioned that a branch of the Sons of Temperance had opened in his town he teased, "you are a member--"I trust I am not mistaken," but regretted that the brothers "have both, no doubt, caused [their father] to see more trouble than we ought." Evidently the distance between Tennessee and Philadelphia eased his conscience. He confessed to his brother that a "city life is very pleasant to me since I've got used to it, & got the green somewhat rubbed off." In this respect, at least, James Brannock seems to have been a typical student.\(^{31}\)

To medical students and their male friends, if not to family, the opportunities for

\(^{30}\)Wyatt-Brown, "Ideal Typology and Antebellum Southern History," and Southern Honor, 97-98, argues that southern fathers exalted sociability and manliness over the academic elements of their sons' education. For contrary views see Faust, A Sacred Circle, 8-9; and Censer, North Carolina Planter Families, 43-58.

\(^{31}\)James M. Brannock, Philadelphia, to James Brannock, Sr., 17 November 1850; James Madison Brannock, Philadelphia to [George?] Brannock, January 26, 1851, Brannock Papers, VHS.
illicit sex available in Philadelphia stood out as one of the city's major attractions. They anticipated a year away from the prying eyes of family, surrounded by like-minded young men eager for amusement after a grueling day of lectures and operations. Besides, observes Steven Stowe, "an idiom of ready, uncontrollable sexuality was for male satisfaction only." One student at the University of Virginia was most curious regarding the activities of a friend newly arrived in Philadelphia to attend medical lectures. "Ssince you have been in Philadelphia," he wondered, "How do you like frigging white gals?" He was most eager to know, not having "been to see a lady this session" in Charlottesville. He recommended that his friend might have more success in his nightly adventures if sought out the acquaintance of a "pretty tall, & pretty good looking" fellow student who, though "very nice," was also "pretty wild." Some students were fortunate enough to be privy to the advice of licentious mentors, as was James Gage to Josiah Nott. Nott urged the young South Carolinian to stay at his old boarding house, but only if the landlady's niece Elisabeth still resided there. The mention of his name, Nott intimated, would be a "passport to you, and will admit you to more privileges than you ever dreamed of in your philosophy." Further, Nott informed Gage of an "An assignation on 9th street just behind the American Theatre," where worked a young lady keeping a candy shop "who will show it you if you manage things properly." For those students without contacts, their imaginations sufficed. "When we are at a distance from this place knowing the numerous sources of amusement which it holds out we are left to conceive
that we there we would be happy as kings," confessed a Virginian.\textsuperscript{32}

Young men were often quite candid about their exploits in their letters to one another, the experiences of students in northern and southern colleges being quite similar. A North Carolinian remarked jealously to his mentor that but for his inability to assume "the presumption, or impudence" of his fellow students, he would "form an intimate acquaintance with some of the handsome girls of this city." Another who had formed many such acquaintances probably wished he had not. A Petersburg friend empathized with his dilemma, the Philadelphia student having been accused of impregnating a prostitute. His friend marveled that "being a professed whore would be of sufficient evidence to defeat her villainous intentions towards you in any court of justice."

Nevertheless, he encouraged the student to return to "the Old Dominion and if you can resist the sporting life and cherry cheeks of the girls I'll be damned. . . . There will be no danger of getting the Damned clap that you speak of being so afraid of." There was little in the letters of such young men that can be interpreted as censure of northern, urban vice. If proslavem writers portrayed northeastern cities as dens of sin, it seems that medical students took their dire warnings as promises, not threats.\textsuperscript{33}


\textsuperscript{33}Stephen Davis, Philadelphia, to Dr. John Owen, Meuitsville, NC 28 January 1810, Campbell Family Papers, Duke; Edward Pegrame, Petersburg, to Francis Gregory, 7 September 1827 Ferebee-Gregory-McPhereson Papers, SHC.
The same bonds of fellowship that led men to recommend protégés to their alma mater, discuss treatments, reputations, and personalities, virtually compelled them to exchange these sexual confidences. Such exchanges promoted masculine camaraderie while fostering a sense of professional tradition. Hence one student described his "blow up with the 'ladies' night before last"--ladies to whom Daniel Lassiter, his older friend, fellow Virginian, and alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania, was evidently acquainted. Despite the rather humiliating circumstances of the encounter--the women shoved off his embraces and "gave me so much impudence and treated me so badly that I did not go far"--the young student told his story without embarrassment. Rejection by women of such low station need not be taken seriously, but the maintenance of male friendship required a high degree of candor. The story was an amusing confidence between two professional friends, not a confession of incompetence.34

Besides, the company of low women was just one form of amusement open to medical students. Especially when classes were not in session, students took to the streets to carouse, drink, gamble, and fight. As one perceptive young doctor noted, "[y]oung men in a city with nothing to do are not very apt to do nothing." Money was not always necessary to participate in male amusements--want of cash was a near-universal lament in family correspondence--but most men whose families could afford the myriad expenses of a Philadelphia education did not suffer from poverty. All students requested money for educational purposes, for fees, books, and supplies, or for room and board. Some, no doubt, used the cash for less academic purposes. The aptly named Thomas Cash of North

Carolina appealed for resources with the rarely-used honest approach. "[T]hink of a man in Phila. with out a dime in his pocket," he entreated his father, "he is small potatoes."

More typical was W.B. Miller, who asked his friend Charles Johnson for $225 to defray the expenses for an "unfortunate Frolick" a month past. Though he told his uncle about his losses, he dared "not tell him all," and "cannot do it now." Without the loan he would be unable to "pay what I owe and pay my necessary expenses" until his uncle's next allowance, which was at any rate was given for tuition, not gambling debts. Though the unfortunate Miller's situation was perhaps extreme, his predicament illuminates the differing expectations that motivated sons and fathers in pursuing a medical degree.  

Company of this sort was pursued both for its own sake and in the interests of male camaraderie and fellowship. Southern men in Philadelphia were hardly embedded in an alien culture; in the company of fellow students, Philadelphians, and men from all corners of the union, they were very much at home. The Virginian Robert Nelson explained his companions' drinking habits--"There are some of them who drink liquor enough to kill a horse much less a human being"--by suggesting that the city's two great medical schools brought together "so many young people from all parts of the world." Far from friends and family, in a strange city, without supervision, it was not surprising that young men sought out amusement in the company of other students and Philadelphians of similar station. W.B. Miller had little to say about his studies, but confessed to a friend that he had "yielded to the temptations that were so numerous

---

35WB Miller to Charles Earl Johnson, 16 November 1849, 30 December 1849, Johnson Papers, Duke (first and last quotations); Thomas Cash to father, Yatkin County NC, 28 January 1854, Jarratt-Puryear Family Papers, Duke (second).
offered out before" him by the city. Indeed, he implied that Philadelphia itself was to blame for his indiscretion, replacing the crossed-out phrase "I fell" with the more innocent "was thrown in accidentally" to describe his "frolick. . . . with a few wild ones" of the town. Miller enjoyed his "few days frolick" with these young bucks of the "rich sect," but awoke from his bender "a severe pecuniary sufferer." To this as to other accounts of student rowdiness there is a curious ambivalence. On the one hand, young men knew they were violating parental expectations, sacrificing study for pleasures neither they nor their families could easily afford. But they also suggest a feeling of release from academic pressures and, more positively, the construction of genteel masculine identities through participation in exclusively male, elite rituals.36

Hence the circumstances and pressures of medical school life conspired to create a sense of student solidarity which necessarily manifested itself in hostility to outsiders—in this case, local toughs, prostitutes, and even rivals from other schools. A Carolina student reported one such incident, an "almost every day occurrence," regarding "a parcel of cabmen on whom one of the students drew a knife." After being chased to the hotel by the hundred or so cabmen, who threatened to "stone the house," the students were "taken under [the] protection" of the police. Conflict between citizens and students was such an accepted fact of Philadelphia life that Robert Peyton felt compelled to boast that none of his unusually "respectable" classmates had yet "been put in the watch house, nor have

36Robert Nelson, Philadelphia, to Eliza Nelson, Jefferson County, Va., December 17, 1843-44
they had any combats with the citizens." While violence between students also took place quite often, it had a markedly different character than the persistent ire between locals and transient students. Hence when Thomas Cash bragged that he "had but one fracas" since his arrival, when a fellow pupil pulled his moustache, he suggested how such behavior ultimately contributed to male fellowship. "I promptly hit him one lick I left him with a bleeding nose," he related. "He has been very good to me since."  

The rituals and routines of student life provided more positive ways to construct male, professional fellowship than drinking, whoring, and fighting. Students from the same area and relations often boarded together, easing the transition from home to school. Southerners also consorted with Philadelphians of like mind and station, often through friendship with other students but also through relations in the city. These ties of kinship and friendship often led to mixing in polite society and even courtship. Finally, the medical schools themselves encouraged professional camaraderie through parties hosted by faculty members. Not only did these affairs bring together a diverse group of students and professors in an informal, single-sex atmosphere, but they provided opportunities for the most urbane and ambitious students to initiate friendships with other doctors and cultivated Philadelphians. These social relations belied a common sensibility, an accepted cultural style—the culture of the city. As Thomas Bender maintains, "[m]edicine, like other professions and learned avocations, represented an emphasis

---

37W.B. Miller to Charles Earl Johnson, 30 December 1849, Johnson Papers, Duke; Robert E. Peyton, Philadelphia, to Doctor. F. (?) Peyton, Farquier County, Virginia, 31 January 1827, Peyton Family Papers, VHS; Thomas Cash to brother, Yatkin County NC, 14 December 1853, Jarratt-Puryear Family Papers, Duke.
within a shared and relatively accessible public culture that was nurtured by general associations of cognoscenti. The devotion by medical men to the leisured pursuit of science and the sociability it engendered, more than professional courtesy or medical interest, was the heart of the republic of medicine in the early nineteenth century.\footnote{Thomas Bender, "The Culture of Intellectual Life: the City and the Professions," in John Higham and Paul K. Conkin, eds., \textit{New Directions in American Intellectual History} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1979, 184.}

Choosing a congenial roommate was the most obvious way young men could ease the transition from South to North. The large number of southern students made it easy to find an agreeable companion. Virginia and North Carolina sent so many young men to Philadelphia that roommates were often acquaintances or even close friends already. Such was the situation with Neil McNair, who in 1838 shared quarters with two friends from his North Carolina county. "[I]t is a hard matter to find as closer a set of fellows as wee are," he assured his sister. Students naturally sought out other men of congenial temperament. James Madison Brannock, though "away from home & friends," declared himself "as pleasantly situated as I could hope to be" at his Sansom Street boarding house "at a convenient distance from the [Jefferson Medical] College." After leaving his original lodgings because it housed "a good many wild students," Brannock fell in with his "old friend" Campbell, the two having studied under the same physician in Virginia. Not surprisingly, southern students sought out fellow southerners with which to board. For those men without friends or relations in the city, such associations helped alleviate the almost unbearable loneliness and isolation of the stranger in the antebellum city.

When a southern family spending the year in Philadelphia placed an advertisement...
seeking southern boarders, Clarence Robards wasted little time in making "immediate application." Still, his hesitation cost him: "they had flocks of students," he informed his cousin, "all of whom came in immediately after their banner was thrown to the wind."

Students inevitably made acquaintances and friendships with other students and locals, but many went further. The medical schools' prestige, plus the personal contacts encouraged by student life, provided access in to parlors and ballrooms. Philadelphians looked after their friends' daughters while they boarded at finishing school, monitoring their health, progress, and entrance into the beau monde. Young men received similar hospitality, though with considerably more allowance for their manly autonomy. James Brannock had such a patron in George Hendrickson, an "old friend" of James's father who "treat[ed] him very kindly" during his time at the University of Pennsylvania. "He has invited me around to take tea with his family several times," the student wrote in his first letter home, but had to apologize that "as yet I have not had time to avail myself of his invitation." Students fraternized with local young men as well. Julius Haywood felt he was imposing on "a young man by the name of Page" when the Philadelphian invited him on several occasions to his home. "I refused until I was ashamed of myself," Haywood confessed, until he "resolv'd at last to brave the battery." He and three other Carolinians finally attended a ball at which were invited several other Carolinians, a number of "citizens," and four of Page's sisters, "one considered beautiful." Julius pronounced

---

39 Neil McNair to Annabella McNair (cousin), Robison County, NC 4 November 1838, McNair Papers, Duke; James M. Brannock, Philadelphia, to James Brannock, Sr., 17 November 1850, James Madison Brannock Papers, VHS; Clarence Robards to cousin, 11 November 1850, Hill Papers, Duke.
himself "thunderstruck" by at least one of the Page sisters, but his father approved for another reason. Physicians' duty, he admonished his son, "calls him to a daily intercourse with all ages, where delicacy & manner are not trivial matters." Such virtues "are only to be well acquired to any practical purpose in the proper cultivation of female society." Local friendships were not just an incidental benefit of a Philadelphia education, but a part of the learning process itself.⁴⁰

The most urbane and polished students cultivated polite society and the company of women not because it gave, in William Haywood's phrase, "a relish to all the minor enjoyments of our [men's] being," but for the pursuit of refined company itself. For those doctors who were, or sought to become, gentlemen, attending social functions was a crucial element in their education, every bit as important as committing lectures to memory and attending surgical wards. Participation in polite society confirmed their elite status and encouraged fellowship with other scientific and medical gentlemen. Socializing usually involved fellow doctors--Robert Coleman bragged to his family about his "little circle of professional friends"--but students were most pleased when they were introduced into a wider company. Not everyone could expect to be as fortunate as Daniel Lassiter, who received invitations to formal affairs from Franklin Bache and Phoebe and James Rush, but students had other venues available to them. Abner Grigsby, of an old Virginia family, accepted an invitation from a lady to "take a walk up Chestnut [Street]"

⁴⁰James M. Brannock, Philadelphia, to James Brannock, Sr., 17 November 1850, Brannock Papers, VHS; Julius Fabius Haywood, Philadelphia, to Elizabeth Haywood, Raleigh, 28 February 1825, William Haywood, Jr., Raleigh, to Fabius Julius Haywood, Phila., 5 April 1827, Haywood Family Papers, SHC.
one winter evening, thus participating in a favorite pastime of the city's smart set. He also attended numerous to teas and other functions, some of which, he pointed out, were "by special invitation." These affairs were not mere diversions from the real business of becoming a doctor; they were crucial elements in the formation of professional and personal identity. John Powell described his life away from class as a process of socialization, through a "quite extensive, but select" acquaintance with his fellow gentlemen, an association that "bears the character of imparting every thing which a young man may desire." Lectures and study were sufficient training for the mechanics of medicine, but hardly adequate for the cultivation of character and contacts.41

Professors and other gentleman physicians in Philadelphia were eager to extend professional fellowship to their young charges, thereby giving life to the republic of medicine through a new generation. This involved much more than the simple passing on of knowledge and technique. Following custom, the faculty of Philadelphia schools hosted yearly parties for their students. In these all-male affairs professors and students mingled together informally, eating, talking, and drinking in a spirit of gentlemanly fellowship. The most ambitious students strove to mingle with the professors and other invited luminaries. In 1850, Clarence Robards attended one such party held in a faculty home. "[S]even professors were present, around whom might be seen groups of

41Robert L. Coleman, Blockley Hospital, Philadelphia, to Mary Ellen Fleming, 9 March 1853, Mary E. (Fleming) Schooler Papers, Duke; Invitation cards of Dr. [Benjamin Franklin] Bache, Philadelphia January 5, 1852, and Dr. & Mrs. James Rush, January 13, 1853, Lassiter Papers, Duke; Abner Grigsby, Philadelphia, to Lucian Grigsby, Rockbridge County, Virginia, 23 December 1844, Grigsby Family Papers, VHS; John Powell to Henry Curtis, 26 November 1827 Henry Curtis Papers, VHS.
students," he observed. Not all young men were eager to mix socially with their mentors. "[I]n other parts" of the room, noted Robards, "might be observed other parties looking at engravings," and still others "sitting off in remote corners" waiting for the next course. Abner Grigsby attended a "brilliant party" at which not only "[a]ll the profs are present, [but] also some few of the medical brethren." For the most urbane and interested medical students, these parties provided uninhibited access to the community of medical gentlemen.42

The very atmosphere of these affairs announced the preeminent place of the Philadelphia medical establishment, their schools, and their students. Faculty hosts feted their students with a sumptuousness few of the latter had ever known. Dr. Wood dazzled John Owen, a University of Pennsylvania student from Tennessee, with his hospitality and extravagance. Owen practically gushed to his mother that "a servant opened the door and carried us in to a room to take off our cloaks hats & after which another servant came and showed us the way in to the parlor." Wood met his students at the entrance to the parlor, where he "gave [Owen] a harty [sic] shake of the hand and then showed me a seat." Wood's parlor, claimed Owen, "was the finest that I ever saw," featuring "looking glasses 4 in number . . . 2 of the most splendid Rivian marble mantles that I ever saw also 2 chandeliers that must have cost $500 each 2 of the most suburb window curtains and every thing else in accordance." Mississippi's Clarence Robards, from Jefferson College, attended another splendid affair in 1850 given in a "large, elegant parlour." The variety

42Clarence Robards to cousin, 11 November 1850, Hill Papers, Duke; Abner Grigsby, Philadelphia, to Lucian Grigsby, Rockbridge County, Virginia 23 December 1844, Grigsby Papers, VHS.
of food and drink, not surprisingly, most of all impressed these "starved out students."

Abner Grigsby, who did not suffer from want, observed that the "ice cream vanished far more rapidly than a mist before the rising sun and not one of the huge pyramids of cake were suffered to remain . . . not a vestige of it remained." Liquor flowed freely as well. At Dr. Wood's party servants poured "wine and when [guests] had as much as they wanted of this, the servants bought champaign wine in abundance." While sons were understandably reluctant to emphasize this part of the entertainment—Alexander Edmiston claimed that he and his roommate were "sober as judges" upon leaving Dr. Woodhouse's party in 1810—spirits were an essential part of male fellowship. Hence when John Owen finally excused himself from his professor's rooms, his friends praised both their host "Dr. Wood and his wine."\(^4^3\)

Masculine exclusivity was the most conspicuous feature of these affairs. The absence of women gave a tone to medical parties that set them starkly apart from other gatherings, a quality that socially sophisticated students did not fail to recognize. Since these parties were "composed entirely of students, [they] denominated them, stag parties," noted one southerner. The absence of women eliminated certain restraints upon men's behavior, producing a more rowdy, ill-mannered, and less self-conscious assembly. And while men enjoyed female companionship in designated contexts, they plainly enjoyed the freedom of action bestowed by all-male company. Abner Grigsby mingled socially

\(^4^3\)John D. Owen, Philadelphia, to Mrs. Mary Owen, Carthage, Tennessee 20 January 1847, Campbell Family Papers, Duke; Abner Grigsby, to Lucian Grigsby, 23 December 1844, Grigsby Papers, VHS; Clarence Robards to cousin, 11 November 1850, Hill Papers, Duke; Alexander Edmiston, Phila., to Miss Margaret M. Edmiston, near Lexington, Ky., 18 December 1808, Edmiston Papers, Filson Club.
with women often during his student days in Philadelphia, but wrote that at school parties, "fortunately, no ladies are seen." Unlike the crowds at mixed parties, he characterized the men-only throng at Joseph Pancoast's mansion as "a devouring multitude," because "there are no ladies to throw any restraint around the young men when they get a hold of a big plate of oysters." While feminine influence would force a measure of decorum upon even hungry young men, they suffered here under no such restrictions, and thus "took [the oysters] standing," the better to preserve access to the next course.\textsuperscript{44}

The rounds of classes, surgical observations, and residencies did much more than train students to conduct their profession, just as parties, "frolicking," and other forms of recreation served as more than a mere respite from studies. Both academics and society prepared students to enter the republic of medicine--to become both doctors and gentlemen. Just as they expressed their urbanity by leaving the South for the best education available in America, some men maintained their cosmopolitanism by cultivating the friendship of fellow doctors from the Philadelphia circle. George Otis, Jr., like his friend Daniel Lassiter a student of Dr. Jackson at the University of Pennsylvania and a Virginian, urged Lassiter to make the acquaintance of Dr. Patrick Cabell, another resident of Richmond and a graduate of the medical college there. Not only was Cabell a distinguished professional whose thesis was to be published, but he was a good companion, being "amiable and full of intelligence." Such friendships were crucially

\textsuperscript{44}Clarence Robards to cousin, 11 November 1850, Hill Papers, Duke; Abner Grigsby to Lucian Grigsby, 23 December 1844, Grigsby Papers, VHS.
important to men of learning, who maintained their community of refinement through professional ties, learned societies, and prolific letter writing. Thus when Josiah Nott advised James Gage that his "time and money will have been thrown away" if he attended Pennsylvania, "for here [in the South] science and mental cultivation weigh not a feather in the scale of reputation," he was speaking as a sectional partisan, not a man of science. If men of means did not find the status they craved in the South, they could receive it by corresponding and socializing with others in the North and elsewhere. Southern doctors, especially those trained in the North, had available to them a network of gentlemen interested in science, medicine, and intellectual pursuits that knew no bounds but the reach of the post office.45

Besides, learned men were far less interested in receiving the approbation of common people than they were of their intellectual and social peers. Moreover, they craved not merely intellectual fellowship but the social perks of elite status. Thus did Benjamin Rush thank his protégé David Ramsay for "opening a correspondence between Dr. [Alexander] Garden and" himself, vowing to answer his "polite letter as soon as I meet with anything in the line of our profession worthy of his Attention." He recognized Ramsay's social ambitions as well, hearing "with great pleasure of [Ramsay's] progress in reputation & in the esteem of your fellow citizens" in his adopted Charleston. "I anticipate your rising on some future day to the first honors of your State," Rush wrote.

"In your career towards political fame and importance, you will soon lose sight of your old friend!" Nearly seventy-five years later Richard Arnold expressed nearly identical sentiments when he visited Philadelphia for a conference. While he was honored to be amongst "so many distinguished medical men," he was also "pleased to find that men who are distinguished in their profession here are not afraid of a little recreation." His companions convinced him to leave his beloved opera in the third act to visit a local medical club, the billiard rooms, dining room, liquor selection, and general luxury of which dispelled his provincial notion that the city's medical establishment was "all as stiff as if done up in buckram." Ramsay and Arnold, men of ambition and cultivation, craved the honor to which their formal medical training qualified them. They did not distinguish between their status as doctors and gentlemen, but basked in the learning, conversation, and leisure to which they were privileged.46

Not all, or even most, of the young men who studied in Philadelphia entered or hoped to enter the fraternity of medical gentlemen. They merely sought to graduate, to qualify themselves to practice medicine in their small southern communities. Like John Dabney, who thought "I shall soon be able to kill people with some skill, if I make a proper use of my time," they were content to take their degree and leave Philadelphia, never to return or retain any ties to their student days. For the brightest and most ambitious, however, education held out the promise of initiation into the professional

fraternity. John Owen captured this sense of possibility when he described his oral examinations to his Virginia mentor, Henry Curtis, a process he characterized as "[t]he most pleasurable time, I have ever spent." With the exception of one professor "whose visage, bears somewhat the stamp of terror," Owen "felt as if [he] were surrounded by near relations, either of whom, would act the part of father, and if necessary lift me out of any slight difficulty into which the confusion & dismay consequent on such an occasion, might place me." Though medical orals were notoriously lax affairs, as the final impediment to graduation they still evoked trepidation. They could also, as Owen's account suggests, dramatize the young man's transformation from apprentice to peer.47

The ferocity of sectional rhetoric aside, initiation into the national medical fraternity did not require tortured negotiations on the part of most southern men, who remained professionals, gentlemen, and southerners with little difficulty. Though the example of the student secession of 1859-60 suggests otherwise, medical men were remarkably skilled at balancing their parallel identities.48 They were proud of their southern heritage and the accomplishments of their region while maintaining the urban, cosmopolitan sensibility of the medical gentleman. Coleman Rogers' plea to Samuel Brown, enjoining him to "write to me as often as your time will permit[,][i]nform me what new surgical books that was published up to the time I was last in Philadelphia . . . [and] send them to me," embodied the desire of medical men on the frontier to maintain

47John Dabney, Philadelphia, to sister, 13 March 1818, Dabney Papers, SHC; John Powell to Henry Curtis, March 9, 1829, Curtis Papers, VHS.

48The exodus of southern students from Philadelphia will be treated in detail in chapter 8.
state-of-the-art standards of professionalism, bringing, as it were, the city to the country. Yet he also charged Brown to "remember me to all the professors in that school, and also Dr. & Mrs. Caldwell. Inform Dr. Chapman that I am in hopes I shall see him again before many years, I am much attached to him. He treated me with great hospitality and friendship when in Phila." Learning and sociability, practice and leisure: these ideals animated the medical elite, North and South, into an intellectual brotherhood founded in Philadelphia lecture halls. Hence on the eve of secession Richard Arnold wrote to a New York friend that "the people of the North are a foreign and hostile people to us and I wish no alliance with them," yet after five years of invective and carnage he "stopped four days in Philadelphia & was most kindly & warmly treated by my old friends." Perhaps victory made Philadelphia doctors magnanimous, but perhaps, too, they offered a heartfelt embrace to a prodigal son. For even in war, Arnold remained one of them.49

---

Table 6-1: Graduates of Jefferson Medical College, 1826-1849

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1826-30</th>
<th>1831-35</th>
<th>1836-40</th>
<th>1841-45</th>
<th>1846-49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=139</td>
<td>N=195</td>
<td>N=505</td>
<td>N=385</td>
<td>N=717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0 (1)</td>
<td>0 (2)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NJ, NY, CT, MA, ME, NH, VT, OH, MI, WI, IA, IN, DC
Table 6-2: Total Enrollment, Jefferson Medical College, 1850-1861

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1850-51</th>
<th>1855-56</th>
<th>1859-60</th>
<th>1860-61</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=502</td>
<td>N=510</td>
<td>N=630</td>
<td>N=443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North*</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KY</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TN</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AL</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0(2)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FL</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TX</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARK</td>
<td>0(1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6-2--Continued

*NJ, NY, CT, MA, ME, NH, VT, OH, MI, WI, IA, IN, DC.

Table 6-3: Enrollment, University of Pennsylvania Medical School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Southern States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1830-1831</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>204 (48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1840-1841</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>281 (63%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850-1851</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>224 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860-1861</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>222 (42%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 7
SCIENCE AND SOCIABILITY: THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,
1784-1841

Philadelphia "is no longer the place it was," William Henry Furness insisted upon the
death of John Vaughan in late 1841. The Unitarian minister was expressing not only the
sentiments of his Unitarian congregation, but of gentlemen scientists all over the United
States. Vaughan had been the Treasurer of the American Philosophical Society since
1791 and its Librarian since 1803, but his formal position belied his real importance. He
was the soul of the Society, the last living member who could actually count the Society's
founder, Benjamin Franklin, as a friend and colleague. But Vaughan's passing marked an
event of greater significance. Philadelphia's circle of amateur scientists would not be
reconstructed on the basis of "influence and honour," as Furness hoped. Professionalism,
discrete disciplines, and impersonal standards of merit were already beginning to supplant
the genteel character of the American science of Jefferson, Rittenhouse, Franklin, and
Vaughan.

Similarly, his death dealt a blow to the personal networks and cosmopolitan spirit
that tied Philadelphia's genteel community to like-minded elites throughout young
America--especially in the southern states. "Seldom does a private individual make
himself so extensively known," Furness observed. "[W]e can hear every where some one
who knew him exclaiming, 'Ah! the kind old man is gone at last. I can never forget him. I
rejoice in the remembrance of his friendship." In particular, the intimate connections of learning and sociability linking the Society to the South never recovered.¹

During Vaughan's long stewardship the American Philosophical Society (hereafter referred to as APS) came to embody two essential elements of male gentility—learning and sociability—with the emphasis on the latter quality. As Simon Baatz explains, "science in Philadelphia was restricted to gentlemen-savants with wealth and leisure. There was virtually no route to science . . . open to the tyro who lacked a connection to the Philadelphia elite." Merit, though hardly insignificant, was alone insufficient to guarantee access. Wealth and, particularly, connections, won aspirants access to genteel scientific circles. The APS, concludes Baatz, "as a patrician organization, rarely if ever opened its doors to a supplicant who had not already made his mark, if not in science, then in some equally illustrious field such as banking or politics."²

The American Philosophical Society did more than provide an ideal of genteel fellowship for its members and other aspiring gentlemen throughout the nation. Other organizations consciously patterned themselves on the Philadelphia model in promoting


science and sociability, but the Society actively sought out members among learned elite men from all corners of the country, the South in particular. In doing so, the Philadelphia society followed the medical schools of the University of Pennsylvania and Jefferson Medical College in fashioning a nationwide network of learned gentlemen. Both the schools and the APS explicitly encouraged national identity, patriotism, and the development of an American science worthy of respect around the world. As Ronald Story has shown for the Boston Athenaeum, the organizers of that society established an exclusive community of elite gentlemen of similar fortunes and worldviews, thereby perpetuating the foundations of Brahmin economic and ideological dominance. The designs of the APS were less economic than cultural, though in reaching out to men outside of Philadelphia it initiated men of means almost exclusively.

The Philadelphia society resembled the Boston Athenaeum in establishing a community of gentlemen, but two differences were more significant than the superficial similarities. The APS's community embraced a national, not merely metropolitan, constituency, and its most influential members enjoyed particularly warm relationships with the South. Second, in place of the bourgeois Brahmin creed it promoted a more traditional eighteenth-century notion of genteel manhood quite congenial to prevailing southern ideas of masculine behavior. In pursuing both science and sociability, the American Philosophical Society before 1842 came very close to realizing the ideal of the Republic of Letters, at least so far as civility is concerned. As Robert Darnton has shown for the French Enlightenment, the ideal of intellectual fraternity had little connection with the reality of Grub Street. While Voltaire, D'Alembert, and other intellectuals promoted
enlightened reform from the French Academy, those rejected by the intellectual establishment thundered against their erstwhile idols in angry, libelous pamphlets devoured by the French reading public.\(^3\)

Cosmopolitanism also compelled APS leaders to recruit outside of Pennsylvania. The Society's fathers and subsequent leaders shared an enlightenment faith in the cooperation of learned men. Not only science, but the political and economic progress that emerged from the discovery and promulgation of scientific principles, depended on a community of gentlemen. Political economists might insist that the invisible hand of market forces produced personal well-being and national wealth, but few believed that such competition ought to be extended to the republic of letters. Just as APS leaders extended membership to European men out of a spirit of camaraderie, so did they reach out, first to their fellow colonists, then to fellow citizens. "Men of Learning and Enquiry should turn their thoughts and attention to [scientific and technological] subjects," the Society's first Transactions reasoned, because "[t]he bulk of mankind... seldom turn their thoughts to experiments, and scarcely ever adopt a new measure, until they are well

assured of success and advantage from it, or are set upon it by those, who have weight and influence with them." Good science, like charity, began at home.4

Throughout the first seventy years of its existence, the American Philosophical Society acted upon these cosmopolitan principles. On the surface, though, it looked like a Philadelphia club. Its leaders, with the exception of Thomas Jefferson's long presidency, were culled exclusively from Philadelphia's upper crust. From 1770-1861 over two thirds (67%) of its American members were Pennsylvanians. The lion's share of these lived in Philadelphia, though the APS insisted from the beginning that it served a national constituency. Since "Philadelphia . . . hath, by its central situation, not only a ready communication by land, with our Continental-Colonies; but likewise with our Islands, by vessels employed in carrying on our trade," Franklin and his fellow founders reasoned, their city was uniquely situated to appeal to men of mind from all the North American colonies. A substantial minority of the APS's American membership--33%--came from outside the host city. Of those, 107 men, just under 40% of the Americans outside Pennsylvania, were southerners. Most of the others came from two states, new York and Massachusetts.5

The APS’s nationalizing project, and particularly its close ties to the Old South, can only be understood in the context of John Vaughan’s life and work. He was born in 1756, the son of English liberals Samuel and Sarah Vaughan. Intimates of Benjamin

4Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Held at Philadelphia, for Promoting Useful Knowledge 1 (1769-1771), Preface, xiv, xv.

5Ibid., Preface, xvi;
Franklin and other colonial republicans, they sympathized with the American cause during the Revolution. His brother Benjamin served Lord Shelburne as a private envoy during the peace negotiations and may have introduced his younger brother to the American negotiators. John probably did not require their acquaintance to cultivate republican principles, however. He received his education partly under Joseph Priestley, the noted English radical and freethinker. When Priestly emigrated to America in the 1790s, John Vaughan was already there. John Jay had introduced him to influential patriots, including Robert Morris, for whom Vaughan came to work in 1782. Vaughan loved America, an affection which pleased Morris. Even that conservative Philadelphian opposed the emigration of John’s father on the grounds that “a mind formed and trained so long as Mr. Vaughan’s hath been under Monarchial Government cannot at once relish the manners and customs of Republicans.” His son suffered under no such restraints. “America,” promised Jay, “affords ample field to a young mind trained like yours to observation; I find you are cultivating it, and already begin to reap.” Vaughan made the most of the patronage of Jay and Morris, even while such traditional practices were coming into disrepute for their allegedly unrepulican implications. Indeed, Vaughan implicitly thanked Jay and Morris by acting as a patron for aspiring young gentleman-scientists throughout his long life.

---

Vaughan went into business for himself after Morris' failure in 1784. "I was in the right when I said, that political men did not always prove to be the best merchants and bankers," his brother Benjamin admonished. Morris "was a free liver," he cautioned, "not to mention that he was a man of great expense." Whether from Morris' example or not, for the rest of his life Vaughan lived in spartan simplicity in his apartments in Philosophical Hall, adjacent to the State House on Chestnut Street. By 1787 Vaughan was an APS member and a successful merchant, his long silences to his English family "represent[ing]] to me," his younger brother empathized, "that your engagements are of such a nature that it would be impossible to ask or expect a line from you." Vaughan had also won the trust of some of the South's wealthiest planter-merchants, often acting as their representatives for transactions with Europe and with Philadelphia banks. Vaughan exploited his position as a merchant-republican to supply his contacts with tracts, books, news, and gossip of the learned world. He solidified his ties to the new nation's establishment by supporting the Federalists during the ratification debates, though he took pains to avoid the partisan rancor of the early republic by retaining his friendships to Jefferson and other republicans. In her account of her husband George Logan, the prominent Philadelphia republican, Deborah Logan singled out the "benevolent" Vaughan as a "benefit & blessing to Soc[iety]" because he, with a few other "federal friends. . . . kindly visited, & cared for me" during the Logans' bitter period of "political

Indeed, it was this universally-acknowledged spirit of "benevolence" that most distinguished Vaughan from other gentleman scientists and made him renowned in the American scientific community of the early Republic. After an 1818 visit to Philadelphia that Vaughan choreographed to introduce the Harvard president to every mathematician of note in the city, Jared Sparks was almost breathless in his praise of Vaughan, whom he had never before met. To a friend he described him as "the most active member of the Philosophic Society, cicerone and friend to all the strangers who visit the city, occasional preacher in the Unitarian Church and parish minister to all the poor of that society, . . . recommender-general of . . . every sort of personage, whose characters are good, and who can be benefitted by his aid." Caleb Forshey wrote to Vaughan in 1841, just before the latter’s death, “not that I have anything interesting to communicate, but that I may renew my assurances of gratitude, for the kindnesses and attentions I received at your hands when a stranger in Philadelphia.” He asked the elderly librarian to watch out for his friend J.W. Monette, a Natchez physician seeking a publisher in Philadelphia, because Vaughan held “the keys to whatever may interest the mind of the inquiring stranger to Philadelphia.”

---

7Benjamin Vaughan to John Vaughan, August 12, 1784; William Vaughan to John Vaughan, February 3, 1787 both box 1; "Extract from Mrs. Deborah Logan’s biographical account of George Logan,” box 2, Madeira-Vaughan Papers, APS. On Vaughan’s business connections with southern families at this time, see Henry Laurens to Vaughan, February 13, 1787; for his Federal sympathies, George Washington to Vaughan, December 27, 1788, both box 1, Madeira-Vaughan Papers, APS.

8Herbert Baxter Adams, ed., Life and Writings of Jared Sparks, Comprising Selections from His Journals and Correspondence (Boston and New York: Houghton
Vaughan’s interest in cultivating connections between the learned men of the leisure class emerged from his commitment to foster the power and prestige of his adopted land. At the service mourning his passing, William Furness characterized Vaughan’s life "as a sphere of benevolence and friendship." Vaughan constructed of an American community of gentleman through his own network of friends and acquaintances. Joshua Francis Fisher remembered that “in the days of Steam-Boats, and when the routes North and South were by the river, he was on the watch for strangers at every arrival, and at once became the welcome [...] for every person of note, or those who came in any way recommended.” Vaughan viewed his cultivation of friends as an end in itself, but he also believed that the establishment of a network of scientific gentlemen would further the interests of the new nation. In congratulating Jefferson upon his election as APS president, Vaughan told his friend, “your Elevation will tend much to the encouragement of science in this Country.” In the absence of European-style state support, American science had to depend upon the activity and financial support of its upper class.®

Hence Vaughan’s major contribution to the APS and American science was not as a researcher or explorer, but as an organizer. “Though not a man of science or literature,”

Mifflin Co., 1893), 133-134; Forshey to Vaughan, June 6, 1841, APS Arch.

Furness said, "Mr. Vaughan was a dear lover of both. All plans for the promotion of knowledge had his generous support. He loved to bring men of science and learning acquainted with one another, and to assist all literary investigations, and all sound scientific projects." As he told Jefferson, the absence of state support necessitated by republican economy compelled organizations like the APS to rely on private funding. Ideologically committed to privilege and dominated by Philadelphia gentlemen, the APS had little choice but to seek support in the traditional, eighteenth-century style of personal appeals and patronage. "Pecuniary rewards are not to be had in the present state of Society here, we therefore more strongly require patronage & countenance--it has hitherto been sparingly given if not withheld altogether," Vaughan reminded his friend. His indefatigable pursuit of learned travelers emerged from his desire to promote American science through the "patronage" of interested gentlemen.10

Though Vaughan committed himself to promoting American science in every region, he enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the South, and with the Palmetto State in particular. Vaughan provided financial services to his Carolina friends. He managed Henry Middleton's affairs while he served as minister to Russia, made purchases for Thomas and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney during the 1790s, and kept watch on the Philadelphia-area properties of Ralph Izard and his family. Other southerners also exploited Vaughan's connections. Samuel Brown and Thomas Percy's New Orleans factor communicated to them through Vaughan when they were in

---

10Furness, Discourse. Delivered on the Occasion of the Death of John Vaughan. 12-13; Vaughan to Jefferson, 28 March 1801, Jefferson Papers, LC.
Philadelphia in 1822, and Thomas Jefferson used Vaughan as his European contact in replenishing his library after he sold his original collection to the federal government after the War of 1812. Vaughan provided at least some of these services free of charge. Over three years of conducting business with Vaughan, William Dunbar could not “find any charge of commission” after checking over his books. Dunbar had to beg Vaughan to take his money. “I have no right to expect this sacrifice in the line of your regular business,” he chided him. “I must request the favor of you to correct this omission.” Indeed, Vaughan kept Dunbar “daily” supplied with “small objects” without “retain[ing] in [his] hands a moderate sum.” A friend who knew Vaughan well suggested that this was his regular practice with his friends and clients. To his southern friends, noted J. Francis Fisher, “he offered more services than it was possible for him to perform.”

In appreciation for these business services his southern clients were anxious to donate articles of interest to the Society. “[I]f the Society lost in one form,” Fisher noted, alluding to Vaughan’s habit of conflating the Society’s finances with his own, “it gained more wealth, for he was an indefatigable solicitor for its collections, and gained many presents and bequests in return for his own kind attentions.” Hence John Izard Middleton donated several rare books, some rare plants, and “other small matter from

---

So. Carolina” in 1816; George Izard gave the APS his copy of a rare botanical work; Henry Middleton offered Vaughan a steady stream of Russian curiosities; and Joel Poinsett, wishing to “advance by every means in my power the very laudable design of the Institution,” kept Vaughan busy both by donating Mexican specimens and introducing Mexican naturalists.¹²

As significant as Vaughan’s business connections with southern clients were, his natural sociability and friendship with several leading Carolina families were doubtless more important in cementing his ties to the region. He was “particularly intimate with the colony of Carolinians on Spruce Street,” remembered one socialite As if these throngs of Manigaults, Izards, Middletons, and Morrices was not enough, “he claimed all their friends as his own” as well. His ties to the state were apparently well known. When he sent some poetry by way of Vaughan to Mrs. Phillips, a boarding school dame in Philadelphia, James Ferguson enclosed an extra copy for Vaughan, assuming he would appreciate them since “these poems are the production of a native of Carolina.”¹³

Vaughan had other connections to South Carolina besides his ties to the first families of Charleston. His friendship with Thomas Cooper solidified his connections

¹²“Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher,” HSP; John Izard Middleton to Vaughan, May 12, 1826; George Izard to Vaughan, June 8, 1818; Henry Middleton to Vaughan, April 13, 1831; Joel Poinsett to Vaughan, April 20, 1827 (volunteering to donate material), March 5, 1829 (introducing Mr. Del Rio of Mexico), all APS Arch.

¹³James Ferguson, Charleston, to JV, Phila., 6 April 1817, Madeira-Vaughan-Collection, APS.
with the upcountry gentry. Even strangers knew of Vaughan’s affection for Carolina, Cooper reported. In 1821 the academic told Vaughan that a member of the local gentry, “Col. John Taylor, whom you do not personally know,” had heard that Cooper was entertaining Henry Lea. Upon hearing that Lea was “a friend of yours [Vaughan’s],” Taylor offered Lea warm hospitality “as a duty incumbent on the Gentlemen of S. Carolina toward Mr. Vaughan.” William Preston’s expressions of esteem suggest how Vaughan’s partiality to Carolina helped the APS solidify its ties to the South in a web of personal obligations. “We of the South are always your debtors, and I beg of you to give me whenever you can, a chance of [evening up] some of our obligations,” Preston entreated, addressing the Philadelphian as a fellow gentleman. “When you have a friend going South do send him to me and if I can [I will] contribute [something?] to your Athenaeum.”¹⁴

Though these Carolinians addressed Vaughan as self-conscious members of the southern gentry, they were also willing participants in a national network of amateur scientist-gentlemen. William Johnson, the Carolina jurist, was so enthusiastic upon hearing of his election that he proposed a new method of voting that would more effectively integrate the “dispersed” membership. “Much advantage,” he suggested to Vaughan, “results from drawing the minds of a number of able men to act at the same time. . . . It is drawing the rays of genius to a focus.” Indeed, Vaughan’s methods of tying gentlemen to the society by personal bonds of sociability and obligation were as effective

¹⁴Thomas Cooper, to John Vaughan, 28 June 1821; William Preston, to John Vaughan, July 12, n.d., both APS Misc MS.
in his day as they were obsolete just a few years later. Out of 22 South Carolinians elected to the APS before 1861, only one—Geddings—was elected after Vaughan’s death. No Carolinians--from either the North or South--joined the APS after 1848. Only 13 out of 107 antebellum southern members were inducted after Vaughan’s death in 1841, including 4 (of 30) Virginians and 5 (of 24) Marylanders. The APS’s efforts to recruit in the South peaked during Vaughan’s tenure. The organization and the man were, in this respect at least, indistinguishable. The Society’s links to the South were not impersonal and institutional, such as they were in more modern learned societies. When Vaughan died the APS’s links to the South largely died with him because the personal obligations that bound the South to the Philadelphia group could not be recovered.\textsuperscript{15}

Vaughan’s personal qualities did much to establish southern loyalty to the Society, but his efforts would have come to little had planter-scientists not shared his cosmopolitan vision. Before Vaughan came onto the scene, the APS had already established a claim to intellectual leadership recognized by southerners. James Ramsay, the son of the Philadelphia-trained Charleston physician David Ramsay, donated a copy of his late father’s \textit{History of the United States} (1816-1817) to the APS, both because "it was usual with the Author to present copies of his different works to the Society," and also out of "respect for the first Scientific association of our country." With little sense of state or regional jealousy, American men of letters believed themselves engaged in a common endeavor. Affiliation with the APS made all its members denizens of

\textsuperscript{15}William Johnson to John Vaughan, April 24, 1811, APS Arch.
Philadelphia by proxy. When Dr. Samuel Brown, then a professor at Kentucky's Transylvania University, procured a skull of uncertain origin that some naturalists believed was related to the famous mammoth skeleton in Charles Wilson Peale's Philadelphia museum, he sent it to the Society. Brown assumed, as he told John Vaughan, that "some of our learned naturalists will favor the world with a correct description of it." Other gentleman scientists, particularly from the South, continued to see Philadelphia as their intellectual home for decades.16

Southern scientists were usually deferential in their relations with their Philadelphia peers. Many of them had been educated in Philadelphia or had been integrated into its learned community during visits there. Strong bonds of friendship or kinship tied them to the Quaker city. Both family and fraternity ensured Charles Short's loyalty to Philadelphia and the APS. His uncle, William Short, Jefferson's former confidential secretary, lived in the city as a socialite bachelor, and Charles had lived there "as a member of [John Vaughan's] family" in his youth. Such relationships created "many obligations" for Short, as they did for other southern men of mind, that helped maintain the APS in its preeminent position among gentleman scientists. "Should anything worthy of appearing in so learned a repository occur to me or my western friends, I will not be wanting in the will to communicate it," assured Short, whose deference typified the attitude of most southern scientists toward their Philadelphia

16James Ramsay to John Vaughan, September 25, 1818; Samuel Brown to John Vaughan, June 10, 1802, both in American Philosophical Society Archives, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia (hereafter APS Archives).
peers. 17

In a similar spirit, southerners and westerners looked to the APS for their model when they established their own learned societies in the early Republic. "Philadelphia," notes historian John Greene, "set the pattern of institutional development for the sciences in the urban centers of the new nation." Gentleman scientists like Elliott saw in the prospering, respected Society a mirror of their own aspirations. When the South Carolina naturalist established his society, he appealed to Vaughan and the APS to publicize the founding and solicit aid. The Philadelphians, Elliott recognized, were best placed "to aid us with your own observations or discoveries." They were also able to publicize the society's goals to other men of means, as Elliott recognized in asking Vaughan to "forward our purposes by communicating its contents to all within the circle of your acquaintance, whom you may suppose able to render us assistance." Elliott further emulated the Philadelphia society's example by endorsing the cosmopolitan ideal advanced by the APS. "It is only by the union of many that such institutions can be rendered valuable," he declared. "They are formed to concentrate the diffused and detached fragments of human knowledge, to collect the information which the modesty or indolence of individuals might otherwise permit to perish in silence." 18

Elliott's brave words belied the Carolina Society's weakness. His efforts to keep it alive shed further light on the South's pace within the orbit of Philadelphia science.

17C[harles] W. Short to John Vaughan, October 25, 1830, APS Archives.

18Stephen Elliott to John Vaughan, circular letter concerning the formation of the Literary and Philosophical Society of South Carolina, APS Collection of Broadsides No. 80. n.p., n.d. [c.1814]
Charleston's first families proved much more willing to applaud speeches than contribute funds and exert effort. "[W]e meet with so little encouragement from our wealthy and fashionable citizens," he complained, that he doubted the enterprise's success. Six years later Elliott, desperate to save the fledgling group, appealed to Joel Poinsett, as the most prominent "public man" of the Palmetto State, for help. "I begin to feel anxious as to our prospects," Elliott wrote, charging other members of being "irregular in [their] exertions." Elliott pleaded with Poinsett to intervene with Joseph Hopkinson in borrowing a painting from some of his French contacts, a loan of which had helped the Society "gain . . . so much ground in public opinion" the year before. "I should be sorry now to lose our advantage," he told Poinsett, hinting at an "intimation" of Hopkinson that, when the Society had returned the first painting, "another would be sent in its stead." As if to underscore the pathetic state of a "scientific" society that depended upon the loan of French artwork to maintain public support, Elliott lamely suggested to Poinsett that perhaps "some hint or revival of the subjects is only wanting to accomplish this object and obtain for us some painting that would add great interest to our exhibition."

Compared with the hand-to-mouth existence of similar learned societies throughout the South and West, even the relatively under funded APS seemed like a rock of stability.19

The cosmopolitan ideal represented by the APS had deep resonance with its members, especially with those outside the Philadelphia area or on the frontier, threatened by intellectual isolation. More significantly, the urbanity of the APS affirmed an elemental impulse within the self-image of upper-class American men. The Philadelphia society fostered connections between gentleman scientists. Learned men eagerly exploited its facility to make them part of a larger intellectual enterprise and forged an identity less sectional or national than Western or Atlantic. In fashioning such an "imagined community," the APS promoted values associated with the colonial gentry--leisure, learning, sociability, privilege, and urbanity itself--fast losing currency in the dynamic years of the Jacksonian era. The advancement of these ideals by Vaughan and his colleagues lent reality to the cosmopolitan ideal and helped maintain anachronistic values well into the nineteenth century, but it also marginalized the Society. As professionalization took hold of American science and medicine in the 1850s and in subsequent decades, the APS faded in significance to serious research scientists. As Walter Gross, a historian of the APS observes, by the late 1840s "the Society itself played almost no role in physics, chemistry, and mathematics. ... [The APS] was an amorphous, eighteenth-century learned society. It had neither the funds, the equipment, nor the organization to contribute much to the developing 'hard' sciences." Nor, Gross might have noted, did it have the inclination. Such a commitment would have contradicted the privileged assumptions on which the Society was founded.20

20The phrase "imagined communities" is Benedict Anderson's, from Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso,
Yet these same ideals made the APS very attractive to traditional gentlemen who longed for a community of similarly learned men. The act of connecting men of science together through correspondence and recommendation may seem to have been unremarkable, but in an age of uncertain, slow communication and great distances the relationship was crucial. Charles Short's ambition to "form a correspondence and exchange of specimens, with almost all of the Botanists of our own country, and several of the more eminent in Great Britain and on the Continent," suggests both the elemental nature of and the significance scientists imparted to the undertaking. To his delight, Short found his correspondents shared his commitment to cooperative enterprise. The author of *Plantae Asiatica*, for example, proved to be "on all occasions prompt, liberal, and communicative." When the French naturalist Louis Gay-Lussac planned a trip to the southwest in 1838, he secured letters of introduction from John Vaughan to Daniel Drake in Cincinnati, Charles Short in Lexington, Archibald and William Dunbar in Natchez, and William H. Robertson in Mobile. Northern scientists had a stronger institutional network upon which to coordinate their endeavors, but southern scientists, especially those on the southwestern frontier, lacked the urban foundations necessary to maintain intellectual stimulation. Without the APS, these men would have been largely cut off from the world.

of science.  

The effectiveness with which the APS fashioned a community of gentleman-scientists centered in Philadelphia is particularly evident in the case of William Dunbar, the aristocratic Scottish-born astronomer who in 1771 emigrated to the United States. He eventually settled in the wilderness around Natchez, where he spent his time building and maintaining his plantation, adding to his slave labor force, surveying the southwestern frontier, and conducting observations and research in botany, astronomy, mathematics, and zoology. He also submitted twelve manuscripts to the APS, in which he was inducted in 1803, between then and his death in 1810.  

Like other learned men on the southern frontier, Dunbar depended on his friend John Vaughan for books, supplies, apparatus, financial assistance, and news of the scientific world. Financial management was fundamental, both for continued research and simple survival in the near-wilderness of the southwest. “I must again have recourse to your obliging services in drawing some money from England,” Dunbar wrote Vaughan around 1806. Dunbar instructed Vaughan to exchange the notes at the Bank of the United States--just a block from Vaughan’s apartments at the Philosophical Society--while keeping $100 “for [the] usual object,” probably the procurement of books and a commission for Vaughan. Reflecting upon the

21L. Gay-Lussac to John Vaughan, November 28, 1838; Charles Short to Vaughan, December 16, 1839, both APS Misc MS.

uncertainty of southwestern transportation, Dunbar advised his friend to send his money in $100 notes “by 2 or 3 different mails.” Soon before his death Dunbar requested Vaughan to “lose no time in ordering the spinning machine. . . . It will save us considerable time and expense in our domestic manufacturing.” If Americans had not yet pirated this technology from the British, Dunbar viewed it so “highly advantageous to us who manufacture all our wool into winter clothing” that he was willing to draw up the blueprints himself from memory and have Vaughan contract its manufacture. To many southern scientists, research was inextricably combined with the mundane concerns of frontier survival.  

On the other hand, Dunbar’s other requests suggest the juxtaposition of refinement and isolation that characterized the Old Southwest. “What I wish is a neat handsome, well finished Carriage,” he wrote in 1806. The exact style of the conveyance he left to his Philadelphia friend, though he “observ[ed] only that neither Mr. [Stephen] Minor nor myself have any objections to neatness or even elegance, altho’ we disapprove of gaudy show.” The aristocratic Dunbar only regretted that “I presume we Republicans must not think of coats of arms.” Two years later Dunbar entrusted his friend with the education of his son “who has not enjoyed those advantages of education in this Country which he ought to possess at his years.” Dunbar knew just where to end his son for an education befitting his birth and station. New Orleans would not do. “My present view is to bestow upon him the education of a Gentleman and of a man of Science if he shall

---

23"Extract of a Letter from Mr. Dunbar to Mr. Vaughan," [1810], APS Arch.
be found capable of acquiring it.” Dunbar’s injunction to Vaughan suggests the common assumptions and aspirations that bound the two— one in Natchez, the other in Philadelphia— into a community of gentlemen. “I have informed my son William that he is to pay obedience to your Commands as to a Father, & you must be sensible that the exercise of your authority over him as if he were a Child of your own will confer upon me one of the greatest obligations.” When he thus entrusted his son, the two men had known each other only five years.24

Vaughan’s facility at supplying the expatriate Scotsman with scientific supplies and learned correspondents ranked far higher on Dunbar’s scale of priorities than business services, however essential. Thanking Vaughan for connecting him with Alexander Hamilton, Dunbar averred “I shall much value Mr. Hamilton’s correspondence & will receive most gratefully the seeds or plants of the tallow & tea trees.” In the same letter he solicited Vaughan’s assistance in “cultivat[ing] a correspondence with my old friend Mr. [Andrew] Ellicott,” boasting that “I am now in possession of my six feet reflecting telescope & other valuable instruments, & will endeavor to profit from the instructions which he is so well qualified to give.” Vaughan often acted as a middleman in Dunbar’s transactions with London suppliers, as when Dunbar instructed them to “forward to your care articles of that nature (“instruments books &c from that quarter”), [since] vessels are not frequent from Lond. to New Orleans & risk & insurance considerable.” Though Dunbar depended on Vaughan’s financial services to maintain his

genteel lifestyle in frontier Mississippi, he valued the cosmopolitan connections the APS provided far more. Conflating the ends of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, Dunbar thanked his correspondents for their aid, “being fully persuaded that the most perfect harmony will reign among you, upon which will greatly depend the valuables [sic] & discoveries & information expected by the Genl. Govt. & by our Country from your successful labors.”

Dunbar was hardly alone in expressing these sentiments. Indeed, the delight with which men of mind established connections with others of similar temperament indicates the longing for intellectual community and male fellowship throughout the South. These men found in the APS a means of maintaining friendships that defied distance, political division, and rural isolation. It was not always easy, as a poignant exchange between George Izard and his old friend Joseph Hopkinson illustrates. The Society had welcomed Izard into their ranks in 1807 when he and his family resided in Bristol, just north of Philadelphia, near the estate of his sister, Margaret Manigault. As one of the few out-of-state members who was in a position to attend the regular meetings, Izard was a valued member of the Society. Learning of his move to the area, the Society wrote to him in Bristol that “they have such confidence in your abilities & application as to enjoy the pleasing expectation of receiving great advantage from your zeal & activity.”

Izard’s activity in Philadelphia, both at the APS and at his sister’s intellectual gatherings, must have seemed remote indeed after he became governor of the Arkansas

---

25 Dunbar to Vaughan, October 20, 1805, n.d. [1806]; Dunbar to [?], April 28, 1806, Ibid., 327; 328-329; 340.
Territory in 1825. He became despondent at his “estrangement” from his fellow aristocrats, particularly Hopkinson, with whom he had cultivated a close friendship. Near the end of his life he desperately tried to recapture some sense of the community to which he had belonged. He rued his “exile” as Governor of the Arkansas Territory—”a region where, nothing but sad contrasts present themselves to the [?] scenes of my life.” Amidst the riffraff in the southwestern frontier, Izard felt the bane of every southern gentleman— isolation, loneliness. “The friends of my youth, the partner of my choice [Elizabeth Carter Izard, who had died in 1826], the near & dear relations among whom I lived, have disappeared.” In deploring his isolation, Izard was not only speaking as a southern gentleman, but as an upper-class American. He spoke in terms that must have shaken his urbane friend, seated in his comfortable parlor in Philadelphia. “Stripped of opulence, bereft of friends, and reduced in health,” Izard wrote, “I am now living out the remainder of my days among the ignorant, the brutal, the unprincipled, who in the regular course of things are opening the Path of Civilization.” All he hoped for in these last years was a sense of connection to the enlightened world. “I fear to intrude upon your time, which I know to be generally more valuably employed than in perusing epistles from the wilderness. Shall I be disappointed in receiving one from you in return?” he entreated his old friend.26

The isolation that Izard suffered was hardly unique. Between the time when

William Dunbar toiled in the wilderness until 1841, when Caleb Forshey wrote John Vaughan, Natchez had become a thriving river port. Yet its communications with the cultivated world were still uncertain. Like his illustrious Natchez predecessor, Forshey was committed to traditional cosmopolitan principles—he praised Vaughan for being “successfully devoted to benevolence and the diffusion of knowledge”—and he also depended on his Philadelphia connections for ties to the outside world. “I have not yet received a single number of your Transactions, tho’ I subscribed while in your city, and your Proceedings notice the issue of two numbers since my return,” Forshey pointed out in pleading with Vaughan to try a more dependable mailing route. Harry Toumlin expressed similar sentiments in addressing Vaughan in the hopes of exploiting “that general spirit of promoting public good which has so uniformly distinguished your career in life.” Toumlin wrote in the hopes that the well-connected Philadelphian could induce some “intelligent man versed in business” or “merchants of Philadelphia” to settle in his part of the state. Toumlin, a cultivated man, had moved around Mobile in 1822 after finding an upland tract “absolutely too lonesome. We had but three or four neighbors in a circuit of ten miles, excepting indeed two or three mulatto families.” Toumlin hoped that by appealing to their shared spirit of urbanity, he could induce Vaughan to encourage similarly refined Philadelphians to join him in Alabama, thereby alleviating his “loneliness” and developing the state’s commercial potential. 27

27 Caleb Forshey to John Vaughan, June 6, 1841, APS Arch; Harry Toumlin, Washington Court House, Alabama, to John Vaughan, 13 May 1822, APS Misc MS. On Forshey, see Gross, “The American Philosophical Society and the Growth of Science,” 177-178. Forshey had been introduced to Vaughan by William Dunbar, the emigrant’s
Few southern men of mind found themselves in so desperate a position as Izard and Forshey, but some came close. Slow transportation and the relative smallness or absence of cities in most areas of the South rendered communication slow and difficult. Gentleman scientists pined in rural isolation, but at least some used the APS to maintain their place in an active community of scientific gentlemen. Both social progress and their own upper-class identity depended on such connections, they believed. Samuel Brown—no hermit—spoke to both these aspirations in thanking John Vaughan for putting him in contact with William Dunbar. “I did myself the pleasure of forwarding to Natchez some vaccine for Mr. Dunbar,” the Doctor told Vaughan. Not only would Vaughan’s intervention facilitate the important work of introducing Jenner’s smallpox vaccine throughout the southwest—a project of “infinite importance” according to Brown—but Dunbar’s friendship was pleasurable and flattering in itself. “I thank you sincerely for the pains you have taken to make me acquainted with Mr. Dunbar,” Brown said. “From his character I am confident a correspondence with that gentleman will be very interesting to me.”

Other southern intellectuals used the APS overcome the relative sense of isolation they found in the region. Their commitment to the cosmopolitan ideal virtually compelled them to reach out. Gentlemen allowed divisive issues to intrude upon their
dson, and John Quitman, who recommended the young man as one who “has devoted much of his time to scientific pursuits among us in this remote section of the union. . . . he is a most estimable man.” Dunbar to Vaughan, June 26, 1840; Quitman to Vaughan, July 1, 1840, both APS Misc MS.

28Samuel Brown to John Vaughan, June 10, 1802, APS Arch.
common endeavor at their peril, as the case of Thomas Cooper illustrates. Cooper's prosouthern partisanship contradicted the fundamental principle of the cosmopolitan ideal: civility. Before his move to South Carolina Cooper was viewed with something approaching awe by most American men of mind. Joseph Francisco Correa da Serra, the Portuguese diplomat and famed naturalist, thought so much of Cooper that he retracted a previous recommendation of another candidate to support the expatriate Englishman. As he explained to Joel Poinsett regarding the position at South Carolina College, "I did not then know that a very superior candidate offered himself, whom it w[oul]d be an honor & also a great advantage to y[ou]r Country to possess." To Correa, Cooper embodied the best traits of cosmopolitanism--merit and gentility. "The experience & character of this Gent. is above every praise," he assured Poinsett. "I believe I do service to you & to S. Carolina in letting you know he is a candidate."

Cooper's credentials as a scientist and a gentleman overcame even the serious handicap of his agnosticism. Henry DeSaussure reported to the APS that Cooper had been elected President of the College because of his "high character" and his reputation as a "man of general science." Cooper maintained his ties to his old city until the years just before his death. Unlike Izard, though, the loss of contact may have been a product of

---

sectional animosity. Articles hostile to nullification published by Robert Walsh in the *American Quarterly Review* infuriated the hot-tempered--and now prosouthern--chemist. Cooper sent Vaughan election data, editorials, and speeches purporting to show the popular support for his movement “which if Mr. Walsh means to deal honestly with his subscribers, he will now substitute in lieu of the misinformation with which his paper has so long lulled them.”

Cooper was playing with fire. Not only was he involving Vaughan in an enterprise that might destroy his reputation for civility and risking his friends’ goodwill by attacking Walsh. His ardor for nullification and his penchant for glib secessionist comments--he once suggested that the Palmetto State should “calculate the value of [the] union”--could not help but alienate the unionist rank and file of the APS. Joel Poinsett, the very man to whom Correa da Serra had appealed in obtaining Cooper his position at South Carolina College, was a staunch Unionist. So was John Vaughan, the man in the middle of the Philadelphia Society’s national network of gentlemen scientists. An 1833 letter from Poinsett to Vaughan introducing two of Poinsett’s Carolina friends plots out Cooper’s alienation. “You will oblige me by presenting them to Mr. Walsh and to all my friends there as distinguished members of the Union Party,” Poinsett promised, “which I hope & trust will be a passport to their friendly regard.” Cooper’s violent partisanship risked alienating even the benevolent Vaughan and thus removing himself from the APS’s circle of learned gentlemen. Indeed, that seems to have been precisely what happened. Cooper had insulted Walsh, misjudged Vaughan’s unionism, and estranged
himself from his patron, Poinsett.  

In doing so, Cooper had violated the gentleman's code of sophisticated diffidence. His sin was not that he held political opinions. Even passionately held beliefs were acceptable so long as they were expressed within appropriate channels and did not disrupt social peace. But Cooper had allowed his political beliefs to disrupt the republic of letters. Near the end of his life, Cooper keenly felt his alienation from his erstwhile northern companions. "I inquire about you every now and then," he wrote Vaughan three years before his (Cooper's) death, "and I hear with great pleasure that your health continues good, and your industry little impaired. Many years yet of enjoyment in doing good, I hope are in prospect for you." Cooper wrote to inquire how the spry octogenarian maintained his frenetic pace when Cooper was feeling all of his 77 years. Yet his letter also reveals his growing sense of isolation, both his daughter having married and moved away from Columbia and his son, against his wishes, having joined the army in Florida. By 1836, Cooper's atheism and his outspoken support of nullification had restricted his circle of friendship outside the Palmetto State.

The sad spectacle of Thomas Cooper's alienation from the Philadelphia circle reveals another aspect of learning essential to upper class male identity: nationalism.

---

30 Thomas Cooper, Columbia, to John Vaughan, 24 October 1832; Joel Robert Poinsett, Charleston, to John Vaughan, 2 Aug 1833, both in APS Misc MS. Cooper's speech was printed in the Charleston Mercury, July 18, 19, 1827. On these ideological shifts, see Stephen L. Newman, "Thomas Cooper, 1759-1839: The Political Odyssey of a Bourgeois Ideologue," Southern Studies 24 (1985), 295-305.

31 Thomas Cooper, Columbia, to John Vaughan, Phila., 16 February 1836; Henry W. DeSaussure, Columbia., to John Vaughan, 6 December 1819, both APS Misc MS.
Cooper had defied cosmopolitanism by allowing his political beliefs to take precedence over the gentleman’s natural sociability, but his endorsement of secession threatened to destroy the nation-building project to which all APS members were committed. Few saw any contradiction between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. As the freest, most egalitarian nation on earth, most of the members assumed that American science would eventually dominate the world of science. On the other hand, there was a long way to go. The APS’s American members believed by advancing the scientific interest of their own country they were supporting the progress of science throughout the world. In welcoming foreign men of letters, the APS opened the world of science to its American members, hence serving the cosmopolitan ideal. Most American scientists, however, were content to establish connections with other American scientists. Not only was much of what the new world had to offer distinct to the Americas, but by establishing a community of gentleman-scientists the APS was contributing to the heady work of nation building in the early Republic. It was not only creating Americans, but fashioning a particular sort of American man that affirmed the privileged, conservative backgrounds of its members.\(^{32}\)

While the APS invited foreign men of science into its ranks in part to live up to the cosmopolitan ideal, its appeal to men outside Philadelphia was its promise to construct an American scientific infrastructure worthy of note. From the outset, the APS merged learning, gentility, and nationalism in appealing for the support of American

\(^{32}\text{May, } \textit{Enlightenment in America}, \text{ 212-213.}\)
gentlemen. “That this Society, therefore, may, in some degree, answer the ends of its institution, the members propose to confine their disquisitions, principally, to such subjects as tend to the improvement of their country, and advancement of its interest and prosperity” the first Transactions declared. American economic success depended on scientific discovery, the APS founders argued, because though the “fruits, trees, plants and grain, introduced by the new inhabitants, are mostly such as were cultivated in European countries, . . . the soil and climate of these countries being different from that of Europe, no wonder if many of them do not succeed here as well as in Europe.”

The discovery and development of new crops fitting the American context depended on the exertions of its gentlemen, the new Society assumed. “There are many gentlemen in different parts of the country, whom Providence hath blessed with Affluence, and whose understanding is improved by a liberal education,” they recognized. The leadership of gentlemen was necessary because only they had the leisure and resources necessary to pursue serious research. “[T]heir fortunes enable them to make experiments, which men of narrow circumstances would not dare to attempt.” The elitism of these statements can be misleading. Actually, they reflected the most progressive thought of the day. The founders of the APS, good republicans all, assumed the leadership of a “natural aristocracy” while condescendingly soliciting the aid of the lower orders. “The farmers employed in cultivating the lands are intelligent and sensible, capable of observation, and of making many useful experiments,” they conceded. The Society would happily record their observations of husbandry, weather, and other mundane aspects of the natural world. Artisans had a similarly prosaic function. “As
among our mechanics many are expert and ingenious, the Society hope to be favoured with any new inventions and discoveries they shall make.” While opening its doors to the working classes, APS fathers—even Poor Richard himself—assumed that both its leaders and its best researchers would come from the privileged orders.  

In selecting southern men for the Society, the members recruited gentlemen of leisure who conformed to genteel conventions. They saw southern science as part of their nationalist endeavor and sought out that region’s “best men” to fill their ranks. Nevertheless, a striking fact emerges from the membership data put forth in Table Four. The recruitment of the lion’s share of southern members falls within John Vaughan’s term as Librarian and Treasurer. Of the 107 members of the APS from the slaveholding states, only 13 (12%) were inducted between 1841 and 1861. Eliminating Maryland’s 25 members from the pool produces an even more striking result. Of those 83 members, just 8—under 10%—were inducted in the 20 years preceding the Civil War. The APS’s recruitment of southerners was most intense before the period of intensifying southern nationalism, when the institution’s nationalizing project still resonated south of the Mason-Dixon line. Nor was its simultaneity with Vaughan’s tenure coincidental. As southerners recognized, neither Vaughan’s Unitarian faith, respect for his antislavery minister, nor his republican pedigree enjoined his ties to Dixie. As contemporaries recognized, Vaughan had an especially warm relationship with the South that emerged from his personal friendships with prominent planting families, particularly those from the Palmetto State.

33APS Transactions 1, Preface, I, iii, xvii.
Vaughan’s efforts to recruit gentlemen to his national network still had resonance within the genteel community of the early republic. Science was still a gentleman’s pastime—witness Hugh Mercer’s anticipation of “command[ing] a few days of comparative leisure”—and the atmosphere surrounding science and medicine was not yet poisoned with sectional jealousy. Mercer, like other southern gentry, identified with both the South, the nation, and their privileged class without feeling conflict or the compulsion to choose one over the others. Hence Mercer hoped to forward to the APS a biography of his father that had been published in both the National Gazette and the Southern Literary Messenger. Vaughan appealed to both his Carolina connections and the interests of the nation in entreaty to Wade Hampton to attempt the cultivation of silk culture. “My attachment to Carolina is strong,” he assured Hampton in introducing himself.

Not only did he give credit to himself by his acquaintance with the state’s first families, but, he assured Hampton, his “warm Carolina feelings” and consultation with “some of my Carolina friends” had convinced him that Hampton was the man to approach. Yet the essence of Vaughan’s argument was an appeal to Hampton’s nationalism. Silk, he suggested, might eventually rival cotton as a major U.S. export. Stephen DuPonceau, the main advocate for silk culture at the APS, foresaw insatiable European demand for the product. Vaughan appealed to Hampton and other planters as “public spirited characters” to use a small portion of their vast holdings as an experiment “for the good of the country.” The “public” facilities of the APS being insufficient to conduct the experiment, Vaughan sought the help of “private enterprise and patriotism”---
the help of gentlemen and scientists, of southerners and Americans.\textsuperscript{34}

The zeal with which Vaughan pursued the patriotic goals of the APS was certainly exceptional, but a commitment to American science was expected of all members. The southwestern planter-adventurer Nathaniel Ware attracted the notice of the Membership Committee as "a gentleman favourably known as an ardent cultivator of the science of Botany, and distinguished by his attainments in various branches of Physics." Ware was hardly a "distinguished" man of science by the professional standards of a later day, but he had wealth, having married the conveniently rich widow Sarah Percy Ellis of Natchez. In the context of the early Republic, however, his travels, polite interest in science, and Federalist connections made him a natural fit with the APS. Joel Poinsett's credentials were even more impressive than Ware's. As minister to Mexico, Poinsett had demonstrated his commitment to cosmopolitanism, American learning, and the APS by donating Mexican artifacts even before he had been elected—which the Society's President, Stephen DuPonceau, regarded as a mere formality. DuPonceau judged his paper on Mexican geography as "the most convincing proof of your zealous disposition & capacity to promote the scientific & literary interests of our dear Country." That dedication alone, DuPonceau suggested, merited Poinsett's election to the Society, though implicit in DuPonceau's approbation was his judgement of Poinsett as a public man and gentleman of rank.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34}Hugh Mercer to Alexander Dallas Bache and John Vaughan, December 20, 1838; Vaughan to Hampton, September 13, 1832, both APS Arch.

\textsuperscript{35}Peter DuPonceau, Clement Biddle, et al., to the Membership Committee of the American Philosophical Society, 18 July 1823, Letters of Nomination for Membership,
The Historical and Literary Committee was the most ambitious manifestation of the nationalizing goals of the APS. DuPonceau and Vaughan, the Society's most aggressive nationalists, were its most ardent supporters, serving respectively as its corresponding and recording secretaries. Organized in 1815, the Committee sought to advance the "moral" sciences "in contradistinction to those which have the material world as their object." Though the Committee was charged with collecting materials on the history of "Pennsylvania in particular," they also solicited materials, particularly "as many as possible of the public and private documents scattered in various hands throughout the union," to the end of forming a "History of America in general." The interests of the Committee, reiterated its chair, the Philadelphia jurist William Tilghman, was "not limited by the bounds of any particular state." Tilghman "appeal[ed] . . . to the citizens of the United States at large," particularly "those members of the American Philosophical Society, who reside in different parts of the Union, remote from the city of Philadelphia."

Actually, the Historical and Literary Committee exaggerated in expressing their commitment to look beyond the boundaries of their host state. They were particularly interested in the history of the South. Their immediate task, DuPonceau told Jefferson, was to rescue important papers and artifacts from "oblivion." This process was already well underway in the major states of the northeast. "The Historical Societies of

APS Archives; Peter DuPonceau to Joel Poinsett 9 November 1826, Poinsett Papers, HSP.

Massachusetts and New York have preserved many important facts and documents," he pointed out. The greatest risk to preserving the history of the republic was in the South, whose humid climate and dearth of cities and learned societies threatened fragile documents and artifacts with decay and loss. "I need not point out to you the advantage which the future historian of Virginia will derive from these records," the linguist pointed out to Jefferson, while reminding him "there is not yet in that State any establishment or institution professing the same objects with those of the committee." The Philadelphia Society, DuPonceau assumed, was in the best position to preserve this material. Not only did it have many southern members--assets the rich but parochial New York and Massachusetts societies could not claim--but as a national organization, adjacent to the upper South, it promised to integrate southern documents into a national historical narrative.37

The Committee pursued southern documents aggressively and, in some quarters, met with an enthusiastic response. Its first order of business following the election of officers was the collection of data on the expedition to survey the Virginia-North Carolina border that had been recorded by William Byrd. The Committee inquired whether Jefferson had the account, but they had more success with Elizabeth Carter Izard, the wife of George Izard, who promised to rifle her family papers in search of the manuscript. In 1815 a "The History of the operation of running the line between Virginia and North Carolina in the year 1727, written by Col. Byrd." was accounted for in the "List of

37DuPonceau to Jefferson, 14 November 1815, American Philosophical Society Historical and Literary Committee Letterbooks, 1:1.
Documents in Possession of the Historical Committee of the American Philosophical Society.\textsuperscript{38} DuPonceau, a linguist, was particularly interested in the languages of the southwestern Indians. He solicited and received information from a variety of sources put in his reach by the long arm of the APS in the region. A Mississippian gave DuPonceau the name of Eliza Tunstall, of the hamlet of Greenville, Mississippi, whom he requested "the honor of your correspondence" in soliciting information on the Indian languages of her region. Other members introduced DuPonceau to military men on the Georgia frontier for information on the Creeks. He cornered Nathaniel Ware at a party in 1820 and pumped him for several pages worth of data on the Natchez Indians. Moreover, other southerners eagerly met the Committee's requests for aid. In 1817 the Committee read letters from "J. Gould being a description of West Florida [in] 1769," and "an account of Tennessee by Mr. Newman [in] 1797."\textsuperscript{39}

The Historical and Literary Committee's interest in the history of the South did not emerge from any partiality to the region, but as part of an effort to preserve the history of the new nation in which the South had suffered peculiar neglect. It was an effort to extend the nationalizing project of the APS from science to morals and the arts. As such,

\textsuperscript{38}Entries for 14 July 1815, 8 May 1816, (pages 1:5, 12, 36), Minutes of the Historical and Literary Committee; DuPonceau to Benjamin Harrison and William Page, Westover, Va., 3 April 1816, Historical and Literary Committee Letterbooks, 1:34, both APS Archives. See the letter of E[lizabeth] C[arter] Izard to John Vaughan, [April or May 1816], APS Archives.

\textsuperscript{39}DuPonceau to General David B. Mitchell, 12 Oct 1818; DuPonceau to Eliza Tunstall, Greenville, Mississippi, 11 Jan 1819, APS Historical and Literary Committee Letterbooks, 2:20-21, 2:22-23; Entry for February 2, 1817, Minutes of the Historical and Literary Committee, 2 (1817-1820): 3.
it inevitably tapped into the heroic spirit of nation-building that animated gentlemen from all corners of the nation in the decades following independence--particularly in the South. The task of constructing a distinctive American character and making the new nation's place in the order of nations was, these men assumed, perfectly suited to the temperament of the "natural aristocracy." W.B. Bullock appealed to this sense of patriotism by ensuring General David Mitchell that by assisting DuPonceau in understanding Creek culture he would be aiding a "noble institution" in one of its "grand objects." In soliciting John Sibley's aid in cataloging the tongue of the Caddoes, a branch of the Natchez tribe, DuPonceau exploited the APS's southern network, contacting him in remote Natchioches, Louisiana through a "common friend." Moreover, the linguist tapped his nationalism by appealing to Sibley's "obliging disposition, particularly in every thing that tends to the promotion of knowledge."  

Members of the Committee conflated nationalistic and class appeals in their petitions for aid. They were not fashioning an American nationalism for the masses. Their concept of what America ought to become was inseparable from their notion of proper class relations. The nation they were constructing was one in which gentlemen--the natural aristocracy--enjoyed the deference and gratitude of the lower sorts. Hence when DuPonceau appealed for Jefferson's aid in collecting "the communications of patriotic & literary characters in every part of the Union," he believed he was being

---

"faithful to the original comprehensive design of their Institution." References to the farmers, mechanics, and artisans made in the APS's Act of Incorporation—hardly an egalitarian document—were conspicuously missing from the mailing list of DuPonceau's committee. Instead, the Committee reached out to people like Elizabeth Carter Farley Izard—a "very respectable Lady"—and other elites. Izard volunteered to supply the Society with the Byrd papers on the condition that they “obliterate[d] the Dr. from my ancestor Byrd” in exchange for the “more honorable title” of Colonel.41

Indeed, the Committee's chair, William Tilghman, indicated just to what extent the APS's vision reflected upper-class priorities when he bemoaned that men "who have sufficient leisure to devote a considerable part of their time to its acquisition and advancement, are not. . . . very numerous in these states, where society has so many calls for the exertion of its members in the more indispensable employments of human life."

But this poverty of aristocracy, as it were, did not induce DuPonceau and Vaughan to reach below their station for aid. Instead, Tilghman congratulated the men on reaching the Committee's initial goals within the narrow confines of the upper crust. "[T]hey have found a considerable number of their fellow citizens, able and willing to aid in the promotion of their objects, and from whom they have, in fact derived very important assistance." Tilghman, Vaughan, and DuPonceau had little sense that by so successfully segregating their fellow members from middle-class influence they were damning their

41DuPonceau to Jefferson, 14 November 1815; DuPonceau to Benjamin Harrison and William Page, Westover, Va., 3 April 1816 (reference to the "respectable lady," Elizabeth Izard), APS Historical and Literary Committee Letterbooks, 1:1, 1:34; E[lizabeth] C[arter] Izard to John Vaughan, [April or May 1816], APS Arch.
beloved Society to near-irrelevance in the coming decades. It must be pointed out that by excluding non-elites from APS activities, Vaughan and the other leaders were not acting in a vindictive or mean-spirited way. Vaughan and Dr. Caspar Wistar, in particular, were renowned for their benevolent spirit towards the poor. "While he had a house and a purse of his own," Joshua Fisher recalled of Vaughan, "both were freely open to his friends and the destitute." In his eulogy of Caspar Wistar, Charles Caldwell observed that "in the charities of his profession, to the lowly and indigent, he recognized no bounds, but his leisure to serve them." Charity was one thing; association was another. In practicing elitism the circle of APS leaders were merely acting in a manner consistent with their class assumptions. They restricted their appeals for aid and participation to the upper crust because they could scarcely imagine a different state of affairs. These assumptions were held, moreover, across the political spectrum within the APS—from Republicans Jefferson and Rush to Federalists Vaughan and Joseph Hopkinson. Jefferson alluded to these common class and generational perspectives that transcended political boundaries when he introduced Vaughan to his nephew as "a friend of another century" The circle of learning, in other words, was restricted to the circle of sociability because the most prominent members of the APS made no distinction between the two. To be a gentleman—or a lady, for that matter—required both learning and sociability, not one or the other. The various social affairs sponsored by the APS demonstrate this identification clearly. Male-only social affairs, at which southerners were prominent participants, performed vital cultural work to this

privileged set by affirming a unity of science and sociability that was becoming anachronistic in the wider culture even while it was being celebrated by elites.43

Vaughan cultivated the connection between social life and learning by holding daily breakfasts at his quarters at the APS to which he invited prominent “strangers” to converse with his prominent Philadelphia friends. “I frequently met, at breakfast, distinguished travelers of literary men from other states,” recalled J. Francis Fisher. His own business affairs and APS concerns kept Vaughan so occupied that he had to hold his early-morning meetings at the unheard-of hour of seven o’clock, “two hours before anyone else was up,” marveled Jared Sparks. Nevertheless, his breakfasts were inevitably well-attended. Vaughan used them to introduce men of mind with Philadelphia luminaries with similar interests, as in Sparks’ case. More commonly, his breakfasts were informal and inclusive, qualities that made them ideal for providing strangers with a battery of introductions, invitations, and possibilities for discussion. William Dunbar, son and heir of the Scottish emigrant, realized that they were just the place to initiate Caleb Forshey, whom he introduced as a “graduate of West Point, and a lover of the pure sciences,” to the wonders of Philadelphia. “I introduce him, to your acquaintance, & breakfast table, and, thro' you, to the scientific facilities and enjoyments

43"Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," HSP; Charles Caldwell, M.D., An Eulogium on Caspar Wistar, M.D., Professor of Anatomy, Delivered by Appointment, before the Members of the Philadelphia Medical Society (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson and Son, 1818), 12; Thomas Jefferson to John Vaughan, 26 March 1826, Madeira-Vaughan Collection, APS.
which he so well knows how to appreciate,” wrote Dunbar.

Vaughan’s breakfasts served to initiate men of learning into the city’s genteel community, but they were still limited by his own circle of acquaintance—a finite group despite its considerable size. In the early decades of the century, the Philadelphia members of the APS institutionalized another social affair, the Wistar Party, that integrated far more “strangers” into the Philadelphia scene than Vaughan’s intimate breakfasts could. Despite their emphasis on welcoming “strangers” of note, the Wistar Parties remained exclusive assemblies, both because they limited those invited to the upper ranks of society and because they embodied conservative social ideals.

These affairs owed both their name and their inspiration to Dr. Caspar Wistar, a professor of anatomy at the University of Pennsylvania medical school and president of the APS until his death in 1818. Wistar was well known for his learning and sociability. “His house was open to men of learning, both citizens and strangers,” noted William Tilghman in his eulogy. Wistar had the gentleman’s gifts for entertaining—fortune, tolerance, natural sociability, and learning. “He loved his friends; he was fond of conversation; he delighted in talent,” observed the Wistar Party’s historian, Job Tyson. “Being a man of easy fortune, he only promoted his own judgement in seeking the company of desirable guests” to enjoy “the unstudied ease and unostentatious style of these entertainments.” As a Federalist, moreover, Wistar was a model of enlightened tolerance and genteel civility. “[T]he harmony in which he lived with friends of both

44Adams, ed., William Dunbar, Forest (Mississippi), to John Vaughan, 26 June 1840, APS Misc MS.
parties, and the respect and affection which friends of both parties entertained for him," admonished Tilghman amidst the Era of Bad Feelings, provided a "memorable example, well worthy of the serious reflection of those who suppose that political intolerance is essential to political integrity."45

After Wistar married Elizabeth Mifflin, a lady of good Quaker stock, in 1798, his friends—all APS members and their out-of-town friends—organized into an informal club so as not to upset his domestic arrangements. Until 1811 his friends met at his home to drink wine and converse on Sunday evenings. After then and until his death they imposed more regularity on the meetings, which had expanded beyond easy sociability. Meetings moved to Saturdays and were held within the winter social season, when the first families moved from the country to the city. Wistar sent out invitations, served wine, cake, "domestic fruits and ice-creams," and tried to regulate the number of his guest to between 15 and 25. His regulars included the most prominent and well-connected Philadelphians—Tyson lists Vaughan, William Short, Joseph Hopkinson, and Nathaniel Chapman as his most frequent visitors, a pool of friends that guaranteed a steady parade of "eminently social and pleasing, ... often sprightly and gay" visitors to the city. Wistar's parties advanced traditional social goals befitting his Federalist politics and

privileged station. "They cultivated social feelings, they led to and fostered private friendships, they diffused a spirit of true and elegant, but simple and unambitious hospitality. They made strangers acquainted, on easy terms, with the worth, wit and learning of Philadelphia, and contributed, in no slight degree, to a just appreciation of the city, its institutions and character abroad."  

After Wistar’s death in 1818, his friends resolved to continue meeting. Vaughan, Tilghman, DuPonceau, Walsh, and several others resolved to each give 3 parties during the social season, eventually reduced to 2 with the inclusion of several new members in the coming decade. Vaughan “assumed the labour of a general charge over the concerns of the Association” until his death. The two requirements for membership were APS membership and the unanimous vote of the members, the latter requirement designed to limit the association to those committed to “scientific fellowship.” To maximize sociability, attendance was limited to 20 Philadelphians with no limit on strangers. Entertainments were kept simple lest “mixed and crowded companies, late and inconvenient hours, [and] sumptuous and expensive banquets” eclipse conversation. Vaughan’s death in 1841 “brought a recognition of the necessity of some more definite organization,” and formal by-laws were passed governing the place, time, and form of entertainments, the election of officers, and requirements for membership.  

The admiration with which visitors to the city described Wistar Parties suggests

46[Tyson], Sketch of the Wistar Party, 6-7

47Ibid., 8-9; 11; 24 (constitution of 1842).
that the Association successfully lived up to the standards of its founder and namesake in encouraging both sociability and elitism. Basil Hall, the Scottish aristocrat and military man, attended one Wistar Party "consisting of most of the men of letters, and science, or general information, in Philadelphia." Hall--hardly an uncritical observer--found the parties congenial to his aristocratic tastes. "Certainly nothing can be imagined more advantageous than these parties for all travelers properly introduced to the agreeable society of Philadelphia. . . . I had here the satisfaction of making acquaintance with many gentlemen, of whom I had heard before, and with some of whose writings I was already acquainted." Conversation was by no means limited to scientific topics, though controversial subjects that might violate civility were explicitly discouraged. Indeed, Charles Caldwell, whose phrenological theories of African inferiority supported the proslavery theories of Thomas Cooper, among others, delivered Wistar's eulogy to the Philadelphia Medical Society even though Wistar had succeeded Rush as president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery.48

Though discussion of slavery threatened the civility that Wistar parties sought to promote, sectional animosity did not, in fact, interfere with the affairs until 1860. Not only was the subject avoided, but both the APS's antislavery members and its slaveowners subscribed to enlightened views on the peculiar institution. They endorsed colonization, assumed slavery was a backward institution unfit for a progressive society, but avoided explicit, concrete recommendations for its abolition that might

disrupt civility. As William Tilghman admitted, "considering the situation of the southern states, the subject is delicate. But, certainly, the introduction of slavery into our country is an event deeply to be lamented, and every wise man must wish for its gradual abolition." Vaughan perfectly captured this ambiguity. He enjoyed close friendships with some of Carolina's largest slaveholding families, managed accounts for plantation managers, all the while attending the antislavery sermons of William Furness and planning the distribution of mildly antislavery articles with Robert Walsh. The discussion of the potentially contentious subject was easily avoided, as the English judge William Keating recognized, because "the attendance [at Wistar Parties] is too numerous for general conversation." The rules limiting attendance were usually observed in the breach lest they interfere with sociability.49

Besides sociability, the Wistar Association promoted an elitist, conservative worldview. It did this partly through limiting its pool of guests. The members of the association itself were limited to those of "solid attainments. . . . various accomplishments and elegant tastes." Thomas Hamilton, an English visitor, suggests the rather narrow understanding the members had of diversity. "These parties bring together men of different classes and pursuits, and promote the free exchange of opinion, always useful for the correction of prejudice," he recalled. The mingling of men of different

classes did not imply an egalitarian impulse, however. Not only did Hamilton exaggerate the participation of non-elites, but that mixing that did take place had a decidedly colonial and condescending tone. When "modest and deserving" men of promise were invited, Hamilton observed, it was assumed that "[h]is errors are corrected, his ardour is stimulated, his taste improved." Thereby the properly hierarchical nature of class relations was maintained. "A healthy connexion is kept up between different classes of society, and the feeling of mutual sympathy is duly cherished." Charles Daubeny more accurately captured the spirit of the parties when he characterized the occasional appearance of middle-class men as "a wish on the part of the leading citizens to reconcile aristocratic predilections with the exigencies growing out of republican institutions."\footnote{Tyson}, Sketch of the Wistar Party, 7; Thomas Hamilton, Men and Manners in America, 2 Vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1833), 1:341, 342-343; Charles Daubeny, Journal of a Tour through the United States (Oxford: T. Combe, 1843), 90-91.

The elitism that lay at the heart of the Wistar Party can be most clearly seen in the conventions governing the attendance of "strangers." One primary goal of the parties, noted its historian, was "the occasion they present of easy hospitality to desirable strangers." One reason members had to be chosen unanimously was that they "had the privilege of introducing . . . as many eligible sojourners . . . as he pleased." Membership had to be severely circumscribed to those with an implicit understanding those "desirable" and "eligible" traits that defined a congenial stranger. Such strangers could not be residents after the Philadelphia area. As Walter Gross observes, "The reason for the geographical requirement was presumably to help the Society expand outwards from
its own city.” The importance of Vaughan’s leisure-class connections to the Wistar Party’s diversity can not be overestimated. So effective was he in inviting strangers and cultivating connections between genteel men that the “duty . . . of introducing non-residents” was “sadly neglected” after his death.51

Befitting the cosmopolitan and elitist assumptions of the Wistar Party, planter-class southerners were conspicuous participants, frequent guests, and even leading members. Langdon Cheves, elected in 1821, was the most conspicuous of the latter. Virginians Robley Dunglison, Nathaniel Chapman, and Moncure Robinson were all inducted between 1821-1839. In addition, many of the Associations most prominent members enjoyed close family connections with the South. Charles Ingersoll, Rene LaRoché, and Joshua Francis Fisher all had southern-born brides and maintained close ties to the region. Other members had close friends in the South or sympathized with the region’s reputation for conservatism and the rule of elites. John Vaughan was among this group, as was George Cadwalader, Thomas Wharton, Peter DuPonceau, John Kane, Joseph Hopkinson, George Sharswood, and the Biddles.

Visiting planters such as William Gaston, Henry Middleton, and William Polk were welcomed as peers. The Wistar Party, it seems, was part of the itinerary that Vaughan plotted for his guests even before their arrival. Breakfast, APS meeting, the Athenaeum--which, Elizabeth Geffen notes, “from 1814 is filled with the names of southerners whom [Vaughan] took to that organization’s reading-room as his guests”--

51[Tyson], Sketch of the Wistar Party, 10; Gross, “The American Philosophical Society and the Growth of Science,” 304-305.
and then a Wistar Party might fill up an entire breathless weekend. Thomas Percy, in town in 1821 to place his friend’s daughter at a French school, was at least partially exposed to this regimen. “Since my arrival here I have passed an evening at Mr. Vaughans in company with some pleasant men of learning & a few diplomatic characters,” he wrote his friend in Alabama. “Among the former I reckon [Robert] Walsh & the Swedish Minister, Sardinian Consul, [and] Portuguese Charges des affaires among the latter. The evening was pleasant enough & we had delightful ice creams.”

Not only did Percy feel a crushing isolation in Alabama that made him seek out such company, but he was a well read, amiable, and well connected (as a close friend of Samuel Brown) gentleman, qualities that made him an appropriate “stranger” for the company. William Dillingham’s (Wistar Association 1844) eulogy of William Gaston captures the quality in the North Carolina judge that made him an appropriate guest:

“Modest, amiable, and courteous in his deportment, warm-hearted, generous, and affectionate in his nature, habitually joyous and kind in his social intercourse, he was the idol of his associates.”

---

52 Members listed by year in [Tyson], Sketch of the Wistar Party; Thomas Percy to John William Walker, 12 June 1821, John William Walker Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery; William Dillingham, "The Life of Judge Gaston," read 15 March 1844, in APS, Memoirs of Deceased Members. On the itinerary imposed by Vaughan on unsuspecting but grateful travelers see the accounts of Hall, Travels in North America, 2:337-339, and Adams, ed., Life and Writings of Jared Sparks, 133-134. Vaughan was “to arrange all the business of sight-seeing for us,” noted Hall’s wife Margaret, even though they had never met. Mrs. Basil Hall [Margaret Hunter Hall], The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written During a Fourteen Months’ Sojourn in America, 1827-1828 Ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1931), 133.
The Wistar Party was just the most explicit and formal manifestation of the American Philosophical Society's marriage of learning and sociability. Its members affirmed their approbation of the relationship in holding their own exclusive social affairs at which they combined broadly scientific topics with other areas of learning--literature, the arts, politics, and the accomplishments, to name a few. By holding itself to a definition of scientific endeavor broadly construed, by maintaining the primacy of sociability over merit-directed research, and by excluding learned men of middle or lower rank the APS effectively consigned itself to a subordinate role in American science during the rest of nineteenth century. While other societies--the Academy of Natural Sciences, the Linnaean Society of New England, the American Geological Society, and the proliferation of colleges and medical schools--devoted themselves to discrete disciplines and merit-based membership, the APS remained hamstrung by its commitment to an anachronistic definition of scientific endeavor.53

But the question of marginalization is largely artificial. The APS was not an effective scientific society in the developing nineteenth century sense. Nor did it want to be. "The Society was an elite, upper and middle class learned body. It did not evince the slightest interest in obtaining a large membership or in educating the 'masses,'" maintains Walter Gross, placing it in isolation from newer, better funded organizations like the Smithsonian and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In nominating new members from outside Philadelphia, APS officials not only chose men

very much like themselves, but men they already knew. Since Langdon Cheves was a “gentlemen, whose [ability is very known] to the Society, we deem it superfluous to say any thing, by way of recommendation,” DuPonceau and Chapman declared. William Drayton enjoyed similar qualifications. “Believing that the Society are amply acquainted with the merits of this distinguished gentleman,” his advocates “forbear to enter into any details recommending of him.”

Similarly, its members, culled from the upper crust American amateur scientists, looked to the APS to affirm their own self-image as gentlemen. Hugh Grigsby’s letter acknowledging his election captures the love of country, learning, sociability, and urbanity that membership in the APS affirmed for southern men of letters. “I cannot repress a sense of exultation that my own name may hereafter be associated, however humbly and distantly, with the names of those who have earned so enduring a reputation for themselves and for our common country,” he gushed. Grigsby paid homage to “the services rendered by the Society to the cause of letters,” but equally important was his anticipation of “fellowship with the members of the Society” that his election made possible. Finally, Grigsby honored membership in the APS because of its identification with the South. “The fame of your Society has been ever dear to the people of Virginia. Aside from those great considerations which constitute its real worth, there are those of a personal character connected with it which Virginians delight to remember.” It is no

wonder that southern gentlemen like Grigsby venerated the APS and found honor in the recognition that election implied. That the Society no longer represented the vanguard of American science hardly mattered. Indeed, that the APS represented a reactionary tradition in American science and social relations stood out as a significant merit, especially for southern gentlemen uneasy with the early currents of modernity they discerned in antebellum America’s Victorian culture.  

---

55Hugh B. Grigsby, Norfolk, to Charles Trego, Phila., 1 May 1857, Letters Acknowledging Election, APS Archives.
Table 7-1: American Philosophical Society Membership, 1770-1861.

Total Members Inducted: 1210

Foreign Members: 393

Pennsylvania Members: 546

Remaining American Members: 271

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>No. Members</th>
<th>Last Year Inducted</th>
<th>No. Inducted, 1841-1861</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1844</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida (incl. West Florida)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1854</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1825</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1856</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Southern</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER 8
ARISTOCRACY AND POLITICAL CULTURE
IN CIVIL WAR-ERA PHILADELPHIA

At the same time that political warfare raged in Philadelphia's newspapers and power circles during the 1850s, prosouthern aristocrats enforced an uneasy social peace in the city's parlors. Though it would not last, the social hegemony of men and women friendly to the seceding states contributed to unparalleled rancor in the city's politics in the final antebellum decade and even called into question the ultimate allegiance of Pennsylvania during the secession winter. Even as fighting raged, the Philadelphia establishment--at least its prosouthern branch--fought a rear guard action for peace, slavery, and recognition of the Confederacy. Conservatives were convinced that the slave states upheld traditional standards of deference and hierarchy long since discredited in their home city. Generations of business, family, and friendly relations prompted this sympathetic response to secession. Philadelphia bluebloods believed--and events bore them out--that the triumph of the Republican Party and the military defeat of the South would not only terminate their feeble political influence forever, but would also consolidate a new social elite on Chestnut Street and Rittenhouse Square.

The public influence of Philadelphia's first families did not reside in public office, where their power had been steadily waning since the early years of the century. Rather, their power lay in the city's parlors, clubs, and drawing rooms. Their isolation was felt
not so much in their complete exclusion from political office. Richard Vaux served as a popular mayor in the 1850s, and brothers Joseph and Charles Ingersoll served in Congress during the 1840s. Instead, their marginalization could be seen in the changing tone of public life, in the rise of mass organizations and the professional politicians who, as gentlemen saw it, pandered to the vulgar, uninformed populace. "As early as 1841," observes historian Elizabeth Geffen, "the Whigs were having trouble trying to get a 'gentleman' to run for Congress to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of John Sergeant." One of those Whigs, Sidney George Fisher, suggested reasons for the difficulty when he noted that in Congress "a man of education & refinement finds himself out of place . . . disgusted with violence and blackguardism." Like many conservatives, Fisher was bitterly fatalistic about politics. A Whig, he even despaired of the party’s victory in 1840, believing that the only proper role for a conservative party in a democracy was as a protesting minority. The fashionable world, however, was theirs to guard and control. From ballroom and salon the city’s social leaders could shape politics and culture through family prestige and inherited wealth.¹

These social conservatives defended their esteem for the South on the region’s genteel traditions. Underneath the cultivated facade, though, darker impulses encouraged identification with slave society. High society excluded blacks as a matter of course, but the virulent racism espoused by some highly-placed individuals engendered a congenial

view of slavery in fashionable circles. Frederick Douglas averred that "[t]here is not perhaps anywhere to be found a city in which prejudice against color is more rampant than in Philadelphia." African-Americans constituted a mere 4% of the city's population, at most, but they were highly visible, concentrated in the city's central—and most fashionable—areas. They lived in shanties and shacks in the squalid, narrow alleys behind Philadelphia's gayest avenues. Predictably, the city's blacks suffered at the hands of Irish crowds, working-class street gangs like the "Moyamensing Killers," and the large population of southern medical students. Yet the racism of the upper orders, though more restrained and subtle, was a force to be acknowledged. Charles Ingersoll, the son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a leading Democrat, frequently extolled the virtues of southern slaveholding. Charles Brewster, future Attorney General of the United States, mocked those concerned about the "condition of the negro" by suggesting that exposure to the civilization and Christianity of whites had failed to raise American blacks "above the condition, in his native state, of the baboon that chatters in the tree above him." Harsh words, but they exposed the prejudice belied by bluebloods' polite silence.2

Cultured racism usually, but not always, manifested itself in more subtle ways.

The highly respectable *Godey's Lady's Book* refused contributions from Grace Greenwood when her abolitionist sympathies came to light. Rumors circulated that a Philadelphia publisher had rejected the submission of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, wary of the novel's virulent anti-southernism. Joseph Willson penned his *Sketches of the Higher Classes of Colored Society in Philadelphia* because "the public--or at least the great body, who have not been at the pains to make an examination--have long been accustomed to regard the people of color as one consolidated mass, all huddled together, without any particular or general distinctions, social or otherwise." Willson's account spoke to the sympathies of cultured Philadelphians, showing little concern for the coarse racism of the lower orders. Cultivated free blacks, he assured his genteel readers, "have their churches, school-houses, institutions of benevolence, and others for the promotion of literature, [and]. . . . last of all, and not the least, men of fortune and gentlemen of leisure." At times, however, intense racism broke through cultured Philadelphians' cultivated facade. Reviewing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other antislavery novels, a writer in *Graham's Magazine* wished for a "plague of all black faces! We hate this niggerism, and hope it may be done away with. . . . Where is the great need of going to the black section of the population in quest of themes, while the broader and richer domains of the better races lie before them?" Small wonder that slavery found warm friends in fashionable circles when the eminently respectable *Graham's* characterized the "negro department" as "lazy and feeble," full of "grotesque peculiarities . . . animal

*Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter *PMHB*) 90 (1958), 267.
vivacities, and somewhat comic slang."³

If the exclusion of free blacks from fashionable society was merely an extension of the prejudice under which they suffered throughout the city, the isolation of abolitionists and their sympathizers was a matter of open policy. Susan Lesley, a Philadelphia abolitionist, had to ask her brother to send her a Boston newspaper to read a sympathetic account of John Brown's execution. "It cannot be that Boston is so cold as Philadelphia," she reasoned. "Here we are accustomed to people being still in the dark ages." Social ostracism was compounded by their unofficial censure by public officials. Police routinely refused protection to antislavery speakers, sometimes shutting down their meetings under the pretext of public safety. But the constabulary signaled their implicit hostility toward abolition by ignoring violence against reformers, often suffered at the hands of southern medical students. One of the latter described how "abolitionists hold meetings every few days all of which the students and a large number of citizens attend. The students get into a row every time first as soon as the speakers begin to cough and hiss so they cant be heard to speak at all and the consequence is they stop and call the police but they cant do any thing for the students number about a thousand." Antipathy to abolition was hardly limited to the rough-and-tumble of working-class street life, however. It was intimately linked to the conservatism of Philadelphia's upper crust. Thus, concludes one student of Philadelphia social reform, the "best people" of Penn's

city would no sooner "[d]iscuss abolition" than they would "[v]ote for Andrew Jackson."

Fashionable Philadelphians stigmatized abolition more out of repugnance for its radicalism and divisive effect on polite society than out of any affection for slavery. As one historian of Civil War-era Philadelphia observes, socialites "would not agitate against the peculiar institution of the South, and they could hardly imagine the North's agitating the question to the extremity of Civil War." Even those who questioned slavery condemned abolitionists as fanatical zealots bend on destroying the union to reach their unattainable goal. Two nights after a mob destroyed the hall hosting an antislavery women's convention in 1838, Sidney Fisher felt that "there was great provocation" for the deed. Despite the rioters' disdain for the "supremacy of the laws," the diarist concluded that "the cause itself is unpopular & justly so, and the fanatic orators openly recommended dissolution of the Union." Fisher, a confirmed snob, could not pass off the violence as the isolated work of a vulgar mob. "Such is the hatred to abolition here," he observed, "that many respectable persons, tho' they do not defend these outrages, blame them faintly & excuse them."

---


Philadelphians generally felt that such single-minded zealotry was inconsistent with the tolerance and urbanity they believed distinguished their society. Again and again they characterized their city as "conservative," a term that implied sophistication, sociability, and disdain toward radicalism of any stripe. Alexander McClure, who chaired the Lincoln-Curtin state committee to victory in Pennsylvania, knew that "Philadelphia was so conservative on the sectional issue" that he warned speakers to "avoid offensive expressions"—statements in any way critical of the South—at a dinner in his honor at the Continental Hotel on Chestnut Street. The Pennsylvanian, a Buchanan administration organ that supported Breckinridge in 1860, urged in the wake of John Brown's execution that "conservative . . . citizens . . . assemble together, and by peaceable means, if possible, and if not, by a resort to arms, end this agitation." Carrie Fries, a North Carolinian in town to witness her fiancee's graduation from Jefferson Medical College in 1860, witnessed this conservative sensibility first hand when the woman with whom she engaged in suddenly admitted to being an abolitionist. Though they "talked on for nearly an hour in totally good humor," the Carolinian was relieved when a fellow boarder unexpectedly came to her aid with his arguments. Similarly, Arthur Ritchie took pains to assure his incredulous Georgia cousins that Philadelphians "are not all abolitionists, we have a few fanatics here, as you have also in the South." Southern zealots posed just as much danger to the union as did antislavery activists. "The majority of the northern people have just as good feelings for the South as ever they had," he reassured his relations, "so you need not give ear to and believe all you hear from violent
Philadelphians claimed that their devotion to conservatism insulated their society from political and sectional strife, but in practice this sensibility gave life there a decidedly pro-southern cast. Though they disapproved of overt expressions of sectional feeling as socially divisive and unsociable, bluebloods viewed antislavery as an especially vulgar persuasion. Before the Civil War, recalled the historian of the Philadelphia Union League, the city's "society had been ruled by rigorous distinctions, often arbitrary, but entirely irreversible; and those who made the distinctions were in general Southern in their leanings." The southern atmosphere of Philadelphia was so overwhelming that it even infiltrated the city's Unitarian congregation, a denomination with strong New England ties. When William Furness prepared to give his first antislavery sermon in 1839, his nerves shook at the knowledge that "there sat Pierce Butler before me the possessor of some 2 or 300 slaves, Mr. [James] Taylor who apologizes for slavery under the authority of the New Testament, Mr. [John] Vaughan who cannot bear to hear a word on the subject, & the majority of my congregation." The good Reverend's fears were well founded. James Taylor immediately fired off a note to Furness demanding to be notified in advance of future discourses on slavery so that he might "act accordingly."

---

and almost 40 of his parishioners affirmed that their pastor's sermon on the "Abolition of Slavery in the South" did "no good, present or remote, but on the contrary . . . sows the seeds of disunion." If antislavery sympathizers wished to circulate in Philadelphia society, they did well to keep their convictions to themselves.7

Southerners and their allies, on the other hand, felt little pressure to repress their feelings. The presence of a number of socially prominent southern families in the city contributed more than the indignation caused by the outrageous behavior of a few abolitionists to the city's conservative tone. Middletons, Butlers, Manigaults, Draytons, and other lesser-known family names all made frequent appearances in ballroom and parlor during the winter social season. Other families, notably the Ingersolls, Cadwaladers, Fishers, and Gratzes, had strong family and property ties to the South. And besides being a stopping-off point for southerners headed toward northern resorts, Philadelphia remained a popular tourist attraction in its own right. Tour guides highlighted patriotic attractions, especially Independence Hall, that gave the city a nationalistic aura and appealed to Americans' memory of a shared, glorious past. The mid-century city also enjoyed the lingering benefits of its former greatness, still boasting large publishing houses and renowned medical schools. Both of these allurements drew Benjamin Wailes, the Natchez scientist, to Philadelphia in 1859. Wailes toured the city

after placing his son Leonard at a boarding house for his year of study at the Jefferson Medical College. As a matter of course he enjoyed the social benefits of his high station, finding hospitality at the homes of numerous scientific friends and meeting fellow travelers from his home state. "The afternoon sped away most pleasantly," Wailes recorded, "questions were asked and answered after Mississippi friends, and old occurrences, which a mutual interest hallowed, were discussed." Deep South travelers like Wailes and his friends both found succor in and contributed to Philadelphia's conservative, southern character in the 1850s.¹

Though this atmosphere discouraged sympathetic consideration of abolition, few of those who were critical of the peculiar institution felt strongly enough to let their scruples interfere with their social responsibilities. In 1856, Sidney George Fisher attended a wine party in Philadelphia with a "pleasant set" of gentlemen that included "[William] Summer of S[outh] Carolina," editor of the Southern Agriculturist, whom Fisher found to be "social, intelligent, [and] gentlemanlike." Pierce Butler was also in the company. A year earlier Fisher spent his Newport vacation with Joseph Allen Smith (whom he referred to as Izard), a planter of old Palmetto State lineage. Fisher depicted the company, consisting largely of southerners and their Philadelphia friends, as "[a] ¹

---

¹Benjamin L. C. Wailes Diary, July 4 1859, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson. On Wailes, see Charles S. Sydnor, A Gentleman from the Old Natchez Region: Benjamin L. C. Wailes (Durham: Duke University Press, 1938). Two nationalistic guides popular with southerners were J.C. Myers, Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, the Canadas, and Nova Scotia (Harrisonburg: J.H. Wartman and Brothers, 1849); and G.M. Davison, The Travelers Guide through the Middle and Northern States and the Provinces of Canada (7th ed. Saratoga Springs: G.M. Davison & D. S. Wood, 1837).
large, refined, & rich society. . . . very handsome & pleasant." The Carolina clan took no offense at their Philadelphia friend's moral qualms about their human property, and Fisher's exalted opinion of his companions suffered not a bit from their ownership of slaves. "The Izards have been as kind and friendly as possible," he wrote. Doubtless the thorny subject of slavery never came up in such refined company. Perhaps it was the more outspoken antislavery feelings of Joseph Sill that guaranteed the Unitarian's exclusion from fashionable society. The merchant agonized over the constant snubs of the better sort, many of whom were fellow members of William Furness' Unitarian church. Despite his Sunday association with the leisure class, Sill was "never invited to their evening parties."9

For all their best efforts, Philadelphia's first families could not forestall forever the intrusion of politics into their society. As animosity between North and South mounted in the late 1850s the placid facade of polite society grew strained, the identification of proslavery with conservatism belied by southern nationalists' fire-eating rhetoric. Incidents like Preston Brooks's caning of Charles Sumner, an "atrocious outrage" compounded by the approbation of some Philadelphians, fueled Sidney Fisher's growing indignation towards the South. When Fisher saw Harriet Beecher Stowe "abused with bitterness by the Southern press & by Southern people & by many in the North who have Southern property & connections," it confirmed his impression that her book presented "a correct picture of the enormities of slavery." And Fisher felt bitterly his alienation from

9Fisher Diary, 8 October 1856, 17 August 1855; on Sill, Geffen, Philadelphia Unitarianism, 168.
his wife's eminent family, the Ingersolls, especially his father-in-law Charles Jared and his brother-in-law Charles, both of whom revered the South. Fisher's family was not the only one to feel the divisions fostered by radicalism over slavery. After a mob sacked Cassius Clay's newspaper office in 1845, Rebecca Gratz disdained both southern partisans and their antislavery opponents in a letter to her sister-in-law in Lexington. She "grieve[d] for the poor blacks whose condition will be worsted," but considered that "the best of them do not consider [abolitionists] as friends" because "the bad are only more set on mischief by the encouragement of their interference." She was most concerned with the effect on Lexington's gay world, hoping that the prosoutherners' rash action would not, as had happened in Philadelphia, "raise up new troubles in your social circles."\(^{10}\)

Just as politics intruded into society, prominent Philadelphians moved to shape the course of the sectional crisis. They were alarmed at the potential for social disorder, and while few considered seriously the possibility of disunion until the late 1850s, they feared the divisive effects of sectional animosity on their national community of conservative gentlemen. And as devoted unionists they were genuinely proud of the

---

accomplishments of the young republic. Despite the ridicule the leisure class received in
the press and popular culture, most old families shared patriot backgrounds that inspired a
warm sense of national pride and group identity. Responsible men of both sections
rallied to the cause of the union, and "Union" and "conservative" became the twin rallying
cries of the serious players in Philadelphia's Civil War politics, the principles which no
man with political aspirations dared contradict. For a significant sector of the genteel
population, however, both terms served as euphemisms for prosouthernism. Such was
the case with the "Great Union Meeting," actually a Democratic Party affair, called
amidst the furor surrounding the Compromise of 1850. It furnished an opportunity for
George Mifflin Dallas to voice the prosouthern sentiments of the Philadelphia
Democracy. Speaking "within sight of the birth chamber of our national existence—here,
on the spot where the states entered into the consecrated league," Dallas urged the North
to "utter words, true to constitutional obligations, true to honor, and true to the highest
and holiest impulse of patriotism." He meant that the North should submit to the
demands of southern extremists. Dallas wished to "rekindle the almost extinguished
confidence and friendship of our Southern brethren, by manifesting a determination to
enforce their rights, and by showing that we deeply and sincerely sympathize in the
sufferings and wrongs to which they have been subjected." Philadelphia conservatives
characterized the political contests of the 1850s as struggles between antislavery fanatics

11On the rise of the patriot gentry during the Revolution see Stephen Brobeck,
"Revolutionary Change in Colonial Philadelphia: The Brief Life of the Proprietary
and southern gentlemen. For them, the choice was simple.\textsuperscript{12}

Of course, this strategy entailed some difficult choices, the hardest and most dramatic of which was the abandonment by gentlemen of the sinking Whig party and their subsequent allegiance to the party of Jackson. Party loyalties ran strong, even amongst the patrician set, but their pain was eased by their identification of the Democracy with the conservative cause, made especially credible after the rise of "black Republicanism" after 1856. "Many former Whigs of conservative temperament were moving toward the Democrats because the new Republican party struck them as dangerously radical on the slavery question," observes Russell F. Weigley. Relatively few of the city's eminent men were Democrats before 1856. Richard Rush, Charles Ingersoll, and George Cadwalader were exceptions to the rule that placed most genteel Philadelphians in the Whig camp, and their status gave the Democracy credibility as an alternative after the demise of the Whigs.\textsuperscript{13} The leaders of the party remained "conservatives, a fact they were proud to claim while arguing that the Republicans were revolutionists." Such a man was William Bradford Reed, a former Attorney General of Pennsylvania and Philadelphia District Attorney who served as Buchanan's ambassador to China as a reward for securing the support of Reed's former Whig colleagues for the "Sage of Wheatland." Reed "embraced the Democracy in 1856 because he regarded that


\textsuperscript{13}Sidney Fisher was glad to hear that Pierce Butler had "become a Democrat because the more men of property they have the more conservative they will be." Fisher Diary, November 2, 1836.
party as the best available vehicle for his upcoming battle against divisive abolitionist reform," though he "deplored extremist views whether they emanated from North or South." Reed spoke for the ranks of former Whigs, longing for union but disgusted with Republican radicalism. They looked to the Democrats as "the conservative party of the nation."¹⁴

At no point was the conservative consensus of proper Philadelphians more evident than during the days surrounding the execution of John Brown on December 2, 1859. Americans of all stripes, even those in sympathy with Brown's motives, deplored his methods, and Philadelphians were no exception. "It is rare to disapprove so entirely of a man's deed," wrote Susan Lesley, "and yet have such entire sympathy for his motives and character." Nevertheless, abolitionists held a "sympathy meeting" at National Hall on the hour of Brown's execution, led by Lucretia Mott, Robert Purvis, and William Furness, where the small mixed-race crowd "talked and prayed" for their martyred hero. Many, if not most, of those who filled National Hall, were "sensation seekers" and southern medical students, according to their adversaries. The results were predictable. Fearing

¹⁴Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War," 370; Nicholas B. Wainwright, "The Loyal Opposition in Civil War Philadelphia," PMHB 88 (1964), 295; Reed to James Buchanan, 7 February 1856, quoted in Joanna Cowden, "William Bradford Reed of Philadelphia," manuscript kindly supplied by the author, 149-150. On Reed see also Arnold Schankman, "William B. Reed and the Civil War," PH 39 (1972), 455-468. E. Digby Baltzell alleges that Rush's and Ingersoll's membership in the Democracy embodied the tradition of aristocrats who "support the rights of those less privileged than themselves, often in opposition to the privileged class that bred them." Actually, their affiliation spoke to their deep conservatism, allegiance to family tradition, and no small dose of personal eccentricity, not any identification with their social inferiors. Baltzell, Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class (first pub. 1958; New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1992), 132.
the worst, Mayor Alexander Henry wisely dispatched 120 policeman for the physical protection of the speakers. They prevented an anti-abolitionist merchant from addressing the crowd, but did nothing to stop the catcalls, jeers, and hisses that rendered the speakers almost inaudible. Despite the "large and efficient police force," rued one sympathetic attendee, "a parcel of Virginia Medical Students contrived to disturb and alloy all the speakers."

Conservatives felt they needed a more positive expression of Philadelphia's indignation lest the South doubt "that the great mass of citizens of Pennsylvania . . . are opposed to any act of any party which would violate the rights of any State of the confederacy or which would jeopardize public tranquility." Their fears were well founded. When the South Carolinian Elizabeth Grimball spent the fall at the Philadelphia home of her Aunt, Gabrielle Manigault Morris Butler, she wrote her fire-eating brothers of the prosouthern sentiments of her mother's circle. "You are woefully mistaken," fired back her indignant brother, "in the belief, that the South had many friends at the North . . . . They are all enemies of slavery, and hope for its extinction." The only reason their aunt's friends did not "advocate open hostility," Lewis Morris Grimball declared, was "because they are cool enough to see that such measures would produce a dissolution of what they are pleased to call this 'glorious union.'" This ignorance of Philadelphia's

friendly intentions particularly disturbed William Bradford Reed, who assured his southern correspondents of the sympathy of his circle. "There seems to be a studied design," he wrote to his Palmetto State friend Robert Gourdin, "to put you and us in the wrong." Reed took pains to broadcast publicly his "more than strong Southern opinions," and even after hostilities broke out he privately assured his southern friends that his circle of "gentlemen" continued to work behind the scenes for "recognition and peace."

Seeking to create national publicity for the conservative cause, Philadelphia's "responsible citizens" called another huge Union Meeting "to deplore John Brown and express solicitude for the constitutional rights of the South." Some of the city's most prominent citizens, including Charles and Joseph Ingersoll, Henry Fuller, and Richard Vaux addressed the crowd of over 6000, but the preponderance of Buchanan men on the resolutions' committee, the speakers' platform, and the crowd demonstrated the meeting's partisan agenda. "Our patriotic and conservative citizens," assured the directors, "were even more alarmed than their Southern brethren at such a display of fanaticism." Henry M. Fuller promised the "Men of the South" that responsible northerners "wish to live in amity with you, and have a perfect Union. Do not mistake the sentiments of a few with the sentiments of the masses," he entreated. To show the sentiments of all

16Lewis Morris Grimball to Elizabeth Grimball, 27 November 1860. Elizabeth continued to assure her brothers of Philadelphia's sympathy with the South, without success. "You will be wise to keep Politics out of your letters till you come home and get a few ideas on the subject from Pa," wrote her exasperated brother. Berkeley Grimball to Elizabeth, 8 December 1860, Grimball Family Papers, UNC. Gabrielle Butler, widow of Thomas Butler, was the daughter of Elizabeth Manigault and Lewis Morris, granddaughter of Margaret and Gabriel Manigault. Reed to Robert Gourdin, 22 January 1861; Reed to John Campbell. n.d., in Schankman, "Reed and the Civil War," 460-461.
Philadelphians, the organizers sent a banner "from a number of ladies of this city" to Virginia's Governor Henry Wise bearing the inscriptions "Union Forever" and "Pennsylvania Greets her Sister State." Yet just beneath the consensual Unionist rhetoric lay a more sinister, divisive subtext: at the mention of Furness, Wendell Phillips, and Lucretia Mott, the crowd cried "Hang them all," and enthusiastic applause greeted the speaker who suggested that antislavery lecturers be tried and hanged.17

Just when the efforts of these highly-placed Philadelphians to assure their southern counterparts of their amity promised to bear fruit, a highly publicized event eclipsed their scripted affairs. The secession of hundreds of southern students from the city's medical schools temporarily put the lie to assertions of northern sympathy toward the South and damaged the credibility of Quaker City conservatives. The aftermath of the affair, however, revealed the incident to be more of a college prank than a prelude to sectional dissolution. Ostensibly, the students left to protest the hostile atmosphere in the city following Brown's execution and the arrest of three armed students at a lecture by George Curtis, the New York abolitionist. On Saturday, December 17, 1859 Dr. L.S. Joynes of the Medical College of Virginia received three telegrams from southern students in Philadelphia. The first simply read, "Are Southern students admitted for [the] remainder of session?" During an executive session of the college called to deliberate on the request, Joynes's colleague David Tucker received a second message claiming that

150 students were prepared to enter the Richmond school. This message bore the signatures of Francis Luckett and Hunter McGuire, Virginia-born doctors who together held "quiz classes"--review sessions especially popular with southerners--in Philadelphia. The final telegram, "We anxiously await your reply. For God's sake let it be favorable--only diplomas fee. We are in earnest, confidential," arrived at the end of the meeting, during which the board voted unanimously to accept the students tuition-free. Henry Frost, Dean of the Medical College of South Carolina, approved the similar request made of him.  

At a southerners-only meeting on December 20, the students formally accepted the school's offer. Being "thoroughly convinced of the fact that the sentiments and feelings of those in whose midst, and under whose instruction we are, with a few honorable exceptions, are inimical to the institutions with which we have been intimately associated," the students "determined in a body to secede from said institutions, to return to a Southern soil with the view to a permanent residence and the devotion of our united and most enthusiastic efforts in the maintenance and advancement of Southern

---

institutions and interests." It was a statement that could have been lifted verbatim from
the dozens of articles calling for a "southern education for southern youth" during the
preceding twenty years. Defying the earnest pleas of northern friends, as well as the
passionate appeals of Samuel D. Gross, a revered professor at Jefferson Medical College,
hasty preparations were made for withdrawal. The students left en masse at 11 p.m. on
December 21, arriving in Richmond the next day to a "hero's welcome" supervised by
Governor Wise himself. 244 students arrived in Richmond, 144 of whom enrolled at the
Medical College of Virginia. The remainder moved on to the Medical College of South
Carolina, other southern schools, or just home. The withdrawal was a serious blow to
Philadelphia schools, especially Jefferson, 69% of whose 1859-1860 class of 630 called
the South home. Only 40 students left the older University of Pennsylvania.19

Predictably, the southern and northern responses to the secession differed
considerably. Southern doctors and medical writers, who had chafed under the
domination of Philadelphia medicine for decades, gloated upon their apparent triumph.
Their withdrawal, Henry Frost of the Medical College of South Carolina contended, was
"the first public step to release us from intellectual bondage on the North." Richard

19 Thomas F. Lee, Chairman, et al, & Drs. Luckett and McGuire, to Governor
Henry Wise, 19 December 1859, Minutes, Board of Visitors, MCV; Breeden, "Rehearsal
for Secession,"180, 186; Matriculation Records of the Medical College of Virginia, 6th
Session, 1859-1860, MCV. 44% of the students enrolled at MCV were native Virginians.
Other states represented were Alabama (17); North Carolina and Mississippi (16); South
Carolina (14); Georgia (6); Arkansas (4); and Tennessee, Louisiana, Missouri, and Texas
(2). Catalogue of the Trustees, Professors, and Students of the Jefferson Medical
College of Philadelphia (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Grambo, 1860). On the sectional
education movement, John S. Ezell, "A Southern Education for Southrons," Journal of
Southern History 17 (1951), 303-327.
Arnold of Savannah saluted the withdrawal as a "patriotic impulse" that distinguished the students as "true men." Northern reviewers typically resorted to ridicule. "Our once fair city has been covered with disgrace and shame," being "tainted with Abolitionism!" joked one editor, playing off the ridiculous accusation of the students that the city was rife with antislavery sentiment. Nevertheless, many medical gentlemen North as well as South lamented the intrusion of sectionalism into medicine. "If this movement is to be regarded as the result of political causes," the Southern Medical and Surgical Journal editorialized, "it is to be regretted." Its editors feared that "for the first time . . . have political acerbity and intolerance risen to such a height as to cumber the walls of science." The New York Times spoke to the fears of conservative gentlemen throughout the North that despite the "Union meetings of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia . . . educated southern men" who had been "living in actual contact with the people" of Philadelphia, "a singularly conservative Northern city . . . think it impossible for them any longer to maintain honorable relations with the North." Indeed, the removal of the students seemed conclusive proof that the efforts of conservative men to reassure the South had been in vain.20

After the initial shock of the withdrawal passed, however, it became clear that just as many southern men remained in Philadelphia as had left. "To make matters worse" for southern partisans, notes James Breeden, the historian of the secession, "the students who remained in Philadelphia served as visible reminders of the city's conservative character." The press exploited the remaining men to the maximum, claiming that those staying back represented "by far the most respectable" southern members of their class. Critics condemned the Richmond's faculty's collusion in the affair, Wise's gloating, and the Common Council of Richmond's contribution of over $3500 to the students for train expenses, as inflaming "the excited feelings of great portions of our country." A "Unionist" writing to the Baltimore American regarding the secession insisted that "no conservative man, by whom I mean a union-loving citizen as much opposed to the fire-eating Southerner as the fanatical Northern abolitionist . . . should countenance that which would . . . turn the balance" toward disunion. Reports circulated that made the seceding students seem anything but "responsible." The American reprinted a Philadelphia column reporting the return of a number of the withdrawing students who admitted "that their visit to Richmond was only to enjoy a Christmas frolic, and an exhibition of Governor Wise's oratorical pyrotechnics." The "treason" of these returning students, as it was deemed, infuriated the radical editor of the Oglethorpe Medical and Surgical Journal, Harvey Byrd, who marveled how young men "at the most critical period of their country's history, [could] patronize the institutions of their enemies." Evidently the returning men were not alone in viewing Philadelphians as

University Press, 1989), 179-205.
their friends: the next year 42% of the University of Pennsylvania's class was southern, and 48% of Jefferson's. Though the latter signaled a significant decrease from 69% the year before—a high point for southerners in Philadelphia schools—the figure was remarkably high given the positive publicity generated by the secession. Philadelphia's conservatives had good cause to feel they had preserved the trust of the South.²¹

Though the students secession proved to be a diversion, the serious work of conciliation between the sections remained to be done by Philadelphia conservatives. Their next major opportunity was the presidential election of 1860. By and large, the city's gentlemen agreed that John C. Breckinridge was their most appropriate choice. The strong support given the Kentuckian in Philadelphia owed much to the city's southern leanings and the lingering prominence of some gentlemen in one faction of the Democratic party. The southern element in Philadelphia was so strong that its Democratic party had strongly supported even the discredited Lecompton constitution, though much of this was due to the influence of the Pennsylvania-born President, James Buchanan. So pro-southern was the Pennsylvania Democracy that its 1859 state chairman was Robert Tyler, Philadelphia resident, son of the former president, "a Virginian in origin and a friend of slavery." In the city itself, "Democrats of old family such as

²¹Breeden, "Rehearsal for Secession," 201; Philadelphia North American, December 22, 1859; Baltimore American, December 26, 1859, December 30, 1859; "Southern Medical Students in Northern Medical Colleges—Once More," Oglethorpe Medical and Surgical Journal 3 (1861), 268-269. The figures from Jefferson Medical College and the University of Pennsylvania are from, respectively, Catalogue of the Trustees, Professors, and Students of the Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1861), and Ezell, "Southern Education for Southrons," 310. On the sums paid out to Luckett and McGuire for disbursement to the students, see the Sanger Historical Files, Secession of Philadelphia Students, MCV.
Charles Ingersoll and William B. Reed... supplied the Breckinridge leadership.

Conversely, "the labor and immigrant factions in the city" spurned the patricians' lead, following Lewis Cassidy, the Democratic chieftain of the city's working-class wards, in supporting Stephen A. Douglas. "Few of this group were socially prominent," while "[m]ost of the members of the Breckinridge group possessed prominence and wealth."22

Though Republican support both in the city and statewide was muted by native-son support for Buchanan, his support had withered two years later. In the state elections of 1858, the Democracy lost control of Pennsylvania. Buchanan's support for the discredited constitution, together with the economic slump of the Panic of 1857, created opportunities their opponents were quick to exploit. For the mayoral election of 1858, the Republicans and Americans united behind Alexander Henry. According to historian Tyler Anbinder, "by broadening their platform and softening their anti-slavery rhetoric, Pennsylvania Republicans transformed their party from an anti-slavery vehicle to a broad-based organization that all opponents of the Democracy could support. As William Gienapp concludes, "it was in Pennsylvania that Know Nothings wielded the most complete control of the Democratic party." Moreover, many of the city's Whig establishment had moved to the American Party, so the fusion of the two into the People's Party--the name adopted to mask the Republicans' antislavery origins--

facilitated their move in 1860 to the Republicans. Of those Pennsylvania voters who cast their ballots in 1856 for Millard Fillmore, reports Gienapp, 83% voted for Lincoln in 1860.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus class divisions, party realignment, and the momentous circumstances of the campaign itself to generate an especially contentious race. John W. Forney, editor of the Philadelphia \textit{Press} and a warm friend of Buchanan, broke with his chief over the Lecompton controversy, and led the separatist Douglas movement in opposition to the Democratic establishment. Behind the scenes, however, Forney was negotiating with officials of the Republican (People’s) party to split the Democratic vote in exchange for appointment to public office. Forney’s apostasy was especially galling because he had hitherto been such a warm friend of the South. In 1850, Richard D. Arnold, the Savannah physician-politician, thanked Forney for "the able & gallant fight you have made in your paper for the constitutional rights of the South. . . . No editor in the country North of Mason & Dixon is so well-known, so highly appreciated & so warmly thanked by the people of Georgia." The divisions in the party prompted the prosouthern state committee authorized its rank and file to support either Democratic nominee, and Cassidy’s faction promptly established an alternative ticket committed to Douglas.\textsuperscript{24}


Philadelphia Republicans knew that, despite their union with nativists, they still faced trouble because of the city's southern leanings. Whig-Republicans, led by *North American* editor Morton McMichael, and mayor Alexander Henry, hosted a gala dinner early in 1860 for 400 southerners and Philadelphians at the Academy of Music in the hopes of founding a Constitutional Union party binding northern anti-Democrats and southern former Whigs. The meeting broke up amidst recriminations when John Maynard, a Tennessee congressman, condemned the People's party for its ties to the national Republicans and declared that southerners would refuse to recognize a Seward administration. McMichael, who had made a conciliatory speech denouncing both northern and southern radicals, criticized Maynard openly and explicitly rejected the legitimacy of secession. The meeting dispersed in failure. Only 7% of the 1856 Fillmore vote in Pennsylvania went for the Constitutional Union ticket in 1860.25

McClure and his People's party faced serious difficulties owing to their antislavery image. Securing an office on Chestnut Street and wishing to hang a massive flag bearing the names of Lincoln, Hamlin, and Andrew Curtin, their nominee for Governor, from their headquarters across the fashionable thoroughfare, they sought the permission of merchants across the street to secure one end of the cord. They could find none willing to be identified with the party of abolition. "[T]here was not a single man of business on Chestnut Street between Third and Ninth," recalled McClure, "who would permit a rope to be attached to his building across the street to bear the Lincoln flag." Even pro-Lincoln

25 An account of the meeting can be found in the *North American* and Ledger, January 16, 1860, and the *Sunday Dispatch*, January 15, 1860. See also Dusinberre, *Civil War Issues*, 93-94; Gienapp, "Nativism and the Creation of a Republican Majority," 555.
merchants demurred. Enjoying "a vast preponderance of the Southern trade," empathized McClure, "they were unwilling to commit themselves in any public way" to the Republican party. The party faced internal divisions in the state similar to those that plagued Democrats. Simon Cameron waged a personal feud against Curtin and set up a separate state committee to foil Curtin's election. Its biggest handicap, however, was its identification with abolition. Republicans stressed their tariff support in Pennsylvania, but they could not avoid discussion of sectional issues. Though they emphasized their commitment to Union and compromise, Republicans felt trumped on the issue. In 1860 as in 1856, remarked the North American bitterly, Democrats "had the Union on the very verge of dissolution, . . . Honest and timid men were deluded by that outcry. . . . 'Conservatism' was then, as now, the catch word of the day."26

The fears of McClure and other Republican leaders that the abolitionist stigma would fatally would their candidates proved unfounded. In 1858 the Democrats had lost control of the state after their opponents ran an anti-Irish campaign. The People's party had done so again to great effect in 1860. Anti-Catholic feeling against the large Irish presence in Philadelphia, combined with class divisions in the Philadelphia Democracy, produced a Lincoln majority. The Republican received 52% of Philadelphia votes, the Breckinridge faction 28%, Douglas 11%, and Bell 9%. Lincoln triumphed in the face of southern threats that a Republican victory would mean the end of the Union. Philadelphia's gentlemen had made the same argument, implicitly endorsing secession.

---

26 McClure, Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania, 413-414; North American quoted in Dusinberre, Civil War Issues, 100.
Two months before the election, William Bradford Reed told the National Democratic Association that Pennsylvania's "true interests" were "in the South and Southwest from which . . . Abolitionism, if triumphant, will forever divide us." On the eve of the election, Benjamin Rush, grandson of the signer, published "Epitaph for the Union" in the partisan Pennsylvanian, blaming Republicans for secession if Lincoln won. The article was reprinted in South Carolina newspapers. Small wonder that fire-eaters took solace in Philadelphia "conservatism." Philadelphia gentlemen "encouraged southerners to believe that if they did secede in the face of Abraham Lincoln's election, much of the North would acquiesce in their departure."^27

If upper-class behavior led secessionists to believe that the North had not the will to coerce the South to remain in the Union, their actions after the election emboldened them even further. Some Philadelphians openly suggested that Pennsylvania's interests and sympathies lay with the South and that the Keystone State ought to join the Confederacy. Between Lincoln's election and the opening of hostilities in April 1861, Philadelphians held dozens of meetings to express sympathy with the South and demand that the new administration make humiliating concessions to keep the seceding states in the union. Even the city's Republican-leaning newspapers, the North American and the Bulletin, supported accepting the secession of the seven deep South states in March, amidst rumors that Sumter was to be evacuated. At best, Philadelphians "favored

concessions on slavery, opposed an indiscriminate display of force against the South, but supported using force in case of a showdown." Foreshadowing wartime class divisions within the Democracy, however, working men's conventions rejected resolutions favored by anti-coercionists that condemned the use of force against the South under any circumstances.28

The secessionist furor produced a pamphlet war and a rash of mass meetings aimed towards rallying party men and shaping public opinion in which the business community participated vigorously. Despite its strong commercial ties to the West, cemented by the Pennsylvania Railroad's 1858 connection to Chicago through Pittsburgh, merchants and manufacturers still enjoyed a lucrative trade with the slave states. In January, the Board of Trade asked the General Assembly to consider the repeal of certain legislation, especially tariffs, deemed anti-southern. Further meetings of the board produced resolutions endorsing peaceful measures to win back the states, though a January 7th gathering called on Pennsylvania to lend her support to "the South, whose sympathies are ours." Before Lincoln's election, a "Merchant of Philadelphia" predicted a financial collapse should the Republican carry the White House. He also chided those who "suppose that the great Commonwealths of New York and Pennsylvania . . . will back up New England against the South." Pennsylvania would, "on the day of trial, treat the imaginary equality of the negro as a ridiculous abstraction, . . . We are not enthusiasts, or fanatics." During the secession winter he summoned an image of "an endless chain, freighted with comforts and conveniences, and revolving inwards from Long Island

28Dusinberre, Civil War Issues, 110.
Sound to Cape Fear." Secession, the Merchant argued, made good political sense as well. Pennsylvania's withdrawal would "turn the scale against [Lincoln], and therefore against civil war." His entreaties typified the wishes of Philadelphia's business community, who wished to avoid disunion, bloodshed, and commercial disruption.²⁹

People's party men responded with their own publications and meetings. A Republican-leaning Union meeting on January 3 attended by the leader of the city's working-class Democrats, Lewis Cassidy pledged itself to "remov[ing] all just ground of complaint against the Northern States and to secure the perpetuity of the Union." Its conclusion did not bode well for compromise, however. William Lewis, author of an article supporting secession, chaired the meeting in the prevailing spirit of conciliation in the sober days surrounding the siege of Sumter, when war at last seemed a real possibility. The huge crowd applauded resolutions supporting the defense of the forts "and gave blanket endorsement to any other measures the administration might take to

enforce the laws," prompting Lewis to withdraw. The failure of these and many other efforts at consensus in the winter of 1860-61 prompted a hardening of positions in the Philadelphia Republican party. Joseph Reed Ingersoll, a Whig turned Republican, called secessionists "too venomous to be pitied, and too violent and mischievous to be despised." Like others in his genteel circle, he hearkened back to a time when southern friends made "[v]isits of health and recreation . . . at all seasons, and . . . hospitable doors were everywhere thrown open to them." But like others in his party, Ingersoll had moved decisively and publicly "to the conclusion that the Union must coerce the South if everything else failed," and he ended his pamphlet on a martial note, promising that the Union's "gallant sons" were assured "a certain passport to glorious victory or honorable death."  

One of the persistent ironies of Philadelphia's Civil War history concerns the behavior of the gentlemen Democrats, who adopted ever more radical positions and behaved in most ungentlemanly ways. While People's party men and working-class Democrats agonized over the possibility of war and strove for compromise, Breckinridge men clamored for a fight, sunk to desperate levels of invective, and politicized the society they hoped to preserve for civility and sociability. Not all proper Democrats defied the manners of their birth, of course, though most harbored unrealistic expectations of what compromises the North would tolerate. Joshua Francis Fisher, for example, suggested a battery of "Concessions and Compromises" that could have been characterized as outright

---

30Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia, 30-31; Dusinberre, Civil War Issues, 107; [Joseph Reed Ingersoll], Secession: A Folly and a Crime (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1861), 7, 8, 29; Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War," 393.
capitulation, including the repeal of all state laws interfering with the fugitive slave law; repeal of all state laws interfering with the right of slaveowners to travel in free states with their property; fixing the maximum tariff rate at 20%; mandating that Supreme Court judges be named by their circuit; and requiring an equal number of northern and southern judges deliberate on slavery questions, with odd judges being disqualified.\textsuperscript{31}

Fisher offered his generous proposals in the true spirit of upper-class civility, but the same could not be said of other prosouthern Philadelphians. Organizing a counter demonstration to the People's party meeting of January 3, Democrats collected "the oddest possible mixture of the upper and under crust of political parties" to preserve the appearance of nonpartisanship. Nevertheless, "the magnates of the meeting. . . . Like most of those in the body of the hall, were Breckinridge Democrats," according to the \textit{North American} account. An impressive array of Philadelphia patricians--Ingersolls, Reeds, Whartons, and Kanes--addressed the assembly. Resolutions accused Lincoln's party of failing "in its duty to the Constitution in all its parts," of establishing "the despotism of a sectional party," and maintained that "the present difficulties in the country are principally attributable to the sentiment prevalent in the north against the moral, social, and political rights" of the South.

To a man, the "magnates" who spoke to the assembly spurned the relatively civil tone of the resolutions. Perhaps they felt that the fortunes of their class were inextricably tied with Philadelphia's southern orientation. In abandoning all pretense of civility,

\textsuperscript{31}[Joshua Francis Fisher], \textit{Concessions and Compromises} (Philadelphia: C. Sherman & Son, 1860), 1-2, 7, 9-11.
however, these Democratic bluebloods discredited both their cause and their caste and made it easier for union-leaning gentlemen to identify themselves with the Federal cause. Charles Ingersoll accused Republicans, and the state administration in particular, of provoking Virginia and Maryland toward secession. William Reed's speech expressing empathy for his southern "brethren" earned his "excommunication by old fellow Whigs . . . and ultimately exile from the city he loved." George Wharton accused Republicans of wishing to spill "the blood of our fellow citizens" to achieve their antislavery agenda, and likened Seward's efforts to preserve the union to "a doctor who, finding his patient in a high fever, promises to call again in a month." Benjamin Brewster's venom outdid that of his genteel colleagues. The United States attorney for Philadelphia accused "Yankees . . . of turn[ing] their backs on God and worship[ing] the devil," asking why "we should butcher our southern brethren because the Yankee is in love with a he-nigger." Finally, Brewster echoed other speakers in accusing Cassidy's faction of lower-class Douglas Democrats of "goad[ing] the South beyond endurance," insisting that "a united Democratic party could have averted the present evils"--a party, that is, deferential to its leisure-class Breckinridge men.32

Though Brewster's race-baiting speech received enthusiastic approbation from the assembled throng, the wildest cheers greeted those who suggested that, if the crisis continued, Pennsylvania should secede with the slave states. The directors resolved that "the dissolution of the Union . . . may release this commonwealth from the bonds which

now connect her with this confederacy." Disunion would compel the Keystone State to "determine with whom her lot should be cast, whether with the north and east, whose fanaticism has precipitated this misery upon us, or with our brethren of the south, whose wrongs we feel as our own." William Bradford Reed, "applauded at times during the course of his remarks. . . . deprecated disunion, but believed that if it must come, Pennsylvania would then consider whether her duty bound her to the north or to the south." George Wharton spurned all delicacy in throwing his lot unambiguously with the South. "Our interests are with the south," he declared, "mine are at any rate. The south and the west are our best friends. . . . We can't be brought up by Boston and New York."

These remarks were hardly out of place in Philadelphia in the winter and early spring of 1861. The city, and especially its upper ranks, was deeply divided by the southern question. In part, the majority given to Lincoln must be seen as a repudiation of aristocratic leadership. Sectional loyalties and the regional orientation of the upper-class were thrashed out publicly and privately in the early months of 1861. The prosouthern argument was articulated most forcefully in the pages of the Palmetto Flag, a two-penny sheet published to "advocate the recognition of the Southern Confederacy" and "afford to our Southern friends and their Northern sympathizers, a liberal vehicle for the expression of their views and opinions. . . . exhibit[ing] the hollow hypocrisy of the would-be abettors of abolition in the Northern and eastern sections of the country." The editors of the provocatively-titled screed appealed to the commercial interests of Pennsylvanians, suggesting that when industrialists considered that "they can become the manufacturing hand of the Southern confederacy . . . they will throw aside their alliance . . . with the
abolitionists and their allies the Republicans." Its most common and articulate articles, however, appealed to the sentimental allegiances of Philadelphians. Hence the Flag presented a "Sketch of General Beauregard" while that "descendant of the most aristocratic Southern families" was investing the sons of Pennsylvania trapped in Fort Sumter. It represented South Carolina's governor Pickens as an "affable gentleman" with "an easy and dignified demeanor, and presents in all respects the characteristics of a high-toned Southerner." In short, the Palmetto Flag appealed to the conservative inclinations of Philadelphia's fashionable and business communities for whom "a full accord between the wise and good of all the sections" entailed the continuance of the city's prosouthern social and commercial orientation.33

The Palmetto Flag survived so long as Philadelphia's allegiance remained in question. Anderson's surrender, however, energized the city. Crowds that had heckled antislavery speakers and hounded free blacks turned against the prosouthern faction, now stigmatized with disloyalty. Upon hearing of the fall of Fort Sumter, Sarah Butler Wister, the daughter of Pierce Butler and Fanny Kemble, witnessed "[t]housands assembled furious at the news of the surrender, & swearing revenge upon all disunionists or

disaffected... visit[ing] the houses, stores, & offices of some of the leading Loco Focos who have of course been especially odious in the last few days." Southern sympathizers either laid low, like Charles Ingersoll and George Martin, hung flags or made patriotic speeches, like George Cadwalader, or fled town altogether, like Robert Tyler. The mob moved to "tear... down the offices of a small paper called the Palmetto Flag recently started, "and were foiled only at the intervention of Mayor Henry, who shut down the sheet. Henry also had to come to the aid of William Bradford Reed when an angry crowd confronted him at his home. A quick-thinking black servant waved an American flag from an upstairs window, reported Reed, placating "the ruffians who had tried to frighten my wife and little children." Pierce Butler escaped the crowd's indignation because he was in Georgia inspecting his plantations. "Oh how thankful I am for Father's absence," exclaimed Wister, probably as much for the crowd's sake as for her volatile Father's.  

The war changed the minds of some in the city's upper crust as well. On Chestnut Street, where Alexander McClure could not hang a Lincoln campaign flag just a few months before, "flags large & small flaunt from every building, the dry-goods shops have red white & blue materials draped together in their windows, in the ribbon stores the national colors hang in long streamers." Hartman Kuhn, "despite his Southern sympathies & Loco Foco tendencies," wrote a shocked Sarah Wister, underwent a drastic

---

change. "[P]atriotism & feeling for the Union supersede everything else now. . . . enlisting is [his] only idea." Upon the surge in war feeling following Lincoln's call for troops to suppress the rebellion, Philadelphia witnessed even more "sudden & amusing conversions," the most striking that of the erstwhile secessionist William Reed. His change of heart was greeted with a skepticism that foreshadowed the social fractures the war would bring to fashionable society. Reed's grandfather, Joseph Reed, served as George Washington's adjutant-general in 1775-1777 but resigned at Valley Forge to become governor of Pennsylvania. Letters that Reed had written surfaced, in which he questioned Washington's effectiveness. Questions were raised over Reed's disloyalty. Some even talked of treason. Reed's defensiveness regarding his ancestor was a quiet joke in Philadelphia society, but the war brought an end to the polite silence. Sarah Wister thought Reed's sudden unionist conversion was a product of his "hereditary halter, that noose which has been hanging over his treacherous race for three generations brushing unpleasantly near his head." Wister's acerbity showed that the civility that had sustained conservative hegemony in Philadelphia society since the Revolution had been shattered.35

The euphoria that had overshadowed Philadelphia's southern sympathies waned after the initial months of excitement. Democratic gentlemen emerged from their self-imposed exile to lead a not-so-loyal opposition to the federal government, and the derision they faced at the war's beginning made for a particularly "bitter dissension, as the

city's traditional sympathy for the South and antipathy toward the black man once again clouded its dedication to the Union." Democrats viewed their resistance as a defense of the Constitution, as hindering a revolution, while Republicans not surprisingly considered their opposition as treason. The hardening of positions on both sides produced an antipathy that saddened many. "We live in an intolerant and prescriptive community," Peter McCall observed sadly, "It is no longer the city of Brotherly Love." With some justice, McCall's Peace Democrats complained of the official and unofficial censorship that marginalized their positions. William Bradford Reed was not disloyal, but merely sought an end to the war on any terms. "[I]f the choice be between the continuance of war . . . and a recognition of the Southern Confederacy," Reed declared after a self-imposed silence, "I am in favor of recognition."36

Despite their control of the city Democratic machinery, the party's genteel leaders recognized the difficulty of their dilemma. "[W]e must have victory, for if the South conquers us the Union will never be restored," Charles Ingersoll reflected, "yet each military success being an addition to the strength of the Abolitionists, the cry of emancipation, which is disunion, is the louder for it." They also worried about the imputation of disloyalty. Some Philadelphians not implausibly felt the social elite were after something more than mere peace when, upon hearing rumors that Lee had invaded Pennsylvania, George Fanhestock saw "W.B. Reed, Charlie Ingersoll, [George] Wharton, and a horde of worn out old Peace Democrats. . . . walk our streets today, radiant with

joy." William Bradford Reed allegedly wrote an editorial for the Philadelphia Evening Journal extolling the virtues of Jefferson Davis. Meanwhile, Chauncey Barr told to the Central Democratic Club that "Abraham Lincoln is a greater traitor than Jefferson Davis," who had "merely infringed upon our territorial jurisdiction" while the President of the United States had "struck at the Constitution." These gentlemen were no doubt inflamed at the wartime arrests of some of their colleagues--Charles Ingersoll, Pierce Butler, and Albert D. Boileau were all taken into custody by federal authorities. Yet their complaints about violations of their civil rights paled in contrast to the recklessness of their prosouthern rhetoric amidst the threat of invasion.\(^{37}\)

Worse, Peace Democrats' invective cost them dearly at the polls and lost them control of the city's Democratic machinery. Enboldened by the slow pace of the war, McClellan's removal from command, and the election of Horatio Seymour as governor of New York, Democrats faced the gubernatorial election of 1863 with great optimism. Conservatives took further heart at Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania in the summer. They hoped that a decisive plunge in the Union's fortunes might doom Republican hopes the following year. The city reacted impassively to the crisis. The Philadelphia Home Guard was led by Democratic city Councils, and Napoleon Dana, commander of the Military District of Philadelphia, found only 400 trained troops guarding the city upon his arrival there in late June. Mayor Henry mustered some 700 laborers to dig entrenchments, but Governor Curtin was concerned enough about the city's morale to make a personal trip in

July "to rally the populace with oratory." Fortunately the preparations proved unnecessary, but the effects of Lee's threat ruined the Democratic campaign. Democrats campaigning under a platform of "[p]eace, peace, on any terms, at any price," suddenly looked rather hysterical. Judge George Woodward, who in 1860 expressed hope Pennsylvania would go with the South, lost decisively to Alexander Curtin, lagging some 7000 votes behind in Philadelphia alone.38

Their resounding defeat prompted the nascent War Democrats back to life. In 1864 their social organization, the Keystone Club, eclipsed the Central Democratic Club of the gentleman Democrats. Its president was Colonel William McCandless, a wounded Union veteran and a determined War man. The Keystone "had a much broader social base than its predecessor." Under the lingering leadership of the Peace faction, the party made a feeble effort in the 1864 elections. The city returned large majorities for Lincoln, turned over to them both city councils, and out of four seats sent three Unionists to the House of Representatives. Peace men lashed out savagely at the workingmen war supporters in their own party, accusing them of "abhor[ing] military arrests, the suppression of newspapers, and the insulting dictation of military despots, but [being] in favor of furnishing the Abolitionists with the men and means necessary to the vigorous perpetration of these outrages."39

Such rhetoric appeared, and was, hopelessly reactionary when voiced by the


39Greenberg, "Aristocrat as Copperhead," 208; Philadelphia Age, February 17, 1865.
Philadelphia Age in 1864, and it helped marginalize the Peace faction. Lewis Cassidy, who had wished to field a joint Democrat-Union gubernatorial ticket in 1863 at Governor Alexander Curtin's prompting, seemed more in tune with the times. Professionals like Cassidy realized "that the Democratic Party's identification with the dissenting aristocrats of the Central Democratic Club was hurting the party's chances for" victory. Forsaking conviction for party survival, they routed the gentlemen out of control. Worse, the Republican ascendancy signaled a transformation of the "social composition of the city's political leadership." While a few gentlemen of old family still held office and influence during the turbulent decades of the 1850s, their behavior during the war discredited the lingering credibility of upper-class leadership. "[W]hen the upper class of the city identified themselves disproportionately with the peace wing of the Democracy," concludes Russell Weigley, "they helped ensure their disappearance" from public office. Moreover, the 1860s inaugurated decades of Republican ascendancy in city politics. The southern allegiances of the city's aristocracy rendered them unfit for the party of Lincoln, flushed with victory and led by "nouveaux riches" unintimidated by old wealth.40

Though political irrelevance was painful, the Philadelphia establishment had been conditioned for such an event by decades of increasing marginalization. Social exclusion was another matter entirely. In the early years of the war, men of means exploited their mastery of fashionable life to impose prosoutherm sentiments in society. While the hearts of ordinary people and up-and-coming men, according to the historian of the Union

League, "beat true to the instinctive promptings of patriotism, . . . society continued to draw fine lines between devotion to a moribund past and the dawn of a future whose glory they did not foresee." Socialites enforced devotion to an "aristocratic idea" whose distinctly "Southern" origin they contrasted to the drudgery of the "middle-class rank and file." This identification of the South with the true home of gentility and conservatism was not an altogether romantic idea. Many of these men had close ties of kinship and friendship with southerners of similar social station, with whom they had far much more in common than with all but a few of their fellow northerners. Joshua Francis Fisher's wife was Eliza Middleton, respectively daughter and granddaughter of a governor of South Carolina and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Perhaps it was this relation that caused him to sympathize "wholly with the rebels," surmised his cousin Sidney Fisher. Joshua characterized southerners as "gentlemen and Christians," lamenting that a Union victory would render "refined and gentlemanlike life henceforward impossible."41

Nowhere was the intolerance of the war years, and the social upheaval produced by it felt more acutely than in the city's gentlemen's clubs. The Wistar Club, the unofficial social arm of the American Philosophical Society, enjoyed a reputation for sociability and civility renowned on both sides of the Atlantic. The club was the "offspring . . . of [the] social instincts and kind affections" of Caspar Wistar, a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, whose meetings with friends and refined

41Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia, 25, 32; Sidney George Fisher Diary, June 27, 1863, March 16, 1864.
travelers evolved into more formal affairs around 1810. After his death in 1818 his friends resolved to continue the tradition by each hosting parties during the winter social season consisting of light, unostentatious refreshment, good conversation, and a diverse yet refined company. Cultivated strangers, sponsored by an APS member, were encouraged to attend. As Philadelphia grew, the Wistar Society developed a more formal structure with formal rules, members, and schedules. The constants amidst all this change were civility and exclusivity. The Association, maintained the historian of the Wistar Club, drew "our huge metropolis together...helping it cement its varied parts into a community,...fail[ing] to draw the city together only when the strains upon that community were too great to be endured."42

The Club could not withstand the pressures upon its tradition of civility generated by the war. Unionists claimed that the Wistar Club had disbanded under the "defiant and outspoken treason" of those who "hobnobbed to the health of President Davis," but the prevailing spirit of antagonism cut both ways. In 1861 the Association resolved to suspend its affairs for the season, and the next year Henry Copee confided to Isaac Lea, the Club's president, that "the same reasons--only more strongly presented--which prompted us to postpone the Wistar Party last winter, are still in force." George Sharswood opposed "resuming the parties until the Civil War is ended," being "sure that parties would not be harmonious. The discussion of political questions could not be prevented, and disagreeable scenes of words if not other kinds of collisions might occur."

Discord had reduced Sharswood to such a state of despair that he no longer felt up to "attending large promiscuous parties of any sort--a party of gentlemen especially."

Neither the omnipresence of prosouthern feeling nor the plodding pace of the war seems to have prompted the suspension of Philadelphia's longest running social tradition. Instead, gentlemen deplored the spreading sense of intolerance that rendered sociability in diverse company impossible. Hence Moncure Robinson, whose sympathies lay with the South, resigned from the Wistar Party, believing that "the present unhappy condition of things" rendered him "really unfit for society."43

A similar conflict divided the company in the less cerebral Philadelphia Club, headquartered in Thomas Butler's old Walnut Street mansion. Twenty southerners signed the visitors' book in 1861, compared to 54 in 1850. Owen Wister, son of Sarah Butler Wister, recalled that "political opinion was divided among the members of the Club, and feelings ran very high" during the war, when the doors nevertheless remained open. Despite their commitment to maintaining a sociable face, the Club's directors could not enforce toleration and civility. "There was little communication between" the Unionists who occupied "[o]ne of the front rooms in the Club, . . . and the Southern sympathizers," who frequented the other, related Wister. When one Union man remarked how the "place reeks of" Copperheads, one of those gentlemen promptly "knocked him down and was

43Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia, 38; Henry Copee to Isaac Lea, 25 September 1862; George Sharswood to Lea, 24 April 1863; Moncure Robinson to Lea, 26 September 1861, in MS Archives of Wistar Association, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia.
therefore expelled."44

Few gentlemen were willing to circulate in company on the verge of violence. Democratic and Republican gentlemen responded by organizing two rival organizations, the Central Democratic Club and the Union Club, later renamed the Union League. The latter was established in 1862 by Unionist gentlemen who chose to meet on Saturday night, the traditional meeting-time for aristocratic clubs, in defiance of the prosouthern feelings of the first families. Its founders sought to "weed out the disloyal element in society with the least friction," and resolved to establish an explicitly political club in which support of the war constituted the sole criterion for membership. "By simply declining to join or countenance this movement," the founders realized, "the stay-aways would be showing their true colors." Union men felt disassociated from polite society, where "disloyal talkers still lorded it." Rather than submit to nightly humiliation, Republicans of means resolved to "withdraw from all social relations with disloyal men." Drawing up a list of men loyal to the administration, the organizers quietly assembled a core committed to the construction of a new basis for cultivated society--loyalty to the war aims of the Republican administration.45

Confident of their dominant position in society, the organizers of the Central Democratic Club consorted openly, their Club being an official arm of the city Democratic party. "[I]ts members were drawn almost entirely from the Philadelphia


45Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia, 35, 39,
aristocracy, . . . gentlemen who considered politics more an avocation than a profession."

For an aristocratic association, the Club opened on an unauspicious day—January 8, 1863, the anniversary of Andrew Jackson's victory over the British at New Orleans. Charles Ingersoll served as its president, George Biddle and George Wharton as officers. The Club counted among its members not one of the laboring class, who were expected to follow the instructions of their eminent leaders. Soon after its establishment the Club set up a former Buchanan personal secretary as editor of the Philadelphia Age, with instructions to promulgate its prosouthern, aristocratic, race-baiting views.

The power of the Central Democratic Club, together with the enthusiasm of may in the community towards the Union Club, prompted its founders to abandon its membership limit of 50 and liberalize the social basis of the Club, reorganized in 1862 as the Union League. By Appomattox the Club boasted thousands of members. The change had momentous consequences for the character of the city's social firmament. With the founding of the Union League, and suffering the blows from successive electoral defeats, the influence of prosouthern aristocrats declined markedly. While the propaganda war "continued for several years, both in the social field and that of journalism and politics . . . the old standards passed away, and society in Philadelphia was no doubt materially changed and liberalized" by the Union League's inclusive membership policies, observes Russell Weigley. The League embraced members "of the new business elite . . . of which

the war, the Union cause, and the Republican party were becoming the symbols.\textsuperscript{47}

The triumph of the Union League and the decline of the aristocratic party were intimately tied with the latter's inability to produce at the ballot box, but the repercussions echoed deepest into the social realm. The Central Democratic Club, the last bastion of prosouthern feeling in Philadelphia politics, disbanded after the 1863 elections. Aristocrats felt keenly their new social marginalization. Though the "social revolution" brought on by the Civil War seems to us shallow and remote, to gentlemen like Charles Ingersoll and the founders of the Union League the transformation was both obvious and profound. George Boker of the latter association credited the revolution both to the democratic membership policies of the League and its sober, "inoffensive code," severely proscribing entertainments and refreshments, that sharply distinguished it from the luxury and easy hospitality of genteel associations like the Philadelphia Club. Ingersoll deplored the social ambitions of "city wealth, money got in trade, and manufacturing, and commerce, the Plutocratic element," which if it only limited itself to "absolute government" would not be intolerable. Ingersoll recognized fatalistically that not only did men of new wealth "aspire to become the dominant class," but that they had the means and the opportunity to achieve it. For a man of wealth and cultivation like Charles Ingersoll, son of a signer and admirer of the southern planter class, such a realization must have been sobering indeed.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47}Chronicle of the Union League of Philadelphia, 50; Weigley, "The Border City in Civil War, 407.

\textsuperscript{48}Chronicle of the Union League, 41; [Charles Ingersoll], A Brief View of the Constitutional Powers, Showing that the Union Consisted of the Independent States
In early 1842, when William Henry Furness spoke on the death of John Vaughan, he also remarked on the recent passing of other significant Philadelphia figures, including Joseph Hopkinson, Philip Syng Physick, and Mathew Carey. William Short would join them in 1849. All of these men were critical figures in Philadelphia’s genteel community, and they all enjoyed particularly close relations with the Old South. Thus their deaths dealt a double blow to their city: the personal and kin ties that bound their city to the South were weakened, and this debility, in turn, eroded Philadelphia’s genteel character. “It seems as if the very city which they inhabited and honoured had passed away with them, and that now a new city must be built with new fountains of influence and honour,” Furness maintained. “It is no longer the place it was.”

What was almost bizarre about Furness’ lament was not his profound note of sadness, for the minister enjoyed close friendships with some of these men, particularly Vaughan. Rather, in eulogizing these four men Furness went beyond praising their benevolence, accomplishments, and reputations. He was right in noting that the death of each man had cost the city both “influence and honour,” but Furness went beyond remarking on that fact. He explicitly endorsed those values and wished that they were reconstituted and carried on by a next generation of worthies. Furness was hardly the
man to express such reactionary sentiments. The minister was a man of the nineteenth century, a believer in democracy, egalitarianism, reason, and reform. He could hardly regret the weakening of the city’s ties to the slave South, since he fearlessly preached abolition to a congregation that included Pierce and Thomas Butler and 35 others who signed a petition admonishing him to cease his antislavery sermons. He was not a man to shy away from controversy or avoid speaking his mind. Neither, however, was he a man to endorse reactionary ideals like “influence and honour.”

That Furness did just that, and apparently did so with conviction, speaks volumes to the persistent power of conservative gentility in antebellum culture. It is necessary to distinguish the brand of gentility of which I am speaking with the modifier “conservative” because refinement was something of a national obsession in the antebellum decades, especially with the middle class of the urban North. They did not adopt the code of Chesterfield and Castiglione without a significant purging of their most aristocratic elements. Concerned, like Samuel Johnson, that the traditional course of refinement taught “the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing-master,” they replaced sensuality with piety and leisure with hard work while retaining attention to the accomplishments, education, personal hygiene, literacy, and comfort. Richard Bushman, the most careful student of this transformation, surely exaggerates when he insists that

---

middle-class refinement, like the etiquette books that gave it life, was “aristocratic at [its] very core.” Yet if their power waned, something of both the substance and the allure—the image, the aura—of the colonial and early national leisure class remained powerful well into the antebellum decades. Even their opponents were forced to recognize it even while, in soberer moments, they effected its destruction so that today it seems like a lost world—as it is.²

Though they lost the deference to which they believed they were entitled and deplored the aggressive democracy of the antebellum era, the leisure class remained a cohesive force up to, and to a significant extent during, the Civil War. Indeed, its cohesion was its most distinctive and remarkable feature. In the midst of cultural and political marginalization, sectional antagonism bordering on hatred in some quarters, and geographic expansion, Philadelphia remained the stage of choice for bluebloods throughout the nation. The upper crust maintained its distinctive identity. Not only did their ideology remain constant: so did the names. Izards, Manigaults, Middletons, Gastons, Polks, and Petigrus from the South; Fishers, Ingersolls, Cadwaladers, Walns from Philadelphia. As the persistence of family names suggests, much of the intimacy between Philadelphia and the Old South was a generational phenomenon. Elites of the heroic generation of the Revolution, especially those who resided in the capital city in the 1790s, made lasting friendships with privileged Philadelphians. Relationships begun in

the late eighteenth century were carried on into the nineteenth. John Vaughan virtually personifies the generational relationship, his life covering all but the final twenty years of this study. The blow his death struck to the Philosophical Society’s ties to the South speaks to the crucial significance of personal, face-to-face relations in holding the upper crust together.

Perhaps the Society’s ties to the South would have remained strong had there been a Vaughan family to carry on John’s work, but he had none. For most other bluebloods, the relationship between Philadelphia and the South was a family affair. They made marital alliances--J. Francis Fisher to Elizabeth Middleton, Rene LaRoche to Mary Jane Ellis, Samuel Wilcocks to Harriet Manigault, to name just three--but blood ties tell only part of the family story. Planters and their Philadelphia friends and relations raised their children together, sent them to the same schools, and vacationed together. They formed extended, informal family groups, so that a simple count of marriages seriously underestimates the sense of kinship that pervaded the smart set in this little world. Margaret Manigault’s household in early national Philadelphia, with little Hopkinsons, Biddles, Middletons, Walns, and Fishers bustling about, captures a sense of this informal kinship. But they conceived of themselves as constituting families in a very literal sense. They did not use the family analogy lightly. When William Gaston charged Joseph Hopkins on with supervising his daughter Susan’s education at Sigoigne’s academy, when William Dunbar entrusted John Vaughan with his son, namesake, and heir, when Vaughan took in Charles at his uncle’s behest, they all assumed explicitly paternal responsibilities. The relationships fashioned between these families, without blood ties,
were as strong as if they had been. Of such stuff the bonds between Philadelphia and the Old South were forged. In such cases friendship and kinship were essentially indistinguishable.³

A common sense of class declension also lent credibility to their consciousness of group identity. For Philadelphians the signs of upper-class marginalization were too obvious to require much elaboration. Though the fortunes of most old colonial families remained stable, the possibility of failure, bankruptcy, and loss of status always loomed in the background. When Alice Izard dropped in “unexpectedly” on some genteel friends suffering through hard times, she was pleased to observe “there was no appearance of fallen fortunes, except the want of a man servant, & that was only in appearance, for all was well arranged.” Whatever the actual extent of social mobility in antebellum America, bluebloods felt that their privileges rested on unsound foundations. New families demanding recognition seemed to be springing out everywhere. “How times have altered since I was living in Philadelphia!” Izard claimed upon hearing that the daughters of an old Philadelphia family had been obliged to leave home to “keep a shop.” On the other extreme, she mused, was the sudden rise of the Dallas family to wealth and prestige. In the 1790s, when Izard had resided in the city with her Senator husband, “[t]he

Dallas's were then scarcely known, & little visited." All one could hope for was that the new families would conform to conservative principles and thereby prove themselves worthy of their fortunes. "I have heard such traits of their character as can not fail to excite esteem," Izard wrote hopefully. Family reputation and fortune hardly doomed old families to cultural and political exile, but as historians from Dixon Ryan Fox to Saul Cornell have shown, they were difficult liabilities to overcome. Wealth and mobility were the twin enemies of the old aristocracy, as Catherine Sedgewick understood.

"[W]ealth, you know, is the great levelling principle," she wrote.

It must be emphasized that this was more than a question of mere wealth. As Gordon Wood maintains, "our attempts to demonstrate the inequality of the society of the

early Republic by measuring wealth alone misses the point of what happened.” The aristocracy’s claim that it defined itself primarily by manners, tastes, and sociability was not mere cant. Money could not buy these qualities, they imagined. What especially galled them about social climbers was not that unworthy families with money tried to ape upper-class manners: precisely the opposite. They made only clumsy, half-hearted attempts to do so. By making wealth the defining mark of elite status, parvenus had changed the definition of what it meant to be an aristocrat. This is what Sidney George Fisher meant when he deplored how “persons of low origin and vulgar habits, manners, & feelings are introduced [into upper-class Philadelphia circles], because they are rich, who a few years ago were never heard of.” This was not so bad, but they refused to conform to traditional norms. When wealth became the only standard for entering the privileged caste, it ceased to be privileged at all. “If they were agreeable, cultivated, intelligent or beautiful there would be some compensation for the innovation,” mused Fisher with characteristic meanness, “but they are all commonplace & uninteresting, many of them vulgar, stupid, and ugly.” Any shrewd mechanic could make a fortune; it took something more to make a gentleman. Or so he hoped.5

This sense of marginalization was particularly acute in the North and in Philadelphia, where an aristocratic pedigree meant political exile. By 1800 the notion of an American “ruling class,” combining social, cultural, economic, and political

preeminence, was a dead letter, as John Murrin and Gary Kornblith have shown. The loss of political power had important repercussions for the psychology and self-image of elites because "disinterestedness" was an essential element in the identities of republican aristocrats. Republican aristocracy was not an oxymoron to their minds, as Joshua Francis Fisher showed by characterizing the ideal gentleman, Ralph Izard, as "ardently opposed [to] royal tyranny, without the slightest sympathy with Democracy."^6

As much as gentlemen wanted to conform to Benjamin Rush's dictum that "Every man is public property. His time and talents. . . belong to his country," Philadelphia's working-class voters did not seem to care about genteel notions of civic responsibility. They expected politicians to conform to their notions of political service. Roberts Vaux and his son Richard were prominent figures in the Philadelphia Democracy during the first half of the century, but the Vauxes earned the enmity of their peers by joining the Democrats, aligning themselves with working-class factions, and "establish[ing] [themselves] as . . . champion[s] of the common man." Numerous other gentlemen served Philadelphia as both Whigs and Democrats, but many gentlemen were repelled by the popular character of politics in the Jacksonian era. "It has ceased to be an honor to be sent to Congress," explained one. "A man of education & refinement finds himself out of place in it and is disgusted with its violence and blackguardism, and no one is found

willing to make a sacrifice of comfort or interest to represent a city like this.’’7

The stigmatization of privilege characterized politics in both the North and South, though to different degrees. In upcountry South Carolina, notes Lacy Ford Jr., “any hint of Federalist leanings or aristocratic preferences meant certain defeat for a candidate.” The similarities—the demands to campaign, the decline of deference, the necessity to make public appeals and address ordinary people in their own terms, requirements that one disparage wealth and high station—lent political life in both sections a similar flavor and thus provided a shared fund of experience for northern and southern bluebloods. Of course there were important sectional differences. In some sections of New England, a Federalist pedigree remained a benefit well into the nineteenth century, as Shaw Livermore has shown. The point is not that a privileged background amounted to the kiss of death for the gentleman with political aspirations. It did not then and it does not today. But an aristocratic bearing became more and more of a liability as the Revolutionary era faded into the past. Like it or not, gentlemen of all sections had to conform to new standards of legitimacy that contradicted their self-image as a natural aristocracy.8


On the other hand, planters did still enjoy deference of a sort. Even if they did have to compete fiercely against one another, even if they did have to grovel for votes, gander-pull, and choke down copious amounts of barbecue to win the votes of their poorer neighbors, they did receive those votes. In local elections--those with the most meaning in this age of small government, patron-client relations still determined the contours of southern politics. In a region where personal honor and “the ability to command the allegiances of lesser men” still held, argues Steven Hahn, political “rivalries often reflected competition among members of the elite.” Poor whites thereby retained favor and leverage, while the process also “reinforced the political and cultural hegemony of the master class.” The point is not to settle the complicated and contentious issue of relations between planters and plain folks, but to suggest that in their dismay with popular politics Philadelphia elites could identify with their southern peers at the same time the latter’s relative success in maintaining traditional relations of deference amidst changing circumstances commanded Philadelphians’ respect.®

Bluebloods commiserated with each other about the changing nature of deference and status in the eyes of the public because they shared common aspirations, fears, and values. This common worldview was the chief source of leisure-class cohesion. The

---

planter class was committed to honor, sociability, learning, deference, violence, and leisure, but so—with modifications—were their northern counterparts. To the extent that antebellum southern distinctiveness has been ascribed to the uniqueness of its master class, then, that notion needs to be revised. Planters may have comported themselves more fully to traditional standards, the influence of middle-class culture being less powerful in that region, but they were still national—not southern—standards. If they had perceived northern gentility as an alien culture they would never have sent their daughters to Philadelphia French schools or their sons to Philadelphia medical schools. They would have vacationed at the Virginia Springs instead of Newport and Cape May. Southern drawls would not have graced Philadelphia salons and ballrooms. But the fact is that southern parents did entrust their children to northern schools. Newport was full of southern tourists every summer—as were Cape May, the Philadelphia Water Works, the State House, and other attractions. Every year southern men signed their names to the Athenaeum’s guest book before being whisked off to a Wistar Party. One could hardly escape brushing against southerners in Philadelphia parlors during the winter season. As it was in 1800 it remained in 1860.

All this socializing would have been unthinkable had not southerners and their Philadelphia friends and relations shared the same conservative philosophy. Here the salon and ballroom emerged as critically important mechanisms for the transmission of leisure-class values. In practicing exclusion and in integrating new blood—a sort of Darwinian “social selection”—hostesses sought to invigorate their circles with deserving new fortunes while maintaining their privileged aura. In insisting on the practice of the
accomplishments—dancing, music, conversation—they maintained supposedly timeless practices that took great care and expense to cultivate, thereby assuring class purity. In an era of vigorous democratization in which denunciation of aristocracy emerged as a regular feature of political discourse, these affairs served as defense mechanisms for a stigmatized way of life.

To be sure, Philadelphians and southerners did not see eye to eye on everything. Northerners usually viewed their southern guests as cruder, more violent, less polished, less educated, and more parochial versions of themselves. Southerners, on the other hand, often saw Philadelphians as effeminate, insecure, miserly, and money-grubbing images of themselves. Seldom did these perceptions engender actual animosity, as it did occasionally at the medical schools, most notably in 1859, and in 1860 at the Philadelphia Club and the Wistar Party. Usually, these differences were interpreted as regional variations on the same genteel score. The time of the disruptions in upper-class civility is both hardly surprising and instructive, however. No matter how hard they tried—and they tried hard—bluebloods could not insulate themselves from national events. Sectional jealousy eventually invaded even this sanctuary. The surprising this is how long it took. It took the parade of John Brown’s body to drive southern medical students from Philadelphia to Richmond—and they came back the next year. It took serious talk of secession to inspire fistfights in Thomas Butler’s old house, the Philadelphia Club. It took actual Civil War for the Wistar Party to suspend its meetings. The ties of affection
were not easily broken.\textsuperscript{10}

Indeed, even the Civil War could not break them completely. Not surprisingly, family bonds proved strongest. Joshua Francis Fisher maintained contact with his wife’s family in South Carolina. Unlike his cousin, Fisher had warm feelings for the Palmetto State that survived the state’s betrayal of the Union. In late 1864, Fisher tried to help his brother-in-law Nathaniel Russell Middleton involve his sons in a prisoner exchange that would put the young men at Hilton Head. The difficult business of the exchange took up most of the letter, but in closing Fisher tried to inject some polite inquiries as if to efface the extraordinary circumstances that occasioned their writing in the first place. “My family are about moving to Philadelphia for the winter, which will make the arrangements proposed much easier for me,” Fisher related. “We are all well and were yesterday made happy by two letters from S.C. giving good accounts of our friends only a month ago.” Yet the mannered Philadelphians could not ignore circumstances. “May God protect you & yours--and grant that a speedy end may be put to the dreadful war which separates us,” he concluded.\textsuperscript{11}


\textsuperscript{11}Joshua Francis Fisher, Avelthorpe, to Nathaniel Russell Middleton, Charleston, 27 November 1864, Box 17, Nathaniel Russell Middleton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.
Richard D. Arnold had a similar experience, both heartening and bitter. "I stopped four days in Philadelphia & was most kindly & warmly treated by my old friends," he wrote a new York friend in 1865. "But as you may easily understand it is not easy for a Southern man to wear a light heart under present circumstances." Edward and Charles Ingersoll's attempts to affirm Philadelphia's relations with the South were just bitter.

After giving a speech defending secession in New York the day before Lincoln's assassination, Edward disembarked in Philadelphia to a howling mob, endured its hoots and insults, and was arrested for carrying a concealed weapon after drawing it in self-defense. When Charles came to visit him at the prison the police responded ineffectively while a mob pulled the proud aristocrat from his carriage and "beat him savagely."

Philadelphia had come a long way since 1834, when the police responded with similar lethargy when a prosouthern crowd had razed Pennsylvania Hall while a convention of antislavery women still sat inside.12

As in that day, few today would defend the ideology of the antebellum leisure class. As Harriet Martineau suggested, their withdrawal from civic life was not so much principled as "perverse." In their resistance to cultural and political democratization they responded much like a frightened turtle. Yet their vices were all too human. They were closed-minded, petulant, snobbish, rigid, and, it goes without saying, had an exalted

opinion of themselves unjustified by the merits. Yet their demise had serious repercussions for the Republic and even for our time. As contemporaries recognized, the absence of a truly privileged class seriously hampered the cause of arts and belles lettres. “I am persuaded that it only requires the aid of wealth and fashion to prove that the Fine Arts, is one strong point of character in the people of this country,” wrote Thomas Sully to Joel Poinsett somewhat optimistically.\(^{13}\)

At their best, the elite stood for standards of elegance, taste, and refinement fast losing their relevance in their Mammon-worshiping age. They had something to offer, if anyone had listened, and if they had done a more conscientious job of relaying their message. Robert Waln, who died too young, had some of this spirit. He believed that “in all civilised societies, an aristocracy must and will exist, either founded on letters, family, or fortune: it is either a \textit{de jure}, as existing in Great Britain, or a \textit{de facto} aristocracy, as existing in this country; and the power thus enjoyed by blood, by riches, and by learning, is as extensively exercised, and produces as great an effect over the minds of the lower orders of people.” It is not an altogether unpleasant vision.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\)Thomas Sully, Phila., to Joel Roberts Poinsett, Mexico, 28 April 1828, Joel Roberts Poinsett Papers, HSP.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Manuscripts:

Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama:
  John Williams Walker Papers.

Filson Club Historical Library, Louisville, Kentucky:
  Samuel Brown Papers.
  Alexander Edmiston Papers.
  Grigsby Family Papers.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi:
  Crutcher-Shannon Papers.
  Benjamin L.C. Wailes Diary.

Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina:
  Peter Barksdale Papers.
  Campbell Family Papers.
  Clement Comer Clay Papers.
  John Dillard Papers.
  Charles J. Harris Papers.
  Daniel S. Hill Papers.
  Nathan Hunt Papers.
  James Iredell Sr. & Jr. Papers.
  Jarrat-Puryear Family Papers.
  Charles Earl Johnson Papers.
  Lassiter Family Papers.
  Louis Manigault Papers.
  Annabella McNair Papers.
  Jacob Mordecai Papers.
  Beverley Preston Morris Papers.
  Elizabeth K. Nelson Papers.
  Mary E. (Fleming) Schooler Papers.
  Hester E. (Van Bibber) Tabb Papers.
Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina:

- Alexander-Hillhouse Papers.
- John Young Bassett Papers.
- John Huston Bills Diary.
- Charles Dabney Papers.
- Margaret (Mordecai) Deveraux Papers.
- Ferebee-Gregory-McPherson Papers.
- Fries-Schaffner Family Papers.
- James McKibbin Gage Papers.
- William Gaston Papers.
- Grimball Family Papers.
- James Henry Hammond Papers.
- Haywood Family Papers.
- Joseph Hopkinson Papers (photostats).
- Jones Family Papers.
- Thomas Butler King Papers.
- Drury Lacy Papers.
- Manigault-Morris Grimball Family Papers.
- McClelland Family Papers.
- Nathaniel Russell Middleton Papers.
- Murtock-Wright Family Papers.
- Polk, Badger, and McGehee Family Papers.
- Polk-Yeatman Family Papers.
- James Stuart Diary [1800-1810].
- Harvey Washington Walter Papers.
- Benjamin C. Yancey Papers.

American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

- American Philosophical Society Archives.
- American Philosophical Society Collection of Broadsides.
- American Philosophical Society Historical and Literary Committee Letterbooks.
- Letters of Nomination for Membership.
- Madeira-Vaughan Collection.
- Minutes of the Historical and Literary Committee.
- Miscellaneous Manuscripts.
- Wistar Association Manuscripts.

Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:

- Samuel Breck Diary.
- George E. Fanhestock Diary.
J. Francis Fisher Section, Cadwalader Collection.
Joshua Francis Fisher Section, Brinton Coxe Papers.
Joshua Francis Fisher Papers.
Sidney George Fisher Diary.
Joseph Hopkinson Papers.
Eleanor Parke (Custis) Lewis Papers (typescripts).
Harriet Manigault Diary.
Joel Roberts Poinsett Papers.
Charlotte Wilcocks Diary.

Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:
Phoebe Rush Papers.

South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina:
Chesnut-Miller-Manning Family Papers (microfiche).
Langdon Cheves Papers (microfiche).

South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina:
Manigault Family Papers (microfiche).

Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia:
James Madison Brannock Papers.
Carrington Family Papers.
Claiborne Family Papers.
Clark Family Papers.
Henry Curtis Papers.
Grigsby Family Papers.
Hamilton Family Papers.
Henry Massie Travel Journal.
Peyton Family Papers.
John L. Powell Papers.
Hugh Merritt Rose Papers.
Spragins Family Papers.
John Strobia Diary.
Jane Shelton Tucker Papers.

Special Collections Library, Medical College of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia:
Matriculation Records of the Medical College of Virginia, 6th Session, 1859-160.
Minutes, Board of Visitors, Medical College of Virginia.
Sanger Historical Files, Secession of Philadelphia Students.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Thomas Jefferson Papers (microfilm).
Newspapers

Baltimore American
New York Times
Philadelphia Evening Bulletin
North American (Philadelphia).
Palmetto Flag (Philadelphia).
Sunday Dispatch (Philadelphia).
United States Gazette (Philadelphia).

Published Documents


"Black Letters; or Uncle Tom Foolery in Literature." Graham's Magazine 42 (February 1853): 208-210.

"Boston, the Literary Emporium." American Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette 6 (1833): 139-140.


Caldwell, Charles, M.D. An Eulogium on Caspar Wistar, M.D., Professor of Anatomy. Delivered by Appointment, before the Members of the Philadelphia Medical Society. Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson and Son, 1818.


"Charge of the Medical Lightheaded Brigade." Sunday Dispatch (Philadelphia), January 1, 1860.


[Drake, Daniel]. "Obituary of Professor Brown." Western Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences 3 (1831): 607-611.


Hosack, David, M.D. Tribute to the Memory of the Late Caspar Wistar, M.D. New York, C.S. Van Winkle, 1818.


Inland Transportation Committee. Report of the Board of Trade, in Relation to the Delaware Rail Road, and its Connection with the Commercial Interests of Philadelphia. Philadelphia: Inland Transportation Committee, 1856.

"Introductory Address." New Orleans Medical and Surgical Journal 1 (1844): I-iii.


"The Medical Department of the University of Virginia." *Virginia Medical and Surgical Journal* 4 (1855): 160.


A Member of the Philadelphia Bar. *Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of Philadelphia*. Containing an Alphabetical Arrangement of Persons Estimated to be Worth $50,000 and Upwards, with the Sums Appended to Each Name; Being Useful to Bankers, Merchants, and Others. Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber & Co., 1845.


[Mott, Abigail Field ]. *Observations on the Importance of Female Education, and Maternal Instruction, with the Beneficial Influence on Society, Designed to Be

Myers, J.C. Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, the Canadas, and Nova Scotia. Harrisonburg, Va.: J.H. Wartmann and Brothers, 1849.


Phelps, Mrs. [Almira Hart Lincoln]. The Female Student; or, Lectures to Young Ladies on Female Education. New York: Leavitt, Lord, & Co., 1836.


"Return of Southern Medical Students from Northern Colleges." Southern Medical and Surgical Journal n.s. 16 (1860): 73.

The Rise and Progress of the Young Ladies' Academy of Philadelphia: Containing an
Account of a Number of Public Examinations & Commencements
Philadelphia: Stewart & Cochran, 1794.


"Southern Medical Students in Northern Medical Colleges—Once More." Oglethorpe Medical and Surgical Journal 3 (1861): 268-269.

"Southern Students Leaving the Medical Schools of Philadelphia." Southern Medical and Surgical Journal n.s. 16 (1860): 236.


[Staughton, William]. An Address, Delivered October, 1807, at Mrs. Rivardi's Seminary, on the Occasion of the Examination of the First and Middle Classes. Philadelphia: n.p., 1807.


The Traveller's Tour through the United States: A Pleasing and Instructive Pastime. Performed with a Tetotum and Travelers. All the Principal Cities are Visited and Described. Philadelphia: Thomas T. Ash, 1835.


Vaughan, John. An Account of the American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia for promoting useful knowledge, by John Vaughan, Librarian of the Society at the request of Baron Roenne Minister from his Prussian Majesty to the United States of America. 1841; Philadelphia: Published for the Friends of the Library by the American Philosophical Society, 1972.


---------. The Hermit in Philadelphia, Second Series. Containing some Account of Young Belles and Coquettes; Elegantes and Spoiled Children; Dandies and Ruffians; Old Maids and Old Bachelors; Dandy-Slang and Lady-Slang; Morning Visits and Evening Parties. Philadelphia: Moses Thomas, 1821.


Secondary Sources


Elliott, Stephen. *An Address to the Literary and Philosophical Society of South Carolina*. Charleston: W. P. Young, 1814.


Hollinger, David D. "Historians and the Discourse of Intellectuals." in New Directions in American Intellectual History Edited by John Higham and Paul Conkin, 42-63.


---------. "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's


Mitchell, James T., and Henry Flanders, Comps. The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania:


Rivinus, Marion Willis, and Katherine Hansell Biddle, Lights along the Delaware. Philadelphia, n.d. [1965].


---------. "What, Then, is the American: This New Woman?" *Journal of American History* 65 (1978): 679-703.


---. "The Not-So-Cloistered Academy: Elite Women's Education and Family Feeling in the Old South." In *The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and


**Dissertations and Unpublished Material**


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Daniel Kilbride was born in Philadelphia on January 27, 1968. He received his B.A. from St. Joseph’s University in 1990 and took his M.A. from the University of Florida in 1992. In 1995 he married Heather Markwalter in Philadelphia. After moving to Roanoke, Virginia, later that year, his wife gave birth to a daughter, Lauren Kilbride. His brother, two sisters, his parents and grandparents still live in Philadelphia. In 1996 he accepted a one-year appointment to the History department of Hollins College in Roanoke, Virginia. In September, 1997, he joined the history department at John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Chairman
Richard J. Milbauer Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Jeffrey S. Adler
Associate Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ronald P. Formisano
Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Thomas W. Gallant
Associate Professor of History

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John Seelye
Graduate Research Professor of English

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 1997

Dean, Graduate School