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**“TO FIX THE TASTE OF OUR COUNTRY PROPERLY”:**

**THE FRENCH STYLE IN PHILADELPHIA INTERIORS, 1788-1800**

by

**Andrew J. Brunk**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Early American Culture.**

**Spring 2000**

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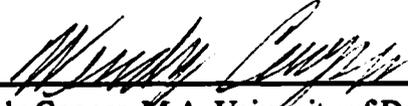
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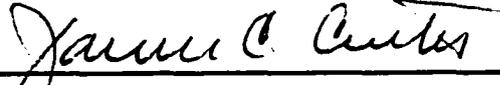
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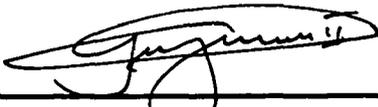
**THE FRENCH STYLE IN PHILADELPHIA INTERIORS, 1788-1800**

by

**Andrew J. Brunk**

Approved:   
Wendy Cooper, M.A. University of Delaware  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved:   
James C. Curtis, Ph.D.  
Director of the Winterthur Program in Early American Culture

Approved:   
Conrado M. Gempesaw II, Ph.D.  
Acting Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Planning

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Many of the large group of French people who fled the Revolution in France and the uprising in Santo Domingo chose Philadelphia for their home in exile, and from this group an active French community developed in Philadelphia in the late 1780s and 1790s. This thesis attempts to quantify the impact of this French community on local tastes in interior furnishings and to trace some of the broad social impact of this émigré population. Compiling evidence from newspapers, manuscripts, documents, and secondary sources, an indication of the impact of the French émigré population on the culture in Anglo-Philadelphia is given, with an emphasis on the degree to which these people embraced the French taste in decorative arts and interiors.**

**The diverse nature of this French community is first demonstrated, with particular attention given to the various professions that the émigrés pursued in their efforts to support themselves while in exile. Through increased French mercantile activities, the European travels of cosmopolitan Philadelphians, the sale of sophisticated royal furnishings, and the growing international activity that followed the moving of the national capitol, French furnishings were increasingly available to Philadelphians. The nature of these furnishings and their sources are discussed, and put in context by examining their role in some prominent**

**Philadelphia households. Of these furnishings, chairs and seating furniture played an important role, particularly within the households of a few prominent Philadelphians. A number of French and French style chairs that were used or produced in Philadelphia are discussed in some detail. These chairs and the interiors in which they were displayed indicate that a specifically French style was embraced by some, but that despite the large French émigré population, Philadelphians were apparently reluctant to fully embrace a strict French style. This reluctance apparently stemmed from a combination of issues of taste, politics, and economics. Most fashionable households seem to have become increasingly “European” rather than strictly French, with elements of French, Continental, and British design forming the stylish and cosmopolitan interiors of many Philadelphia homes.**

## Chapter 1

### **THE STAGE FOR CULTURAL EXCHANGE: THE FRENCH COMMUNITY IN PHILADELPHIA, 1788-1800**

On a market day in early autumn of 1788, the visiting Frenchman J. P. Brissot de Warville walked the busy streets of Philadelphia, watching the wheels of commerce and the crowds that peacefully interacted. “One would think that it is a market of brothers, the meeting place of a nation of philosophers, of disciples of the silent Pythagoras,” he commented.<sup>1</sup> In that same year, Philadelphians commemorated the ratification of the Constitution with the Federal Grand Procession, a celebratory parade by local trade organizations. The parade was seeded with symbols of the emerging return to classicism, including a silver urn carried by William Ball, leader of the goldsmiths, silversmiths, and jewelers.

While perhaps not quite “disciples of Pythagoras,” Philadelphians in the years that followed the American Revolution were indeed beginning to adopt the Neoclassical style, already well established in England and in France. They also continued to embrace the many French who had helped them win the Revolutionary War. Sharing in the 1788 celebration of republican liberty were some of these men who had aided American forces in the struggle against the English monarchy, and stayed rather than returning to France.

The French Alliance was remembered with a man on horseback, "carrying a flag of white silk, bearing three *fleurs de lys*, and thirteen stars in union over the words "Sixth of February, 1778" in gold characters."<sup>2</sup>

On this day of celebration, few probably imagined that just a year later revolution would break out in France as well. Perhaps Louis XVI's vice-consul in America, Barbe de Marbois, who also participated in the parade, thought of the possibility as he passed the waving crowds. Just a year later, penniless and dispossessed French émigrés fled their revolution, many arriving in Philadelphia with merely a strong national pride and the reputation of a people of taste and culture.<sup>3</sup> The former class of power was chief among this first wave of émigrés, as it was this very wealthy nobility that the guillotine was quickly thinning. Yet others also fled, among them intellectuals, clergy and military officers, and those with loyalties to the King who were seen as a threat to the revolution of the people.

Another great wave of French émigrés arrived in Philadelphia in 1793. Again, they were fleeing an uprising of the people. This time it was the enslaved population, and they fled the French colony of Santo Domingo in the West Indies, rather than the mainland of France. As the city of Cape Francois went up in flames, the wealthy white planters and merchants fled for their lives. With them came artisans, businessmen, and even some people of color. In their haste, many left behind all possessions, often sizable fortunes, that were soon laid waste by the uprising.

Thus, thousands of French émigrés chose the city of Philadelphia as their place of

refuge while waiting for the opportunity to return home. The exact number of émigrés is not known, as most of them came and left between the censuses of 1790 and 1800. Moreau de St. Méry estimated that twenty-five thousand had sought refuge in the United States, but did not suggest the number in Philadelphia. Some indication is found in a letter written by Consul-General Letombe to the French government. He indicated in 1797 that there were eight thousand French inhabitants in Philadelphia, and that he could not keep track of all of them regarding moral conduct, as he could not do the work of three men himself.<sup>4</sup> In July of 1793 alone, about two thousand émigrés arrived in Philadelphia from Santo Domingo.<sup>5</sup>

So it was that during the first years of the Republic, Philadelphia witnessed a great influx of French people, French culture, and French customs. With the removal of the capitol from New York to Philadelphia came the dignitaries, money, and national attention that were associated with the government. Philadelphia was more cosmopolitan than ever, and even more welcoming to the émigrés. The continued growth that followed was quickly checked by the outbreak of yellow fever in 1793. Death and a great exodus from the city followed in the wake of the epidemic that claimed the lives of thousands of Philadelphians.<sup>6</sup> Yet through it all, Philadelphia ultimately remained the most popular East-coast destination for the thousands of émigrés.

Philadelphia became a popular asylum for a number of reasons. As the capital of the new Republic, Philadelphia was the hub of cultural and intellectual activity. It was the seat of the new national government, and as such it was seen also as the heart of

liberty and democracy. The French minister of the Revolutionary government was in Philadelphia, and could be an important ally for those émigrés who were sympathetic with the revolution.<sup>7</sup> The French Legation lent financial support, and helped refugees from Santo Domingo arrange portage back to France. Furthermore, ships arrived daily in the busy port, bringing news from abroad. This was an important consideration for the many émigrés whose focus remained on the turns of events that might signal the time when it was safe to return to their homes. Philadelphia was also the home of George Washington, who was highly revered by the French as the embodiment of republican ideals, and whose personage was almost inseparable from that of the Frenchman Lafayette.<sup>8</sup> In short, Philadelphia would have seemed the most familiar and welcoming to the émigrés, and was considered the most cosmopolitan, tolerant, and enlightened city in America.

Some of the émigrés knew Philadelphia from the days of the American Revolution, and perhaps remembered the warmth of the French and American alliance. This alliance was manifested in the Society of the Cincinnati, established to maintain the sense of fraternity that existed between the two countries. At the first meeting, in 1783, the Society declared that they were “deeply impressed with a sense of the generous assistance this country has received from France,” and were desirous of “perpetuat(ing)... the mutual friendships which have been formed under the pressure of common danger...”<sup>9</sup> Washington was unanimously elected president of the society, further reinforcing the French connection to him and to his home of Philadelphia, where he served as President

of the United States from 1790 to 1797. Louis XVI granted French officers permission to join the Society, which established chapters in each of the thirteen colonies, and in France as well.<sup>10</sup>

Philadelphia was also home to Benjamin Franklin, who had won the hearts of the French while in Paris as the first American Foreign Minister. Though Franklin was not a Quaker, the French associated him with the Quakers due to his simple dress and manners and his Philadelphia origin. He contributed to the reverence of the French for this religious group, which was already well in place.<sup>11</sup> Many French writers extolled the Quakers, and they had become fashionable and much admired among the French and others.<sup>12</sup> Some went so far as to adopt a few of the Quaker mannerisms that were convenient. One author notes that “The fad in several elite circles of the 1780s was for nobles to interrupt their evening card games for a moment of somber Quaker-type prayer and then resume their gambling. With no intention of converting to Quakerism, French aristocrats nevertheless acted out their admiration of Quaker beliefs.”<sup>13</sup> Brissot and Crèvecoeur, two influential French writers on American life, both characterized the Quakers as realizing the republican ideal. Thus, the French saw the Quakers as noble, honest, and virtuous, and Philadelphia was unquestionably linked to the Quakers.<sup>14</sup>

As the French Revolution dragged on in the years that followed 1789, the French presence in Philadelphia continued to develop toward a more stable community that embodied some of the comforts of home. While the French remained a fundamentally disparate group, separated by political allegiance and socioeconomic standing, they

nonetheless established a community wherein they could endure their time of exile. The pendulous swings of politics and of American opinions of the French and their revolution excluded any long-term sense of stability or welcome, yet through time, necessity, and sheer numbers they established themselves as a community.

This French community was concentrated from the waterfront to Fourth Street, between Spruce and Arch. Virtually all of the amenities of daily life and the necessary goods for a genteel home were available from French storekeepers, merchants, and professionals working within a few blocks of each other in this general area. For example, Francis Delorme, upholsterer from Paris, worked at 135-South Second Street, and George Bertault, another French upholsterer, was initially located at 208 North Market Street, then relocated to 51 South Third Street. Silversmiths and jewelers on Third Street included Simon Chaudron, who set up shop and lived at 12 South Third Street. The watchmaker and jeweler Claude Brasier worked at number 7 North Third Street, and Simon Dauce, jeweler, was just a few doors up at number 33. Other French silversmiths chose Second Street, where Claudius Chat's shop was located between Chestnut and Walnut, and F. Poincignon was active at number 71 South. Faipoux, the Parisian locksmith, advertised his shop at 97 North Third Street, while Coulaux and Perrein, gunsmiths from Paris, were in business at 93 Water Street near Walnut. Numerous bakers and cooks were located in the area, particularly on Second Street. For coffee, people could go up to 59 South Fifth Street, where the Frenchman Bossee claimed "They will find at his house every thing as in a Paris coffee-house."<sup>15</sup> John Laclave, a ladies

hair dresser from Bordeaux, worked at 61 South Second Street, and Peter Chameau, a hair dresser from Santo Domingo, was up the street at number 197. John Catez, from Cape François, was a few doors down at 184 South Second Street, where he worked as a hair dresser and perfumery shop keeper. Benoit Descampes, a glass cutter from St. Marks, exercised his trade and kept a china and glass store opposite the city tavern on South Second Street, and the china merchants Pasquier and Company offered their goods on the same street at number 91. Renaudin, a French musical instrument maker, was working at 43 North Walnut Street, between Front and Second streets, by May of 1792. Madam Ravaille, "mantua making and millinery line," was a Parisian living on Market between Front and Second, and Stephen Clapier, merchant from Bordeaux, was around the corner at 210 Front Street. On Chestnut between Second and Third was the interpreter and notary Peter le Barbier Duplessis, who acted as a liaison between many of the émigrés and Philadelphians, providing translations of important documents and advising them on legal matters. Even the three sons of Louis XVI were there, and they are listed in the 1798 city directory as "D'Orleans, Messrs., merchants, Near 100 South Front."<sup>16</sup>

The French clearly played an important role in the business of this area, and these are but a few of the many émigrés living and working there. Others were scattered around the city and outlying areas, but the émigrés clearly felt some comfort in having their countrymen in close proximity. Within this community, and within the city of Philadelphia at large, this group of French men and women worked and lived, and to a

degree, impacted the taste and lives of the Philadelphians around them.

To begin to understand the French taste as it was embraced by Philadelphians, it is necessary to first consider the diverse nature of the professions that the émigrés followed, and the great variance of their social and economic standings. Many had to find new ways to support themselves, having left fortunes and the familiar markets of home behind. The socioeconomic diversity of the French community is reflected in the advertisements placed in contemporary newspapers offering the services of some of the émigrés, and indicating the wide range of their skills and resources. While the social status that they enjoyed in France or in the French Colonies is not always known, it is clear that some came here with specific, marketable skills, while many others, most of them of the leisure class, had to draw on their education and social graces to provide for themselves. Many, for example, advertise their willingness to teach French language, dance, fencing, painting and the like. A common situation was advertised in the *Pennsylvania General Advertiser* in 1792: “A young Frenchman, of reputable connections, and good education, having met with some misfortunes, would be willing to teach the French Language, in a genteel family, and be satisfied with having his board found for his services...”<sup>17</sup> A similar advertisement appeared in *L'Etoile Americane* (The American Star) in 1794:

“A young married man, whom the disasters of St. Domingo have forced to seek asylum in America, and to abandon his property, has lately arrived in this city, with his wife and three brothers; and desiring to procure for his family a maintenance, has the honour of offering to the public the fruits of his education. He therefore proposes to teach vocal and instrumental

music, dancing, and painting; and promises a quick success to his pupils by the attention he will pay them.”<sup>18</sup>

Others who found themselves in this situation offered their services as schoolmasters. A. C. Du Plaine and D. T. Donnant, for example, both advertised that they intended to “keep a French school”<sup>19</sup>, and Godfrey Dorfeuille, “lately arrived from Cape François” advertised that he “has taken that airy and commodious house and garden no. 56 4th street, where he will open an institution for the instruction of youth.”<sup>20</sup> That there was a desire to learn French is evident from the number of such advertisements that appear, and from the noted payments of many people to such teachers. These schools served both American and French émigré children, and such advertisements often appeared in English language newspapers. Many American children did learn French. For example, Abby Willing, in her “Day Book for Family Expences,” lists three different Frenchmen who were paid to teach her three children the French language during the years 1785-1788.

Yet French was not widely known, as suggested by the words of Brissot de Warville, who in 1788 commented of French books that “Even the best will not sell here. Very few people know French.”<sup>21</sup> While this was probably true, a number of wealthy Philadelphians were interested in learning French by this date, and French books and teachers played an important role in introducing and popularizing French culture in Philadelphia. Certainly the waves of émigrés that came after Brissot de Warville’s comment impacted the desire to learn French. Many Philadelphians record buying French

books and patronizing French teachers.

Nicholas Gouin Dufief was one of several French booksellers who played an important role in the dissemination of French books in Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> An exile first of France, Dufief later fled the uprising in Santo Domingo for Philadelphia in 1793. He supplied books for such noted American bibliophiles as John Vaughan, William Duane, Joseph Priestly, William Mackenzie, and Thomas Jefferson, with whom he maintained correspondence for more than twenty years.<sup>23</sup> In December of 1800 Dufief wrote to Jefferson that “I expect in March a quite extensive assortment of the best French authors in all the genres and the most piquant new books. I shall send you the list.”<sup>24</sup> In addition, he offered Jefferson a number of other related objects, such as “2 beautiful busts of Voltaire and Rousseau in Carrara marble.”<sup>25</sup>

The most prominent French bookseller was Moreau de St. Méry, whose bookstore at 80 Front Street became an important center of French intellectual life in Philadelphia. He was one of the numerous Frenchmen who were well known as highly educated, literate, and cultured men. Many émigrés knew his bookstore as a place of gathering and intellectual fraternity. By November 16, 1794, Moreau’s signboard was in place, advertising him as a “Bookseller, Printer and Stationner (sic),” and he remained in Philadelphia until August 23, 1798.<sup>26</sup> Among his many accomplishments as a man of letters, Moreau wrote and published a number of books, and also published the French refugee newspaper *Courier de la France et des Colonies*.<sup>27</sup> The diary that he kept during his years in America has been translated and published, and *Moreau de St. Méry’s*

*American Journey* remains one of the most informative contemporary accounts of the emigration and émigré life in Philadelphia.<sup>28</sup>

The 1795 *Catalogue of Books, Stationary, Engravings, Mathematical Instruments, Maps, Charts, and other Goods of Moreau de St. Mery, and Co.'s Store* reveals that a wide range of French books were available to both the émigrés and to interested Philadelphians.<sup>29</sup> In this catalog, he announced that

Moreau de Saint-Méry & Co. Take the opportunity of their catalogue to repeat that they are established in the general business of Stationers, Booksellers and Dealers in most fashionable and choice Engraving. They will also have connected therewith a Printing Office and Book-bindery, adding thereto a select collection of Music. They purchase French books, and deal in every kind of business on commission. They will continue to fulfill orders for books (or other things) from several parts of Europe, on the most reasonable terms. In short, they will not spare any care to accomplish their enterprize intended to propagate and diffuse knowledge.

It is not surprising that much of this knowledge that Moreau worked to diffuse to his Philadelphia patrons was distinctly French.<sup>30</sup>

Moreau, Dufief, and other French booksellers also maintained connections with the Irish-American bookseller Mathew Carey. Carey emigrated from Ireland in 1784, and with the help of Lafayette quickly established himself as a bookseller.<sup>31</sup> That Carey was selling French language books is evidenced by his contact with these French booksellers, and also by his advertisements in the *Federal Gazette*, where he announces "Chez Mathieu Carey no. 118 rue du Marche, French bookseller."<sup>32</sup> Advertisements by booksellers of this period often listed available titles individually in their newspaper

advertisements, and many, Carey's among them, included books of French literature, poetry, history and language.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, there was clearly a good market for French books during this period in Philadelphia.<sup>34</sup> Other booksellers doubtless included French works in their stock, and such books were also available from the public vendues of deceased or departing émigrés and Francophiles.<sup>35</sup> All of this adds up to an impressive selection of French books available to and being purchased by Philadelphians. While many were doubtless offered in translation, some were in French as well, and both attest to the pervasiveness of French literary culture. One fervent minister noted of the year 1796, that

strong bands of sympathy and gratitude united our people to the French nation, and as a consequence French opinions and French infidelity rolled like a devastating tide over the land. The writings of Voltaire, Volney, and Paine were in the hands of almost all, and the public mind was poisoned.<sup>36</sup>

It seems that any truth that Brissot de Warville's comment that "very few people know French" held in 1788 was tempered by the arrival of the émigrés in 1789.<sup>37</sup>

Further evidence of the status enjoyed by the French as people of culture and education lies in the role émigrés played in the American Philosophical Society. Many Frenchmen were elected members during the late 1780s and the 1790s, among them Talleyrand, E. I. Du Pont de Nemours, Volney, the duc d'Orleans, Liancourt, and Moreau, who was the most active French member in the Society. Membership was an honor, and here many émigrés became acquainted with prominent Anglo-Philadelphians, such as Jefferson, Charles Willson Peale, Benjamin Rush, Caspar Wistar, and John

Vaughan. Vaughan was a wealthy merchant, and treasurer and later librarian of this organization. He patronized the French bookseller Dufief, rather than Moreau, who was his acquaintance and his neighbor. Moreau records an encounter between the two in

*American Journey:*

At one of the balls held on February 23, 1795, to celebrate the birthday of Washington, I begged Mr. Vaughan, my near neighbor, and my colleague in the Philosophical Society, to buy me one of the tickets of admission. But he replied that since I was a *storekeeper* I could not aspire to this honor...

And what did I say to him? "Don't you know that I have never been more your equal than now, when I am nothing?" I got no tickets, and did not see the ball.<sup>38</sup>

This anecdote points out the difficult social position of many émigrés. While they were often noblemen with distinguished pedigrees in France, their situation in Philadelphia was quite different. Many were entertained and aided by the elite of the city, and respected as intellectuals and men of taste, but the émigrés often lacked the money to enjoy full membership in the "republican court." Their financial difficulties and the measures they often had to take to support themselves made them subject to comments like that of Vaughan. Many note the snobbery and class division that was conspicuous in the city. As proud people, this must have contributed to their feelings of resentment and disillusionment upon arriving in Philadelphia. Yet, undoubtedly, the snobbery and airs on the part of the émigrés were also at times a factor in their treatment.<sup>39</sup>

Other public organizations that had active French memberships include the French Benevolent Society, which was established in 1793 to help assist the thousands of

displaced refugees arriving from Santo Domingo as well as those non-royalist French émigrés who were in need of assistance. The founders, all of them French, included some who had come during the American Revolution and stayed, as well as many recent arrivals from Santo Domingo. Among them were several merchants, French teachers, the wallpaper manufacturer Anthony Chardon, the miniature painter Jean Pierre Henri Elouis, the aeronaut Jean Pierre Blanchard, and others. The membership began and remained sympathetic to the Revolution, and none of the royalist émigrés joined. In 1798 it was again safe for émigrés to return to France, and many did leave, marking a period when the Society was not active in Philadelphia. However, by 1805 it was incorporated and again aiding needy émigrés.<sup>40</sup>

Many émigrés, particularly those from Santo Domingo, also were active in the Catholic churches in Philadelphia. French names appear in the baptismal and marriage records, and some services were even given in French.<sup>41</sup> Presumably there was some intermingling, if perhaps reluctant, between the French Catholics and the Irish Catholics, who were arriving in Philadelphia during the 1790s at nearly twice the rate of the French.<sup>42</sup> The church provided a structured arena where the émigrés could further build a sense of community.

As mentioned, Moreau published one of the French newspapers that circulated during the period. The *Courrier de la France et des Colonies* appeared from October 15, 1795 to March 1, 1796. Other French newspapers included the *Journal des Révolutions de la Partie Française de Saint-Domingue*, the *Courrier Politique de la France et des*

*Colonies, the Courier de l’Amerique, the Niveau de L’Europe et de l’Amerique, the Courier Francais, and L’Etoile Americaine, which was published bilingually. While many of these and others were short lived, their presence and their varied political and social overtones are further evidence of the developed and complex state of the French community in Philadelphia during the period of the 1790s.<sup>43</sup> Bilingual advertisements also appeared in increasing numbers in the American newspapers, most notably in the *Federal Gazette* and in *Aurora General Advertiser*.*

In addition to teaching French, émigrés frequently instructed Philadelphians in the arts of dancing, music, and fencing. French hair dressers, milliners, perfumeries and the like were very much the vogue, and were patronized by those Philadelphians who could afford to do so. The popularity of these services is again indicative that the French generally enjoyed the reputation as people of taste and style. In 1789, the *Federal Gazette* quoted thoughts on the French from *Sherlock’s Letters*, who noted that “When a French Lady comes into a room, the first thing that strikes you is, that she walks better, holds herself better, has her head and feet better dressed, her clothes better fancied, and better put on, than any woman you have ever seen.”<sup>44</sup> This seems to have been the pervasive attitude in Philadelphia, and fueled the desire to patronize French hairdressers, dance instructors, clothiers, as well as craftsmen. Many Philadelphians were quick to embrace the stylish French ways. The historian Oberholtzer notes that women imitated French manners, and that young men courting their sweethearts affected French “poses, graces, and flatteries... Philadelphia had gone French mad.” He further quotes the

Englishman John Davis, a contemporary traveler in Philadelphia, who observed that “American girls blushed at their own awkwardness and each strove to copy that swimming air, that nonchalance, that ease... which characterized the French young ladies...”<sup>45</sup> Many French émigrés established themselves in professions that catered to those Philadelphians who strove to live up to the standard set by stylish French women and men.

Émigrés also capitalized on the fashion for French cuisine. William Bingham and George Washington were among the prominent Philadelphians who employed émigré cooks and confectioners.<sup>46</sup> Other émigrés advertised their varied services in contemporary newspapers, such as Mr. Simonet, who advertised that he was a “pastry cook from Paris,” and that he “has opened a shop on second opposite the new market.” Francis Despernay, from Paris, placed an advertisement in both French and English offering his services as a confectioner.<sup>47</sup> Augustin Guigues listed himself as a baker in the 1798 naturalization records, and many others offered their services as cooks, like Joseph Heraud did when he advertised himself as “just from France, cook, prepares and sends dinners on short notice.”

Dancing instructors also enjoyed employment as a result of the desires of Philadelphians to emulate the French manners and tastes, and many, such as Mr. Quesnet, advertised their services in contemporary newspapers.<sup>48</sup> The presence of dancing masters both contributed to and is indicative of the need for places to dance. Philadelphians desired opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of up-to-date steps, to say nothing

of a French dress in the newest fashion, or a stylish French haircut. The importance of proper training is illustrated by an occasion at a ball given by Mrs. Bingham, where Miss Sophia Chew insisted on dancing with Mr. William Smith, a member of Congress from South Carolina. "The poor man, high born as he was, had never learned to dance... no performance, of course, could be more awkward, and he seemed in agony the whole time," recounted Samuel Breck.<sup>49</sup> Such fêtes had become the standard in Philadelphia, as Mrs. Benjamin Stoddard reported back to Maryland, after enjoying another evening at the Bingham's Mansion House. Rather than having tea, as was still popular in Maryland, in Philadelphia, "when company meets it is generally to dance and then to have supper. These are called balls."<sup>50</sup> Such balls were in great demand, and were given not only by Philadelphia socialites such as the Bingham's, but also by industrious Frenchmen. One of many men to address this need and opportunity was James Robardet, who frequently advertised the sale of tickets for upcoming balls that he was organizing. A weekly "French ball" took place at Oeller's, the popular French hotel, and was advertised in the *Courrier de la France et des Colonies*.<sup>51</sup>

Such opportunities also included those important visits by members of the former (and future) French royalty. The magnitude of such meetings is illuminated by contemporary accounts, such as that of Lucy Breck's diary, wherein she writes that

Yesterday Philadelphia was honored with nothing less than the arrival of a prince, and it is generally said, should the French ever call again for a king, which many believe will be the case, the said Duke of Orleans will, beyond any doubt, be the chosen man. And now, I must proceed to inform you, that he is very handsome, pleasing and accomplished- speaks our language

perfectly, and is, in short, a most captivating man of three and twenty. All this I have been told, for I have not yet seen him; but I am in hourly expectation of a visit from this great personage,— Are you not surprised that I write *with so much composure*, or indeed that I have power to *hold my pen*, with such a prospect in view?<sup>52</sup>

Despite the fact that the fall of the French monarchy was initially celebrated by many Philadelphians, things courtly in bearing still carried mystique and certain appeal. Many French émigrés capitalized on this American reverence by affiliating themselves with the distant court. Mrs. Mercier, in offering her services to “the ladies of the city”, advertised that she was “Lately from Paris”, and “a pupil of the Queen’s hair dresser.”<sup>53</sup> Mr. Dubois placed a similar advert in *L’Etoile Americaine*, giving notice of his return from France, and indicating that he was a “surgeon dentist and formerly dentist to the King and Royal Family of France...”<sup>54</sup> Mr. Renaudin, advertising in 1792 in the *Philadelphia General Advertiser*, stated that he was “lately musical instrument maker to the Royal Music Academy in Paris,” and that he “has commenced his business in this city... where he requests the patronage of the citizens”.<sup>55</sup>

The presence of French royalty in the city certainly fueled this interest. The duc d’Orleans, future King of France, arrived in 1796, fell in love with one of William Bingham’s daughters, but was denied her hand by her father.<sup>56</sup> He was soon joined by his two younger brothers, the duc de Montpensier and the duc de Beaujolais, and all were generally well received by Philadelphia society.<sup>57</sup> Other noblemen in residence in Philadelphia included the duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt and the Vicomte de

Noailles.<sup>58</sup>

Among the émigrés were many doctors, dentists, surgeons and pharmacists who offered their services. Men like David Nassy, Dr. Deveze and Citizen Robert played important roles in battling the yellow fever epidemic. Others, such as Lepeyre, a French surgeon, and Mr. Courbe, a French physician from Santo Domingo, were among the numerous French doctors advertising in Philadelphia newspapers during the years of the epidemics. One might also patronize Dr. Chambard, a “Chirurgien François”, who had “lately come to this city to cure the inveterate ITCH,” or Louis Duvivier, a doctor and native of Paris, who came via England in 1795 and “practiced phisick and kept an apothecary shope,” and married an American.<sup>59</sup>

A wide range of other skilled professions was also advertised. Alexander Morel, a “silk dyer from the manufactories of Lyons in France” was working on Front Street in the 1792.<sup>60</sup> Among the many tailors were Mr. De Bartholt, who announced himself as a “tailor and habitmaker,” and Jean Baptiste Soyer, a tailor who emigrated from Cape Francois in 1793. Jean Lefevre and Benoit Descampes were glasscutters, and Etienne Paris, Pierre Nantze, and Louis Neau all came from Bordeaux and practiced the trade of coopering.<sup>61</sup>

Artists and architects were also among those who arrived and offered their services. Among the latter were Pierre Pharoux, who “met all the leading figures of President Washington’s cabinet...,” Marc Brunel, and Pierre L’Enfant. Felize and Lacour, “Architects from Paris”, advertised that they were opening a drawing school, the artist

and architect Pierre Bauduy worked in nearby Wilmington.<sup>62</sup> One of the most famous French sculptors, Jean-Antoine Houdon, had been enticed to Philadelphia and to Mount Vernon to sculpt Washington and others in 1785.<sup>63</sup> With the onset of the French Revolution, many others made the same journey. Jean Pierre Henri Elouis advertised as a limner in 1792, and apparently gained the trust of no less than George Washington, as Washington loaned a Mr. Elouis eighty dollars in July of 1793. Elouis is thought to have painted miniatures of both George and Martha Washington.<sup>64</sup> In January of 1792 a portrait painter, Desaignes, announced his arrival in Philadelphia, as did the “French painter”<sup>65</sup> Beaucourt. Peter de Beauvais, an ornamental painter, worked for clients such as Robert Morris.<sup>65</sup> Jean Baptiste Labarte was a drawing master and an ice-cream maker.<sup>66</sup> St. Memin, the famed portraitist who worked in New York and later Philadelphia, enjoyed great popularity among the wealthy members of Philadelphia society. He was in Philadelphia by the beginning of 1799, and among those Philadelphians whose portraits he captured were dozens of French émigrés. His works today represent the most complete body of images of the French in Philadelphia.<sup>67</sup>

The presence of French art in Philadelphia is further documented by the anecdote recounted by Ann Hollingsworth Wharton in *Salons Colonial and Republican*, wherein she describes a pair of portraits of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette that hung in the building where Congress met during this period. The portraits had been sent in 1785 to the Congress as a gift from Louis XVI. Due to the politically divided French community, they were apparently covered with curtains at the time of Washington’s inauguration for

his second term in 1793.<sup>68</sup> The French royalty were apparently popular subjects for local artists, as evidenced by advertisements placed by Charles Willson Peale, Philadelphia's preeminent artist of this period. He offered a portrait of Louis XVI, a "copy of a painting (apply to see it at Mr. Peale's Museum) painted from the original picture in the council chamber at Versailles."<sup>69</sup>

By far the trade most frequently practiced by the émigrés was that of merchant, and many of these merchants came from Santo Domingo. This island was a great center of trade, and the majority of the white inhabitants there were either merchants or planters.

It is clear that many of the merchants who fled to Philadelphia used their already established credit and connections to continue in that profession. This is supported again by the proliferation of advertisements placed by these merchants in newspapers, and by other contemporary documents, such as the Naturalization Records, where the majority of émigrés indicate that they are merchants. This large influx of merchants with specific French connections contributed greatly to the proliferation of the French taste, and to the accessibility of and interest in French goods.

The presence of French merchants in Philadelphia was not a new phenomenon. Brissot de Warville recounts in his 1788 *New Travels in the United States of America* that "There are today far fewer French merchants in Philadelphia than there were during the war." He indicated that the high frequency of bankruptcy among these earlier French merchants had discouraged others from following and also "put Americans on their guard." The reasons he gives for the bankruptcies early on are noteworthy:

Most of the French who set up businesses in Philadelphia either had brought insufficient capital, or bought stock unwisely, or indulged in extravagant expenses. The majority did not know the language and were unfamiliar with the customs and laws of the country. They were enticed by the *apparently* high prices they were being paid in paper money for their European merchandise. Thinking that this paper would soon be redeemed by the state or Congress, they accumulated as much as they could and, computing enormous profits, kept encouraging with high expectations their correspondents in Europe. These hopes came to nothing... It soon became necessary for them to abandon their illusions and sell the paper at a loss in order to meet notes due. They had, however, made a parade of wealth and had incurred considerable expenses, and now they thought they had to keep up this front in order to maintain their credit. For, judging Philadelphia by Parisian standards, they foolishly imagined that well informed and reasonable men could, like the subjects or an enslaved nation, be duped by vain show.<sup>70</sup>

Thus, the French merchants who arrived after Brissot de Warville's 1788 publication faced a reputation already ensconced in the minds of many Philadelphians. Of those French merchants who arrived before 1788, most came after the American Revolution had ended, rather than as soldiers.<sup>71</sup> While many perhaps learned from the more conservative Philadelphians and particularly the Quakers, others chose to maintain the ostentation that they were known for previously. This both contributed to their reputation as stylish people of taste (though many found their opulence distasteful), but also landed many in bankruptcy. Some more conservative merchants, however, such as Stephen Girard, who had emigrated in 1776, were ultimately very successful and became a part of the elite of Philadelphia.

Other émigrés advertised services that reflect a lower socioeconomic level, a lower level of education, or simply a lack of Philadelphia connections or capital. Mrs.

Bologne, “lately from France, living in Moravian Alley,” for example, advertised her skill at “washing, mending, and preserving silk stockings.”<sup>72</sup> Doubtless many others pursued similar routes to support themselves, and had to adjust to a major change in their financial position. Many fled France and Santo Domingo with little opportunity to liquidate or transport their fortune intact, if they in fact possessed one, and some lost everything in their escape, arriving only with what they were wearing. One example that will perhaps illustrate the situation of many is the account given by Charles Laurent in the Naturalization Records of 1798. Laurent indicates that he fled the conflagration in Cape François while it was “actually in flames” (July of 1793), with his two children, wife, brother, and two Negroes:

On his arrival in Philadelphia, he has endeavored to support his family by every kind of work he was able to perform- such as making wooden boxes, making and mending umbrellas, or anything he could do (?) or execute with the help of two Negroes who had followed his wife and his brother... Now dwells and works in a hat manufactory belonging to Mr. Contineau in a house of Mr. Frig (?) In sixth street.<sup>73</sup>

While the former financial status of Laurent and many others is unknown, it is known that many members of France’s aristocracy were reduced to shop keeping, teaching French or dance, or even farming. Certainly the French royalty who spent their exile in Philadelphia could not live in the same level of opulence to which they were accustomed.

The Vicomte Noailles, for example, did not enjoy the luxury he had in France, and during “the latter portion of his stay in the city he occupied, gratuitously, the third story of a house upon the grounds of William Bingham, situate on Fourth Street, near Spruce,

with an entrance from the street.”<sup>74</sup> Some who tried to maintain former lifestyles overextended themselves and ended up in court. The volume containing the Continuance Docket of the Court of Common Pleas, at the American Philosophical Society, contains notes in Du Ponceau’s hand that indicate such situations were not uncommon. Bankruptcy notices frequently appeared in the newspapers as well, such as that of John Baptiste Dubuiffort in 1790 .<sup>75</sup>

Among the Philadelphia elite, there was a large group of long established Quaker families who were highly esteemed, but “bound, of course, by the essence of their faith, to an abnegation of nearly every thing that belonged to the spirit of the cavalier, and of every thing which illustrates itself in the tastes or shows of life.”<sup>76</sup> While this group had little time or patience for the opulent tastes of the French court, there was another group among whom many noble émigrés found welcome. These Philadelphians were often members of the Church of England, wealthy and much more liberal, both socially and religiously, and they were often more recent arrivals to the city. It was this group, known for their opulence in dress, furnishings, and manners, who more openly embraced the traditional fineries of the French court. Among them were Robert Morris and the Bingham, and it was they and those who aspired to their lifestyle who embraced the styles of the French court. One contemporary source noted that they were “indebted to the French for many parts of their luxuries.”<sup>77</sup>

While the émigrés were often invited to dinner by the members of this group, and sometimes offered financial assistance or even housing by them, most of the émigrés

were without the money necessary to embrace or be embraced fully by this circle. With the ostentation came a form of snobbery, as Moreau had found with Robert Morris. Many contemporary travelers and commentators noted this snobbery, and the prevalent anxiety of Philadelphians to amass wealth. Some felt that the invitations they received to dine in the houses of the elite were less than genuine. The Duke de la Rochefoucault-Liancourt stated his sentiments thus:

The vanity of wealth is common enough. The rich man lives to show strangers his splendid furniture, his fine English glass, and exquisite china. But when the stranger has once viewed the parade in a ceremonious dinner, he is dismissed for some other newcomer who has not yet seen the magnificence of the house, nor tasted the old Madeira... and then a new face is always more welcome than an old one to him who has little to say to either."<sup>78</sup>

The English traveler Isaac Weld agreed, noted that "Amongst the uppermost circles in Philadelphia, pride, haughtiness and ostentation are conspicuous..."<sup>79</sup>

While this great mix of French people busied themselves at surviving, making money, socializing, and passing their time in exile, social and political polarities were not forgotten. Royalists and Revolutionaries in many cases made no attempt to disguise their disdain and even hatred of the other. They did, however, have in common a love of their homeland and a great desire to return, and many did so as soon as the political climate allowed. Politics aside, the émigrés brought with them a distinctly French cultural flavor, and affected to some degree almost every facet of life in Philadelphia. Despite the difficulties and differences of life in Philadelphia, thousands of French people called the

city home for many years, and contributed to its life and to a new taste in the city's domestic interiors of the 1790s.

## NOTES

1. Brissot de Warville, *New Travels in the United States of America, 1788*, 199. He adds on the following page that "To maintain order in a market of this size in France you would need three or four police officers and a dozen soldiers. Here, law needs no muskets; education, morality, and habit do everything."
2. Hopkinson, *Francis Hopkinson's Account of the Grand Federal Procession, Philadelphia, 1788*, 7, 11. The Society of the Cincinnati, an organization that celebrated American and French fraternity, was also represented.
3. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "émigré" as "A Frenchman who has left his country for another; esp. one of those Royalists who fled at the French Revolution." The word is used in this thesis in the more general sense, referring to both Royalist and non-Royalist French people.
4. This correspondence is summarized in Abraham Nasatir and Gary Monell, *French Consuls in the United States: A Calendar of their Correspondence in the Archives Nationales*, 292.
5. A large number also landed in the port of Baltimore, many of whom eventually made their way from there to Philadelphia. One Annapolis silversmith noted that "yesterday and too day there has been between 30 and 40 vessels went to Baltimore, the most of them full of French people from Cape Fransway. They saw that one Vessel had near 1200 on board." See Gregory Wood, *The French Presence in Maryland, 1524-1800*, 144.
6. The Frenchman Stephen Girard played an important role in the organization of hospitals and relief during the yellow fever crisis. French doctors helped treat the victims, and other émigrés were hired to work in the hospitals and to help bury the dead. Later, the physician Felix Pascalis-Ouvrire wrote accounts of the outbreaks. See J. H. Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*, and *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee*.
7. The French Ministers were not known for warm feelings toward the aristocrats who fled France. They were refused aid by the ministers, who publicly shunned them. See Francis Childs, *French Refugee Life in the United States, 1790-1800*, 162. Minister

Fauchet even convinced Washington to refuse private interviews with Talleyrand or any other royalist exile. See Catherine Spaeth, "Purgatory or Promised Land?: French Émigrés in Philadelphia and their Perceptions of America in the 1790s," 97.

8. As an important hero in the American Revolution, Lafayette played a major role in the general popularization of the French people in America, and was often linked to Washington in visual representations, both in America and in France.

9. William Thomas, *The Society of the Cincinnati 1783-1935*, 25.

10. Asa Gardiner, *The Order of the Cincinnati in France*, 10. The Society members voted to present a number of French officers with a medal depicting the insignia of the Society. Recipients of the medal were Chevalier de La Luzerne, Sieur Gerard, Count d'Estaing, Count de Grasse, Count de Barras, Chevalier des Touches, Count Rochambeau, and the generals and colonels of the army and the admirals and commanders of the Navy. Louis XVI's permission was unusual, and L'Enfant noted that "The favors which His most Christian Majesty has been pleased to shew us, in suffering to bear in his kingdom the mark of our union, where no other strange order is tolerated..." See *Proceedings of the Society of the Cincinnati*, 18.

11. Voltaire was among the most influential champions of the Quakers, and his *Lettres Philosophiques* contributed greatly to their popularity in France in the 1730s and after. He presented the Quaker community as unique in its combination of pacifism, simplicity of lifestyle, benevolence, and prosperity. The French alliance with America against the British in 1778 was marked by Franklin embracing the aged Voltaire, in a symbolic public gesture. See Roger Kennedy, *Orders From France*, 27, Catherine Hebert, "The Pennsylvania French in the 1790s: The Francophone Immigrants' Impact," 12-13, and Durand Echeverria, *Mirage in the West*, 17-18.

12. Brissot de Warville tirelessly applauds the Quakers in his *New Travels in the United States*, providing further evidence of the French reverence for the Quakers by 1788, the year of his journey.

13. Spaeth, "Purgatory or Promised Land?," 42.

14. "Early French revolutionary leaders idealized (Quakers) for their virtue in public life, their honesty in private life, and for their perfect constitution that obviated the need for strict laws, police, army, priests, or oaths." See Edith Phillips, *The Good Quaker in French Legend*, 133.

15. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 21, 1796.

16. Stafford, *Philadelphia Directory*.
17. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, September 20, 1792.
18. *L'Etoile Americaine*, April 10, 1794.
19. *The Federal Gazette*, September 29, 1792 and November 25, 1793, respectively.
20. *Aurora*, May 23, 1793.
21. Brissot de Warville, 394.
22. Information on Dufief is derived largely from Madeleine Stern's comprehensive "Nicholas Gouin Dufief" in *Studies in the Franco-American Booktrade during the late 18th and early 19th Centuries*.
23. The Jefferson-Dufief letters are in the Library of Congress. Dufief was instrumental in helping Jefferson build his second library, which was sold to the Library of Congress in 1815. Dufief's patrons are discussed in Stern, 165.
24. Dufief to Jefferson, December 23, 1800, as quoted in Stern, 186.
25. Quoted in Stern, 187. Dufief goes on to say that the copies were brought from France "by Mr. de Ternaut, scuiputed by Givrachy, after Pigal. I have had two antique pedestals made to support them, they make the most beautiful effect in the world..." Marble busts of Rousseau and Voltaire are in the Stephen Girard Collection at Girard College.
26. Moreau landed first in Norfolk, and worked briefly in New York before settling in Philadelphia in 1794. His departure date is noted in Kenneth and Anna Roberts, *Moreau de St. Méry's American Journey*, 173.
27. Among his works are *Description topographique et politique de la partie espagnole de l'isle Saint Domingue*, published in 1796 in French and in English translation, and *Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie francaise de l'isle Saint- Dominique*, published in 1797. Both of these works were published at his own press. See Roberts and Roberts, *American Journey*, xvi.
28. The manuscript of Moreau's diary was discovered in 1913, and was edited and annotated then, but remained un-translated until 1947, when it was published in English by Kenneth and Anna Roberts.

29. Located in the American Philosophical Society Library.

30. Moreau also had an assistant by the name of G. de Combatz, an émigré who had been a bookseller in Santo Domingo. See Stern, 246. After an extensive falling out with his partner and backer Baron Frank de la Roche, de Roche “transferred his favor from (Moreau) to Combatz and opened up a bookstore in partnership with him in Philadelphia.” See Roberts and Roberts, 203. De Combatz and Moreau maintained close ties with the Boston émigré bookseller and publisher Joseph Nancrede, who traveled to Philadelphia and other cities to sell his books, and later moved to Philadelphia.

31. Stern, 74.

32. *The Federal Gazette*, October 27, 1792. The émigré newspaper *L’Etoile Americaine* noted in its prospectus “Subscriptions are received by M. Carey...” Also, Moreau, in the course of recounting an anecdote, notes that Carey was in his shop and that they had a conversation. See Roberts and Roberts, 333.

33. As mentioned, many booksellers also published catalogues of their available stock. A number of such catalogues exist for Carey’s business. See Hebert, “The Francophone Immigrants’ Impact,” 315. Due to the temporary closing of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, these catalogues were not available to this researcher, and their specific content is unknown to him.

34. Of the 239 books and pamphlets sold in the 1785 auction of Pierre Du Simitiere’s collection of specimens of natural history and printed materials, 67 were French. These French language works were purchased by the Library Company, as well as by the citizenry of Philadelphia. See Stern, 235. It is also worth noting that there were numerous French books listed in the 1810 inventory of Mount Vernon. Among them were “Warvills in the relation of France and the U. S.,” “Volneys Travels,” “French Constitution,” “Chastelleaux Travels,” and “Telemachus,” perhaps a version which Nancrede had edited and published in Boston. It is not clear which of these and the other French books listed were actually read by Washington, as the library grew largely as a result of gifts, or were purchased in order to assist an author or publisher. However, it does again suggest the availability of French books. See Worthington Ford, *Inventory of the Contents of Mount Vernon, 1810*.

35. *The Federal Gazette*, December 24, 1793.

36. See Paul Spurlin, *The French Enlightenment in America*, 99.

37. For example, a large selection of French books was advertised for sale at auction in the *Federal Gazette*, December 24, 1793. Stern further notes that “In the aftermath of the French Revolution, until the opening of the nineteenth century, there was a strong market for French books, Particularly in Philadelphia...” See page 199. However, it is well to remember that, particularly during the period prior to the French Revolution, many of the French books offered in Philadelphia and elsewhere in America were actually English translations of that had been published in London or Dublin.

Contemporary New York newspapers suggest a parallel enthusiasm in New York for French books. The *Gazette Francaise* has many advertisements for French books for sale, including a lengthy one for de Combatz’s newly opened bookstore in Philadelphia (November 25, 1795). New Yorkers could chose from a variety of booksellers, and the establishment of a French library was also attempted. The many advertisements include the following, from the September 11, 1795 edition: “For Sale: By some Frenchmen arrived from the West Indies, a large collection of Books, the most part French, wholesale and retail.” Certainly many merchants and refugees from Santo Domingo brought French books into Philadelphia as well. While the unadvertised trade in books is hard to trace, it no doubt contributed to the dissemination of French literature, language, and culture into Philadelphia.

38. The anecdote is recounted in Roberts and Roberts, 333. Moreau had the distinction of having served as President of the Paris commune for three days at the beginning of the Revolution. The contact between Vaughan and Dufief is noted in Stern, 203.

39. Moreau, for example, noted “There is a great deal of snobbery in Philadelphia, where classes are sharply divided. This is particularly noticeable at balls. There are some balls where no one is admitted unless his professional standing is up to a certain mark. At one ball a scene degenerated into fisticuffs because of the insults that passed between the wife of a small jeweler and the wife of a hairdresser.” See Roberts and Roberts, 333.

40. See Francis Dallett, “The French Benevolent Society of Philadelphia and the Bicentennial.”

41. Hebert, “Pennsylvania French, the Story of their Survival” 233.

42. Billy G. Smith noted in *The Lower Sort* that “Of the immigrants arriving in Philadelphia’s harbor between 1789-1793, 53 percent were from Ireland and 27 percent France or the French West Indies, as catalogued in Health Officer’s register.” Moreau de St. Méry called this church “St. Mary’s of the Irish,” as it was known to have a particularly rigid and unforgiving Irish priest.

43. See Childs, Chapter Six, "The Refugee Press." See also Samuel Marino, "The French Refugee Newspapers and Periodicals in the United States 1789-1825," and Allen J. Barthold, "French Journalists in the United States, 1780-1800," 227-230.
44. June 19, 1789. Moreau notes of Philadelphia women that they are "greatly addicted to finery and have a strong desire to display themselves-- a desire resulting from and inflamed by their love of adornment. They cannot, however, imitate that elegance of style possessed by French women." See Roberts and Roberts, 283.
45. Ellis Oberholtzer, *Philadelphia: A History of the City and its People*, 354-355. The source of the quote from John Davis is not cited.
46. Samuel Chase, a guest of the Bingham, found little to like in the French food that was served, and requested roast beef and stout instead. Upon finishing, he commented "There, Madam, I have made a sensible and excellent dinner, but no thanks to your French cook." Elizabeth F. L. Ellet, *The Queens of American Society*, (New York: Scribner, 1867), 146, as quoted in Robert Alberts, *The Golden Voyage, The Life and Times of William Bingham, 1752-1804*, 214.
47. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, January 5, 1793.
48. Quesnet advertised in the *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, November 14, 1793.
49. Samuel Breck, *Recollections of Samuel Breck, with Passages from his Notebook*, 135.
50. Rowland, "Philadelphia A Century Ago," *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, Vol. 62, 1898, as quoted in Alberts, *Golden Voyage*, 358. Mrs. Stoddard goes on to describe in detail Mrs. Bingham's ball.
51. December 10, 1795, as quoted in Childs, 110. The weekly ball was advertised on February 1, 1793 in *The Federal Gazette*. Another opportunity to display one's training and finery was at the "Grand Concert," given by a company of French musicians and advertised in *The Federal Gazette*, August 30, 1790.
52. Samuel Breck, *Reminiscences*, quoted from letters written in October, 1796, by his daughter Lucy, as cited in Childs, 114.
53. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, January 3, 1792.
54. March 8, 1794.

55. May 19, 1792. See also *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, December 7, 1792, where F. P. Besselievre advertised six-dozen violins for sale.

56. When he asked for the hand of Bingham's daughter, Bingham declined, saying that "should you ever be restored to your hereditary position you will be too great a match for her; if not, she is too great a match for you." See Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 921. Other nobles did marry American women, such as the marriage between Joseph Bonaparte and Betsy Paterson, which ended when Bonaparte returned to be king and divorced his American wife.

57. Childs, 29.

58. La Rochefoucauld served as deputy for the nobility of Clermont in Beauvais, and it was he who reported the fall of the Bastille to Louis XVI. Noailles had fought in the American Revolution with his future brother-in-law Lafayette, and was in 1789 elected to the Estates General. Most of his family died under the blade of the guillotine. See Childs, 30-31.

59. The role of the French doctors in the yellow fever epidemic is discussed in Powell, *Bring Out Your Dead*. Statistics and information related to the epidemic are also in *Minutes of the Proceedings of the Committee*. Dr. Chambard advertised in the *Philadelphia General Advertiser*, October 23, 1793, and Louis Duvivier appears in the Naturalization Records in the National Archives in Philadelphia.

60. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, May 16, 1793.

61. *Pennsylvania General Gazette*, December 14, 1793, and Naturalization Papers, National Archives, Philadelphia.

62. A good discussion of some of the French architects active in Philadelphia during these years is available in Kennedy, *Orders from France*.

63. James Madison visited Houdon while he was at Mt. Vernon, and Rembrandt Peale painted his portrait while he was in the area. The portrait is now at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Jefferson owned no less than seven plaster busts by Houdon at Monticello, and Mr. Dupont presented a plaster cast of Houdon's *Diana* to the Library Company in 1800. See Dickson, "Jefferson as Art Collector," and Peterson, "Library Hall: Home of the Library Company of Philadelphia, 1790-1800," 142.

64. The advertisement appears in the *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, February 29, 1792. The loan is noted in a list of "Sundries bot on account of GW", located in the Downes Manuscript Collection at the Winterthur Museum. A Portrait of Martha Washington attributed to Elouis is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum, and Johnson notes in *American Portrait Miniatures*, page 116, that Elouis supposedly painted George Washington as well.
65. Robert Morris, Accounts 1791-1798, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
66. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, January 14, 1794. Labarte's name appears in the 1798 Naturalization Records at the National Archives in Philadelphia.
67. See Ellen Miles, *Saint-Memin and the Neoclassical Profile Portrait in America*.
68. Anne Wharton, *Salons Colonial and Republican*, 74. The portraits were covered due to the divisive politics of the French Revolution. As both revolutionaries and royalists might be in the room to attend the ceremony, they were covered to avoid further inflaming an already tense situation. Wharton also notes that the paintings were at one point under the charge of Robert Morris.
69. *Aurora*, July 11, 1794.
70. Brissot de Warville, 259.
71. Hebert notes that "Of the French merchants operating from Philadelphia in the 1780s, few had actively participated in the War of Independence. Most had arrived during or after the hostilities, establishing headquarters in Philadelphia, with lines of communication and commerce to San Domingo and France in order to capitalize on the newly developing commercial potential." See "Pennsylvania French, The Story of their Survival," 22.
72. *Aurora*, August 18, 1792.
73. Naturalization Records, National Archives, Philadelphia.
74. Scharf and Westcott, 919.
75. *Independent Gazetteer*, January 16, 1790. Many other similar notices appear in this and other contemporary newspapers.
76. Griswold, 11.

77. "Thoughts on Emigration, Particularly to America, from a late Publication," *Columbian Magazine; or Monthly Miscellany* 1, no. 5 (November 1787) 762, as cited in Barquist, " 'The honours of Court' or 'the Severity of Virtue': Household Furnishings and Cultural Aspirations in Philadelphia," 327. The magazine goes on to say that by "means of dress, equipage, and the pleasures of the table, temptations which are sure to captivate young men, [the French] endeavored to attach the rising generation to the interest of France."

78. Scharf and Westcott, 909.

79. Isaac Weld, *Travels through the States of North America*, 21. Alexander Baring said of his father-in-law William Bingham that he "knows how to treat his equals but not his inferiors and is consequently unpopular or he would otherwise have been raised to the Vice President's chair." See Alberts, 283.

## Chapter 2

### **THE AVAILABILITY OF FRENCH FURNISHINGS IN PHILADELPHIA**

French furnishings were available to Philadelphians via a number of avenues. Some of the taste-conscious members of the upper class traveled in France and acquired goods there, shipping purchases back to their Philadelphia homes. Others had contacts in France who procured furnishings on their behalf. For those Philadelphians with smaller purses or without such direct contacts, French merchants offered locally a wide range of fashionable French goods. While not all merchants were successful or long in business, the number of them who were active and the range of goods they offered is further evidence of the popularity of such goods. It is clear from their advertisements that despite the political unrest that had enveloped France (and in some cases because of this unrest), French goods continued to be imported for consumption by those Philadelphians and émigrés who could afford them. These merchants played an important role in the dissemination of French goods, and hence French taste, to Anglo-Philadelphians.<sup>1</sup>

This mercantile class was well represented in the groups of émigrés both from France and from Santo Domingo.<sup>2</sup> French merchants arriving in Philadelphia quickly set up shops, offering goods acquired through their already established contacts in France.

They imported and offered a variety of goods; most common among them were fabrics, wine, paper hangings (wall paper), looking glasses, clocks, china, girandoles, and other specialty goods were occasionally offered. Advertisements for such merchants appear in many contemporary newspapers. For example, in 1796, the French merchants “Odier & Bousquet, Brothers” listed the variety of goods they had in stock:

Cambricks and lawns	White and coloured thread fans
A large assortment of ribbons	Of naburbs
Black and white silk stockings	A large assortment of French books
A large assortment of kid silk and	Jewelry
Angola gloves	Pomatum
Cotton blankets	Essences and vinegar of maithe
White and black lace and veils	A large assortment of French china
Silks of all kinds	in the newest taste
Black, white, and coloured tiffeny	A large assortment of furniture in the
A large assortment of silk shawls,	most elegant fashion
of all sizes and colours	Blue guineas
India muslins, plain and	Looking glasses
embroidered	Time pieces
Prints with frames	Artificial flowers <sup>3</sup>

As most of these offerings are not specifically designated as French, we are left to surmise their origins, but a number of factors do suggest that many of these goods originated in France. First, the nationality of the merchants themselves suggests that they had some mercantile connections in France. The “Large assortment of French China” confirms that at least some of the goods were French. Furthermore, some of these goods, such as looking glasses and timepieces, are frequently advertised by French merchants during this period, and often are specifically noted as of French manufacture.<sup>4</sup> As the

French and English were at war, they were not likely English goods, unless they were first traded through a neutral middleman. French merchants were not likely to have tried to compete with American merchants who had close ties in England, but rather would naturally have taken advantage of their contacts in France. While this does not exclude other markets of origin, it does point toward a likely French origin for many of the goods.

Some uncertainty lies in the reference to “A large assortment of furniture,” as this could refer to furniture as we know it, or perhaps more likely to seating or bed furnishing upholstery fabric, which was commonly called “furniture” during the period. In any case, fabrics were primary among the imports of French merchants. Another mercantile firm, Bertier and Company, also offered a variety of fabrics, including “cotton stripes and cotton furniture,” and Peter Borger imported on the schooner *Fortune*, from Cape François, a wide variety of cloth and fabric.<sup>5</sup> E. Willet, a merchant of unknown origins, advertised in the *Federal Gazette* in both French and English that he had for sale a wide selection of fabrics, and Simond En (sic), at “Spruce Street no. 28,” advertised in French, providing a long list of fashionable fabrics that he had on hand for sale.<sup>6</sup> Newspapers of the period reveal a plethora of such advertisements. These fabrics were used by Philadelphians and by the number of French upholsterers, tailors, and “mantua makers” who were working in Philadelphia during the 1790s.

In addition to those émigrés whose pursuits were solely mercantile, many émigrés who followed other trades also involved themselves in mercantile activities and offered French goods to the Philadelphia public. Upholsterers also played an important role as

importers and interior decorators during this period. George Bertault, “Upholsterer from Paris”, for example, advertised that at his Market Street store,

He has lately received, and will always have on hand, a rich and elegant assortment of paper hangings in the most fashionable taste. He has also for sale a variety of French looking glasses, of the newest fashion, and first quality, of 5 feet by 2 feet 10 and under-- also, Rock-crystal lusters of two and three branches; besides a complete assortment of all the materials used in the business he follows.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the offerings of the émigré upholsterer Francis Delorme illustrate the diverse role of the upholsterer. In 1790, soon after his arrival from Paris, he advertised that he

engages to make, in the most fashionable taste, all furniture in the line of his Business, viz.- Beds, Counterpanes, and Matrasses; Chairs, Arm-Chairs and Couches, all in the English or French Style. He has an assortment of handsome Paper-Hangings from Paris, in the latest taste, some emblematic of the late Revolution. He puts up these papers himself, and gives them a coat of Varnish, which adds much to their brilliance...<sup>8</sup>

Bertault and Delorme came from a French tradition of upholsterers serving as interior designers. There, and in England as well, upholsterers clearly provided a variety of goods and services besides covering seating furniture. Thomas Jefferson patronized merchants in France that offered upholstery services in addition to other goods. Dupuis, “*Marchand de Fer*,” offered “*toutes fortes de Marchandises pour Meubles*,” including feathers, mattresses, upholstery for coaches, and a wide variety of fabrics.<sup>9</sup>

Recent émigrés such as Bertault and Delorme most likely followed in this tradition, and offered Philadelphians a similar range of services. Perhaps Jefferson had

grown accustomed to such diverse services in Paris. He patronized Bertault when he arrived in the city in 1790, spending thirty-two dollars in his shop. Bertault also supplied mattresses, feathers, chairs and upholstery, curtains, and wallpaper to various American clients. Bertault and others perhaps acted as contractors and employed journeymen from various trades. By the mid-eighteenth century in London, the upholsterer was considered the “Chief Agent” in decorating a house. In addition to fitting up beds, window curtains, hangings, and upholstering seating furniture, he employed “Journeymen in his own proper calling, Cabinet-makers, Glass-grinders...and a vast many Tradesmen of other mechanic branches.”<sup>10</sup> The similar role of the eighteenth-century French upholsterer is evidenced by the variety of goods illustrated by Diderot in the plate *Tapissier: Interieur d'une Boutique et differens Ouvrages*.<sup>11</sup> In addition to rolls of upholstery fabrics, chair frames, and upholstered seating furniture, the interior of the upholsterer’s shop is shown with a variety of looking glasses, case furniture, beds, mattresses, and curtains.

Bertault followed these English and French examples in offering looking glasses, paper hangings, and a wide range of decorative goods in addition to seating furniture and upholstery.<sup>12</sup> He also acted as a contractor, for when Andrew Craigie ordered a set of chairs from him, Bertault paid the chair maker Adam Hains for making the frames. Significantly, the chairs were ordered through the upholsterer Bertault, rather than through the chair maker Hains. Francis D’Lorme advertised to Charlestonians that he had “Engaged several of the best hands in the Cabinet-Makers Line; any orders for any kind of Furniture, shall be neatly and punctually executed.”<sup>13</sup> Upholsterers also contracted out

and did independent work in cabinet and chair maker's workshops, sometimes working for materials or finished goods that they could then resell. The upholsterer John Mason suggested such an arrangement when he advertised that "Joiners will find it in their interest to employ him..."<sup>14</sup> The impact then of French upholsterers, who perhaps had a bias for the French taste, goes beyond seating furniture and could potentially impact an entire interior scheme.<sup>15</sup>

Bertault and D'Lorme were two of many Philadelphians who offered French hanging-papers to adorn local homes. Such papers were not new to Philadelphia, but by this time they were tremendously popular, as the advertisement of Burrill and Carnes suggests.<sup>16</sup> Located at the "old paper hanging manufactory," they had "ready for sale 15000 Pieces Paper, in 600 different patterns," among them the "new and beautiful Figure of the destruction of the Bastile lately received from Paris is now finished..."<sup>17</sup> This suggests that patterns were imported, and then copied in quantity at the Philadelphia manufactory. Anthony Chardon, "From Paris," later took over the firm of Burrell and Carnes, and similarly advertised that he had "at present upwards of 300 patterns, amongst which are a number of new ones lately received from Paris."<sup>18</sup>

Many other advertisements suggest the quantity of French papers being imported. One of December, 1793, indicates "Just imported from Paris, to be sold at 203 High Street, most elegant sets of china, clocks, prints, paper hangings..."<sup>19</sup> William Poyntell was also selling "French paper-hangings," and at his "new paper hanging manufactory" he offered a "grate variety of new and tasty patterns."<sup>20</sup> In May of 1793, Despernay, a

French merchant on Fifth Street advertised that he “has received from Paris paper hangings, looking glasses with rich gilt frames, umbrellas, silk stockings, hair powder, etc.”<sup>21</sup> Louis Osmont offered “imported hanging papers,” and the upholsterer James Corley advertised that he had “a beautiful assortment of French paper hangings from Paris.”<sup>22</sup>

Other evidence confirms that French style papers were being manufactured in Philadelphia, as well as imported. One company advertised in 1789 that

At the New Paper Hanging Manufactory of Le Collay & Chardon, Experienced workmen from France, Are now preparing for sale, a variety of papers; the patterns will be extended with all possible expedition, the quality will be found equal to any imported, the prices lower.<sup>23</sup>

The firm also advertised for “Two experienced stampers (or Printers) and four lads from 14 to 16 years of age as apprentices.” Thus, those Philadelphians who lacked the contacts or money to order papers directly from France, could still paper their walls in the fashionable French taste. Whether purchased in Philadelphia or ordered directly from France, these papers were extremely popular and played an important and highly visible role in prominent Philadelphia homes, such as those of William Bingham and Thomas Jefferson. French papers also appeared in public buildings, such as Oeller’s, the popular French hotel at Sixth and Chestnut.<sup>24</sup>

Émigrés who described themselves as watchmakers, silversmiths, goldsmiths, and jewelers were among the most common émigré craftsmen, and despite the differing titles it seems they followed much the same trade. All were involved, to some degree, in the

importation of a range of French and other European goods. Joseph Cooke, a “Goldsmith” of probable British origin, advertised in 1788 that he had “just received by the last vessels from Europe, a most brilliant assortment of every article in his line of business all of which he is determined to sell on the most equitable terms...”<sup>25</sup> He sometimes advertised in French, and described himself as an “*Orfevre et Bijoutier.*” Cooke offered a wide selection of goods, including watches, shoe buckles, locket, rings, seals, miniature pictures set in gold, and “Tea-Sets and Side-Boards of Plate, Made in the most fashionable manner.”<sup>26</sup> Cooke was highly successful, and like some of the wallpaper manufacturers, he both imported and produced locally French and English style goods. He advertised at one point for “20 to 30 Journeymen Goldsmiths, Silversmiths, Jewelers, Engravers, Buckle makers, Plate-workers, Spoon-makers, Small-workers, Lapidaries, Chape-makers...” and noted that “foreigners may not be at a loss on account of their language, he employs a gentleman who transacts his business, and speaks the different languages for their accommodation.”<sup>27</sup> He also sought an apprentice to the store, “one acquainted with the French language would be preferred.”<sup>28</sup> Cooke’s advertisements indicate that he depended on the latest arrivals from Europe to keep his store stocked, in addition to the wares that he and his workmen executed there. He had “formed such connections as forward him immediately the most fashionable patterns &c. as soon as they appear either in London or Paris...”<sup>29</sup> These contacts enabled him to cater to the likes of George Washington.

The émigré Simon Chaudron was also an importer as well as a silversmith. In

1799 he advertised “a quantity of French plate” for sale, and by 1802 he offered “a variety of marble and gilt timepieces, watches, jewelry, and gold watch chains, seals, and keys, as well as claret, St. Domingo coffee, French silver objects, and one hundred prints of the apotheosis of Washington, ‘neatly framed’.”<sup>30</sup> By 1803 he was also carrying French china, and he counted Elizabeth Willing Powel as one of his customers.<sup>31</sup> Chaudron had started out in partnership with Charles Billon, a Swiss watchmaker advertising as Charles Billon & Cie Horologers at number 12 South Third Street. Chaudron stayed at this address after the partnership dissolved, while Billon moved to 45 South Third Street. Number 12 South Third Street was subsequently occupied by another French watchmaker, who moved in after the death of Chaudron in 1812.

Chaudron and Billon were among numerous jeweler and silversmith émigrés who practiced their trade of importing and producing a variety of French and French style goods. Jean Baptiste Dumoutet offered a wide range of goods that included “every thing in his line of the latest French Fashions, executed by himself.”<sup>32</sup> Claude Amable Brasier, Claudius Chat, John James Favre, John Le Tellier, and Peter Oliver were among the numerous other émigré silversmiths and jewelers active in the city.<sup>33</sup>

American silversmiths and watchmakers also acted as import merchants, and they too handled French goods. In 1795 the clock and watchmaker John Parry offered “A large assortment of warranted watches from 14 to 42 dollars- a very general assortment of watch-materials, chains, fobs, &c. &c.- and a few very handsome French Mantle Clocks, for sale on low terms, for cash...”<sup>34</sup> Other American merchants also supplied a variety of

French goods. In September 1795 Samuel Breck offered goods including perfume and fine French laces, despite the dissolution of his partnership with the French merchant Lewis Deblois earlier that year.<sup>35</sup>

It is interesting that these merchants rarely advertised furniture for sale, clocks and looking glasses being the exceptions. There is, however, evidence that French furniture (in the modern sense of the word) was available to those Philadelphians who desired or could afford such things, yet lacked the patience or connections to order directly from France. One gentleman offered for sale “2 Settees in burnished gold, 12 chairs, and a fire screen in burnished gold in 1788.<sup>36</sup> While such advertisements are rare, the April 13, 1793 announcement of a “public vendue” to be held at the house of Richard Rundle is particularly illuminating, as it includes among the offerings

An elegant collection of French Furniture, made in Paris in the most fashionable style consisting of a cylinder burea, with bookcase, Mirror doors, gilt frame and balustrades. A variety of tables for different purposes, with white marble tops and galleries, and gilt balustrades. Dumb waiters, with coolers for liquor. Toilets--wash stands--bidets complete, &c, &c.<sup>37</sup>

French furniture might have been among the goods offered the previous month as well, when an advertisement indicated that a “French ship (was) to be sold with contents.”<sup>38</sup> Again on May 15, 1793, an advertisement was placed in the *Aurora*, indicating that the contents of a ship from Havre de Grace, including “7 looking glasses, 9 elegant time pieces...” would be sold at auction. It is possible that the goods offered at Richard Rundle’s house were part of the cargo of a similar ship, and had perhaps been purchased

on speculation and re-offered.

During this period, the Boston-born merchant James Swan, through his well-developed connections in France, maneuvered his way into a monopolistic position as the Agent of the French Republic. In this role he served as the sole buyer for the French government in America. Swan purchased for the French tremendous quantities of provisions, including wheat, rice, leather, salted meats, potash, dried peas and beans, and naval stores, which were desperately needed by the French Revolutionary government, armies, and by the people.<sup>39</sup> However, French paper money was of no value at the time, and laws prohibiting the export of specie had been enacted.<sup>40</sup> What the Revolutionary government had to offer in exchange for these provisions were the lavish furnishings of the homes of the nobility, who had largely been executed or exiled by the end of 1794.

Swan took pains to inform the French government of what goods were likely to sell in America. He indicated that the market was good for “fine furniture, statues, mirrors, clocks... silks, taffetas, satins, laces...” as well as wines and brandies, and that these would be welcomed in the American markets.<sup>41</sup> He even went so far as to specify the colors preferred in taffetas.<sup>42</sup> These goods were to be selected from the warehouses full of such luxury furnishings confiscated by the revolutionaries.

The arrangement was extremely prosperous and lucrative for Swan. He reported that by the end of 1795, over one hundred ship loads of provisions had been sent to France, most of them arriving in Havre de Grace or Bordeaux. To cover the enormous cost of these shipments, the French government granted Swan & Co. “the proceeds from

luxury goods estimated at some seven million pounds, which they were authorized to export and sell in America.”<sup>43</sup>

Swan arrived back in America from France in December of 1794, and established his headquarters in the capital city of Philadelphia. He chose John Vaughan as his principal agent there, and additional agents were named in New York, Georgetown, Baltimore, Charleston, Newport, Salem, Norfolk, Alexandria, Petersburg, and Boston.<sup>44</sup> The firms were chosen carefully for their reliability as friends of France, for the English were anxious to capture any ships bound for France with provisions, and all shipments had to be covert and masked with neutrality. Vaughan seems to have been a good choice, as he was a very successful and well-connected merchant.<sup>45</sup>

While little is known of the activities of Swan and Vaughan regarding the importation and distribution of French furnishings, they were certainly both involved in such activities, as the following letter from Vaughan documents:

Mess. Dallard, Swan & Co. Paris

Philada. 14th July 1794

D(ear) Sirs

The ship *America* is arrived & I am much obliged by your having induced the Shipper to consign same to me-- Mr Hickborn's Orders will be complied with & I have informed Mr. Henry Jackson that I hold same or rather the Proceeds at his order.---

This cargo arrives at an unfortunate moment, from the great number of vessels arrived, which has lowered the price of every article, however every exertions shall be used...<sup>46</sup>

The cargo of the ship *America* is not known, nor is it known what quantity of French furnishings were imported by Swan into America. He may have been supplying a large

number of the merchants of Philadelphia who were offering French furnishings, as well as those of other port cities. Perhaps the ship from Havre de Grace, with its cargo of looking glasses and time pieces, represents a return payment for the provisions sent by Swan. Perhaps he is even somehow connected to the furnishings offered at Richard Rundle's house, for while this sale predates Swan's official arrangement with the *commission des subsistances* of the French government, he had begun sending some furniture from France by this time. Thus far, firm evidence of such a connection has not been found, and the documentable French furnishings that made their way to America through Swan and his agents is limited to New England. These include some of the fine royal furnishings from his own home in Dorchester, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Another possible source of the furniture sold at Richard Rundle's is a French consul or minister selling possessions before returning to France. One example of such a sale was the public offering advertised in July of 1793, wherein the "household furnishings of the late Consul General of France..." were offered. "Household and kitchen furniture" were to be sold, among them "elegant mahogany dining, card, and breakfast tables."<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, there is no specific mention of French furnishings, and it is possible that the Consul had purchased his furnishings in Philadelphia, and that they were of domestic manufacture. This difficulty arises in examining the inventories of other émigrés as well, for while the entire household contents may be itemized in French, there is no proof that the items were French style or of French manufacture. However,

French consuls and ministers were generally very patriotic, and others are known to have furnished their residences in the French taste. For example, the Count de Mustier offered his French furnishings for sale in New York in 1790, some of which ended up in Philadelphia. Mustier, like many other French officials, was “a coxcomb, full of prejudice, and very apt to assume airs and sport opinions very offensive to (Americans),” and thus one might argue less likely to furnish a home in anything but the French style.<sup>48</sup>

Other evidence of the presence of French furniture and furnishings exists in the advertisements of the aforementioned French upholsterer Francis Delorme, who moved from Philadelphia to Charleston, South Carolina, in 1791. There he advertised in 1794, that in addition to “A large assortment of cotton and silk fringe, tassels and bed line...,” he “has recently been favoured with the following articles, which will be sold at reasonable prices, viz. An assortment of elegant looking glasses with gilt frames-- A few pieces of very elegant mahogany furniture, with marble tops and brass ornaments from Paris.”<sup>49</sup> Delorme again advertised in 1796 that he “has just received from Paris thirty large looking glasses, some of which have frames, others without... He has also Received, A large assortment of paper hanging, with rich borders, and Landscapes for Chimney Pieces, And to place over doors; and some marble slabs with gilt stands, for drawing rooms.”<sup>50</sup> Delorme’s career as an upholsterer in America started in Philadelphia in 1790, and he apparently returned there in later years, perhaps to secure other French imports for his Charleston business. His advertisement in the *South Carolina Gazette* on June 9, 1795, indicates his intentions:

The subscriber thinks it his duty to return his most grateful thanks to his customers, and the public at large, for the great encouragement he has received, since he commenced business in this town; he will embark in a few days for Philadelphia and New York, where he expects to receive an elegant assortment of Paper Hanging and Furniture, from Paris, and he will neglect nothing in his power to procure for his customers and the public, the best goods in this line... Francis Delorme, Upholsterer. Who has for sale, A large assortment of Looking-glasses and paper hangings, with rich borders, a very elegant Sopha, and a handsome clock with brass ornaments.<sup>51</sup>

This suggests that Delorme was depending on Philadelphia at least in part to provide him with some of the stylish French goods he was offering to Charlestonians. Delorme's movements may reflect the competitive nature of the Philadelphia marketplace. He perhaps had trouble making a living, and like others before him traveled south in search of better opportunities.

Some French-style furniture was also produced locally. A number of Philadelphia made, French style chairs survive from the period, in addition to a few larger case pieces. Stephen Girard patronized the émigré cabinetmakers J. B. Laurent and Charles Domballe, ordering from them a number of items. In 1797, Girard noted that "Laurent, a Frenc(h) cabinet maker, has agreed to make me with good mahogany wood an elegant buffet with a table for \$70." Laurent and Domballe were also paid for making an armoire, a buffet cupboard, bed frames, tables, a bedstead "*a tombeau*," as well as work on the interior architecture of the house.<sup>52</sup> Girard also paid sixty-three dollars to "A. Beraud," 1798, for a mahogany closet, which was made for him or perhaps purchased second-hand.<sup>53</sup> Some chairs in the French style were also made in Philadelphia, and are discussed in Chapter

Four.

Given the number of émigrés in the city, and the role they played in furnishing local interiors, it is surprising that only a handful of cabinet and chair makers have surfaced in contemporary documents. Of the few names that did appear in the context of furniture craftsmen, most appeared only once or twice, in Masonic records or Naturalization records. There is little evidence that many of them were very successful in making furniture locally. With the exception of Laurent and Domballe, this researcher is aware of no examples of furniture from this period attributable to French émigré craftsmen in Philadelphia. Perhaps their time in Philadelphia was insufficient to develop a clientele, or the established family and client connections of Anglo-cabinetmakers were strong enough to discourage the émigré craftsmen.<sup>54</sup>

Other factors may help explain the rarity of such French style furniture. First, the close similarity of the Laurent and Domballe pieces to French provincial examples suggests that other pieces may remain misidentified as French-made. French provincial furniture has been widely imported during the twentieth century, and distinguishing between the French-made examples and those made locally by French émigrés can be difficult. Due to the rarity of American made examples, such French provincial style furniture is usually presumed to be French. The second possible explanation is that the cultural exchange between France and England during this period despite political conflicts was so great that lines between styles began to blur, and objects that appear English to our eyes may have design precedents in France as well. For example, the pier

tables in the Swan collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the very similar table in the collection of the Worcester Art Museum, are exquisite examples of French tables of this period. Sheraton also appreciated the French design, as he illustrates designs for pier tables that bear many similarities to these two French examples. Yet the inspiration for American-made versions of these pier tables, such as the pair in the collections of the Winterthur Museum, are traditionally attributed to such English design sources, and are generally thought to adhere closely to English prototypes.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the French style was often filtered through England before being embraced by Americans. Perhaps émigré craftsmen, if they were in fact actively producing furniture, were also creating it in this hybrid style, and their specific “Frenchness” is masked to us today. Alternatively, French craftsmen may have failed to adequately combine French and English designs, and found little market for the strictly French style.

French clothing certainly played an important role in the embrace of French furnishings as well. During the 1780s and 1790s, wealthy women patronized the many French who catered to their desires, and those with adequate resources purchased their fashions directly in France. Among them was Mrs. Bingham, who brought trunks full of Paris fashions back to Philadelphia on her return from Paris. The one of these that she chose to wear to a party at Robert Morris’, “eclips’d any that had been seen.”<sup>56</sup> Mrs. Robert Morris enjoyed fashionable hats ordered from Le Havre.<sup>57</sup> Many French women advertised similar dresses and *accoutrement* that could be purchased locally. For example, Mrs. Le Boutellier, “French Milliner,” offered a wide range of goods from Paris

and London, including “A large quantity of bonnets, caps, hats, and coufs, lately received, and made by the best milliners at Paris,” as well as “*Fringe à la Militaire*,” and “gloves assorted for ladies and gentlemen.”<sup>58</sup> In 1786, Mrs. Abby Willing had purchased “2 dozen of the best white gloves at a Frenchman’s storefront, 3.0.0.”<sup>59</sup>

In furnishing an elegant interior in the French style, the necessary goods were largely available to Philadelphians. Merchants stocked a variety of French merchandise, including wallpaper, mirrors, clocks, silver and jewelry, china, and furniture was available on a limited basis locally, or could be imported by special order. While they did not eclipse the popularity of British wares, French furnishings were increasingly popular in Philadelphia homes. The unifying language of neoclassicism helped bridge the channel between British goods that Philadelphians had grown accustomed to, and the stylish but less familiar French goods. In conjunction with this new bilingual style, the active community of French émigrés and their interactions with Anglo-Philadelphians brought a new urgency to this embrace, particularly among the wealthy and cosmopolitan “Republican Court.”

## NOTES

1. While these merchants also served the needs of their fellow émigrés, most had arrived from France or Santo Domingo with few resources, and would have been able to offer them little support.
2. That merchants comprised a large percentage of the émigrés from the latter is supported by the surge in French mercantile advertisements that appeared after the uprising began in the Summer of 1793. Furthermore, in addition to cash crops, the island economy was largely based on mercantile activities, and it follows that many of the whites who fled the island were merchants. Naturalization records, Masonic records, and the membership lists of various French organizations that list occupation, all confirm the prominence of merchants among the newly arrived émigrés in Philadelphia.
3. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January 2, 1796.
4. In 1798 and again in 1806, Stephen Girard ordered from Paris a number of looking glasses and *trumeaus*. See Wick, "Stephen Girard: A Patron of the Philadelphia Furniture Trade," 90. Advertisements of contemporary upholsterers often note French looking glasses. Francis Delorme had thirty such glasses on hand in 1796. See Prime, *The Arts and Crafts of Philadelphia, Maryland, and South Carolina 1786-1800*, 215-230.
5. *The Federal Gazette*, October 15, 1788 and October 17, 1788. Trade with Santo Domingo had clearly not ceased, and merchants from the islands were doubtless taking advantage of any contacts who remained there as well. These fabrics could have been merchandise imported into Santo Domingo from France or another country, or perhaps were produced locally. In any case, the French people of this island clearly looked to Paris as their style center, rather than to any local city on the islands. Fabric produced here would have likely been French in style.
6. *The Federal Gazette*, November 15, 1793 and July 3, 1793.
7. *Aurora*, April 12, 1793.
8. *Pennsylvania General Advertiser*, November 18, 1790.

9. Marie Kimball published one "Bill from Jefferson's Upholsterer" in "Thomas Jefferson's French Furniture," p. 124. Dupuis, a "*Marchand de Fer*," offered a wide range of fabrics, feathers, mattresses, and upholstery for carriages. While this range is not as great as the offerings of Bertault and Delorme, Dupuis may have focused this advertisement specifically on "*tout ce qui concerne les etoffes pour Meubles*." He describes himself as a "*Marchand de Fer*" rather than a "*tapissier*," suggesting that he sold other goods as well.
10. R. Campbell, *London Tradesman*, as quoted by O'Donnell, "The Upholsterer in Philadelphia, 1760-1810," 3.
11. *Ibid.*, 1-2 and figure 1.
12. The 1803 inventory of the upholsterer Richard Wevill indicates the wide variety of goods an upholsterer might have on hand. See O'Donnell, "Upholsterer in Philadelphia," 38-43.
13. *South Carolina Gazette*, March 1, 1797, as cited in Prime, 222.
14. *Pennsylvania Packet*, December 23, 1789, as cited in Prime, 226.
15. The advertisements of other Philadelphia upholsterers confirm the multi-faceted nature of the upholsterers business. Richard Wevill, a London upholsterer for over twenty years, offered bed and window cornices, "gilt or painted, to suit the furniture," Venetian blinds, supplies such as gold leaf and composition, knife cases, portable desks "fitted up complete," dressing glasses, prints, and a variety of woods and veneers. Samuel Bengé offered to make all sorts of bed furniture, window curtains, carpets, umbrellas, and to hang papers. Wevill and Bengé provided a wide range of goods and services to the French merchant Stephen Girard, including carpets and repairing blinds. John Claypoole indicated that in addition to working in the upholstery business "In all its various branches," he had "Sofas, easy-chairs, desks, tables, chairs, &c." to be disposed of. Thomas Harper, who had just arrived in Charleston from Philadelphia, indicated that he "papers, colours, ornaments rooms, halls, staircases, and ceilings in the completest manner." See Prime, 215-230.
16. Bea Garvan notes that "Bills of sale, newspaper advertisements, receipt books, and diary entries record the presence of wallpapers of all descriptions in Philadelphia houses by 1800" and that "imported French wallpapers... were by far the most popular." She adds that "almost every receipt book from 1785-1825 records the purchase of and hanging charges for wallpapers, in city houses and those far out in the countryside." See *Federal Philadelphia*, 62.

17. *The Federal Gazette*, June 7, 1793. It is not clear how many of these papers were executed by the firm. The wording of the advertisement suggests that the design was completed in Paris, and executed by the firm in Philadelphia. Domestic wall paper manufacture will be discussed below.
18. *Pennsylvania Packet*, March 18, 1794, as cited in Prime, *Arts and Crafts*, 275.
19. *The Federal Gazette*, December 13, 1793.
20. *The Federal Gazette*, July 12, 1792 and October 27, 1792.
21. *Aurora*, May 8, 1793.
22. *Aurora*, March 26 and June 21, 1794.
23. *The Federal Gazette*, July 22, 1789, as cited in Prime, *Arts and Crafts*, 281.
24. See Kelley, *Life and Times in Colonial Philadelphia*, 171. Oeller's was destroyed by fire in 1799.
25. *Pennsylvania Journal*, January 5, 1788, as quoted by Prime, 99-100.
26. *Federal Gazette*, January 21, 1789. Cooke advertised in French in the *Courier del l'Amerique*, December 4, 1792.
27. *Pennsylvania Packet*, July 8, 1795, and *The Federal Gazette*, March 16, 1795, as quoted in Prime, 105-106.
28. *The Federal Gazette*, January 21, 1794.
29. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1791.
30. *The Federal Gazette*, November 27, 1799, and Waters, "Workmanship of an American Artist: Philadelphia's Precious Metals Trades and Craftsmen, 1788-1832," 28. These prints were executed by the French artist St. Memin, who was at the time sharing quarters with Chaudron. See Miles, *St. Memin and the Neoclassical Profile Portrait in America*.
31. She purchased a pair of French china flower pots in August of 1804. See Waters, 28-29.
32. *Aurora*, November 26, 1799, as cited in Prime, 114.

33. Deborah Waters discusses the émigré silversmiths in "Philadelphia's Precious Metals Trades and Craftsmen," 23-34. In the Dallett papers, Francis Dallett has compiled a partial list of pre-1800 French silversmiths in Philadelphia. The list includes Andrew Berard, Anthony Blondell, Francis Bourgeois, Joseph Bouvar, Breorbe y, Camoin, T. D. Curbier, Peter Greffin, and J. Varnier in addition to those listed. Several also worked first in New York and later moved to Philadelphia, including John Beau, Simon and Alexander Bayley, Peter Chitry, and Rene Duche. Not all of these have been confirmed as Frenchmen by this researcher.
34. *United States Gazette*, January 26, 1795.
35. *Ibid.*, September 25, 1795 and March 7, 1795.
36. Kimball, "Original Furnishings of the White House, Part 1, 485. The source is not cited. The gilt furniture could be French, French style, or even English.
37. *The Federal Gazette*, April 13, 1793.
38. *Ibid*, March 5, 1793.
39. Swan's purchases are mentioned in Nasatir and Monell, 374.
40. The merchant Jacob Reed wrote from France to Stephen Dutilh, a merchant in Philadelphia, that "Prohibiting exchanges or shipments of money is again in force, except on permission obtained, for such as are of the premier necessity as flour, grain, rice. This alone lays people under such fear in many particulars, as the seasure of mone put on board vessels intended for foreign countries & the penalties of imprisonment &c, attending it that persons on this head, at present hardly know how to act." See the correspondence of the mercantile house of Dutilh & Wachsmuth, in the Claude W. Unger Collection at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Howard Rice notes that an exception was made for Swan, who was allowed to export "a certain amount of bullion, the product of the melting of ecclesiastical ornaments and other confiscated objects," but this comprised only a small percentage of his payment. See "James Swan," 473.
41. Information on Swan's arrangements and dealings with the French government are taken largely from Howard C. Rice's excellent article "James Swan: Agent of the French Republic 1794-1796." In addition, see Rice's "Notes on the Swan Furniture," Donald T. Pitcher, "Colonel James Swan and His French Furniture," and Eleanor D'Lorme, "James Swan's French Furniture."
42. The French had been concerned for some time with what fabrics Americans sought

most. A 626 page document in the *Archives Nationales* records this interest. It is entitled "Observations on the commerce of cloth, linen, etc., between France and the 13 Colonies of the United States, Followed by some details touching upon the cloth most sought after by the Americans and the prices which were paid for it at the time of the domination of the English." Philadelphia, 1780. See Nasatir and Monell, 264.

43. Rice, "James Swan," 473. Swan was even authorized to use the proceeds from the sale of French prizes in American ports, and was eventually "empowered to negotiate for a final liquidation of the American debt to France, and to use these funds for the purchase of foodstuffs." See page 477. Swan worked first under the name of "Dallard, Swan & Cie", and later under the name of "Swan & Schweizer." For the purposes of secrecy, the latter company was known as "Jones & Gaspard" in official correspondence.

44. Rice, "James Swan," 474.

45. In a statement concerning his history as a merchant, issued upon his bankruptcy in 1798, Vaughan states that "from 1787-1796 his business was particularly lucrative &, taking the average of that period, yielded Twenty Thousand Dollars per annum... In 1796 his business was also very lucrative, but unfortunately in that and the following year he got involved by indorsement advances & shipments to Europe which almost all proved losing concerns..." See letter dated August 31, 1798, Madeira-Vaughan Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It is not known if his bankruptcy was related to business dealings with Swan. The firm of Swan & Schweizer suspended its business at the end of 1795.

46. Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, American Philosophical Society.

47. Presumably the ad refers to Antoine de la Forest, who was granted the title of Consul-General on October 20, 1792. His title was revoked by the King's decree of December 19, 1792, but he did not receive notification until May 18, 1793. He sailed for France in July. See Nasatir and Monell, Appendix F, 561. The advertisement appeared in *The Federal Gazette*, July 26, 1793.

48. George Washington purchased a large quantity of furnishings from Mustier's sale. See also chapters three and four. Before leaving New York for Philadelphia, Washington moved into the larger house vacated by Mustier. The wall treatment of this house is unknown, but perhaps was in the French taste of that "Coxcombe" Mustier. See Washington's letter to Gouverneur Morris, March 1, 1790, as quoted in Detweiler, *George Washington's Chinaware*, 213. The quote regarding Mustier is from Samuel Breck, 131. Breck goes on to recount that Mustier "used to send his dinner and wine to the houses which he was invited, even to Alexander Hamilton's."

49. The wording of this advertisement does not exclude the possibility that the “elegant furniture” was of local manufacture, and only the marble and bronze mounts were imported from France.
50. *Charleston City Gazette*, February 10, 1795, and *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, January 13, 1796.
51. *South Carolina Gazette*, June 9, 1795. Again, the reference to furniture is not entirely clear, and could mean upholstery or standing furniture.
52. See Wick, 191-193.
53. *Ibid.*, 158. Much of the surviving Girard furniture is illustrated and discussed in Wick, and also in Schwartz, *The Stephen Girard Collection*.
54. Charles Olton notes in “Philadelphia Artisans and the American Revolution” that cabinetmakers were a close-knit group, and informal association between them may in part explain similarity and design in Philadelphia furniture. See page 69.
55. For a discussion of these pier tables and their place in Baltimore and Philadelphia cabinetmaking history, see Weidman, “Baltimore Federal Furniture in the English Tradition,” 256-281.
56. Pleasants, ed., “Letters of Molly and Hetty Tilghman,” 145-46.
57. Garvan, 58.
58. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, January One, 1796.
59. Abby Willing’s day book for family expenses, in the Hare-Willing papers at the American Philosophical Society.

### Chapter 3

## **PROMINENT PHILADELPHIANS AND THE FRENCH TASTE: INTERIOR STUDIES**

The accents of interior furnishings in Philadelphia were increasingly bilingual during the last decade of the eighteenth century. England had long been the primary arbiter of taste in Philadelphia, dominating the preferences of the Quaker elite. By the 1790s, the cultural interplay between England and France, combined with the new influx of French émigrés into the city, dictated that the styles embraced by Philadelphians were increasingly hybrid. Contributing to this stylistic ambivalence were the divisive politics of the time, with some Philadelphians favoring aid to Revolutionary France, and others preferring neutrality in the politics of France and maintaining strong trade ties to Britain.

Thus, divisive politics, combined with Philadelphia's long history of English stylistic domination and Quaker reserve, perhaps meant that whole-hearted embrace of the style of the French court was socially and politically polarizing. At the same time, the increasingly French flavor of English designed furnishings also played a role in the popularization and acceptance of French style furnishings, but within a decidedly English context. English taste had long dictated American preferences, and most consumers were not willing to fully relinquish this tradition overnight. Documents indicate that the French realized just how strong these inclinations were, and conceded that to successfully

export to America, they would have to adjust their merchandise to these standards. In mid-1785, with French shipping stagnate, *charge d'affaires* Louis Otto suggested that French manufacturers had to learn to adjust to American buying habits. As late as 1790, James Swan recounted that the French too often sent goods “alien to both our climate and our usage; the colors and designs were equally shocking and defective...”<sup>1</sup>

Yet, the interior decorations chosen by many of Philadelphia’s most prominent citizens reveals their taste for French style goods. Jefferson, Washington, William Bingham, Robert Morris, James Madison, and numerous other prominent Philadelphians chose French furnishings for their Philadelphia homes. Some bought directly through agents in France, while others purchased goods locally through French merchants and other members of the French community. Local production combined with importation from France insured that the demands of Philadelphia consumers who chose the French style were met.

Many members of Philadelphia’s elite had traveled in France during the 1780s, and there had their taste fixed in the French mode. Some were not satisfied with their brief forays into the country, and purchased grand estates vacated by the aristocracy.<sup>2</sup> When Jefferson was called back from Paris to Philadelphia in 1789, he had almost his entire household shipped back from France. Nabby Adams commented that Anne Bingham was “so delighted with Paris, that she says she shall never go to America with

her own consent...”<sup>3</sup> The Monroes were also impressed by their time in Paris, and encouraged their friends to purchase French goods. Upon arriving back in Philadelphia, they and others continued to purchase and display European furnishings in their interiors. This was to remind them of their time in Paris, and more importantly was a statement of elegance and taste to the many whom they entertained in their dinners, drawing rooms and balls. These wealthy and cosmopolitan Philadelphians set a standard for the city, and many other people aspired to their example. Both groups found in Philadelphia a French community to fill their orders for elegant furnishings.

· George Washington was undoubtedly the most prominent Philadelphian, though not the most cosmopolitan or the most social. With the relocation of the capital to Philadelphia in 1790, Washington moved into the house at 190 High Street, the “best Single house in the city.”<sup>4</sup> The house was owned by Robert Morris, and the Washingtons had stayed there while attending the Constitutional Convention. In keeping with the newest style, Morris had renovated the house in 1785, and relocated the main entertaining rooms on the second floor. While the “State Drawing Room” was on the first floor, Washington added bow windows to the two public rooms on the second floor, enlarging them to accommodate more guests at his formal entertainments.

Before removing to Philadelphia, Washington had accumulated a sizable number of elegant French furnishings suitable for the drawing room and dining room. The bulk of these were purchased from the Count de Mustier, the French Minister in New York who was returning to Paris. Washington bought from him a range of French furnishings,

and then moved into the house when Mustier departed. He lived briefly in this house, and then relocated to Philadelphia with his furnishings in the winter of 1790.

Mrs. Washington held social "Drawing-Rooms" on Friday evenings in the State Drawing room and the smaller drawing room upstairs. This upstairs drawing room seems to have been known as the Green Drawing Room, and contained the Mustier suite of Louis XVI style French seating furniture, comprising twelve damask upholstered armchairs, six smaller chairs, and a sofa. Washington noted when he purchased the set that while many of Mustier's furnishings were too fancy, this drawing room suite was appropriate for a public room. Other furnishings that graced this room were green silk window curtains and a large fire screen, also acquired from Mustier, in addition to one of the two large looking glasses that the Morris' had left in the house.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, Washington apparently added to this French suite in January of 1793. He notes in a household account the payment of \$32.11 to George Bertault, a French upholsterer, for "6 chrs & 2 Stools G. Drawg. R."<sup>6</sup> These were presumably made to match the French suite purchased from Mustier, and were also in the green drawing room in 1797. Washington continued to patronize Bertault, and on another occasion purchased upholstery totaling \$259.95.<sup>7</sup>

State dinners were held on Thursdays in the State Dining room. Also held in this room were the weekly levees, where the President received other men from three to four o'clock on Tuesdays. The dining room also contained many fine French furnishings, including the large set of Sevres porcelain purchased from Mustier. To this service,

Washington again added items purchased locally. In December, 1795, the French merchants Pasquier & Company advertised that they had “just received a superb assortment of French China which they will dispose of at the lowest price at their store, no. 91 South Second Street, opposite the City Tavern.” In February of 1796 Washington noted two purchases from the company, on February sixth for fifty-eight dollars, and on February nineteenth for fifty dollars.<sup>8</sup> He also patronized Madame Descampes, a French merchant of glass and china, from whom he purchased two figural table ornaments for twenty-five dollars.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to these local purchases, Washington continued to engage the services of Gouverneur Morris, who in Paris acquired for him several elegant plateaus and figural groups.<sup>10</sup> Washington, just before moving to Philadelphia, wrote to Morris in Paris asking that he “provide and send to me by the first ship, bound to this place, or Philadelphia, mirrors for a table, with neat and fashionable but not expensive ornaments for them; such as will do credit to your taste... If I am defective recur to what you have seen on Mr. Robert Morris’s table for my ideas *generally*.”<sup>11</sup> Tobias Lear later wrote to Clement Biddle in reference to the desire of the President to acquire such a set, and indicated that in addition to Robert Morris, William Bingham and the French and Spanish ministers also owned “those waiters, salvers, or whatever they are called, which are set in the middle of a dining table to ornament it...”<sup>12</sup> Morris supplied an elegant set for Washington, spending more than he was instructed and offering in explanation the comment that “I think it of very great importance to fix the taste of our country properly,

and I think your Example will go so very far in that respect. It is therefore my Wish that every Thing about you should be substantially good and majestically plain; made to endure.”<sup>13</sup> To this end, Morris depended on the goods offered by the factories of Paris, and these fine table ornaments graced the table in the State Dining room at 190 High Street.<sup>14</sup>

The impact of Washington’s French style furnishings in fixing the taste of his country, or more specifically his fellow Philadelphians, is difficult to quantify. However, the prominence of the levees, drawing rooms, balls, and dinners is clear, and through these one may perceive the high visibility of their furnishings and interiors. Miss Sally McKean noted after attending one such Drawing Room that it was “brilliant beyond anything you could imagine,” and that there was “a good deal of extravagance.”<sup>15</sup> Mrs. John Adams recounted to her daughter that “I went with Charles to the drawing-room, being the first of my appearance in public. The room became full before I left it, and the circle very brilliant. How could it be otherwise, when the dazzling Mrs. Bingham and her beautiful sisters were there, the Misses Allen, the Misses Chew, in short a constellation of the beauties?”<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Morris, “second lady of the so-called Republican Court,” was also often in attendance. The drawing rooms of Mrs. Washington were often quite crowded with visitors, and the only requirement for attendance was that everyone dressed appropriately. Formal dinners in the State dining room often included members of Congress, foreign diplomats, dignitaries, and distinguished visitors to the city. In these busy and often formal settings, Washington’s French furnishings may well have gone

quite far in establishing the preference for similar furnishings in other households.

Upon his return to Philadelphia in 1790, the well-known statesman and Francophile Thomas Jefferson set up a household even more thoroughly in the French taste. Jefferson had spent four years as the American Minister to France, from 1785 to 1789, and during his time in Paris, he rented the Hotel de Langeac for his residence and furnished it with a wide range of fashionable French goods. Upon Jefferson's visit to Virginia and Philadelphia in 1789, Washington offered him the position of Secretary of State. Jefferson could not, with good conscience, return to France, and entrusted the packing and shipping of his furnishings to his secretary William Short. It is these goods that made their way to Philadelphia in 1790, to be used in Jefferson's new house on Market Street. In all, eighty-six cases of his French belongings eventually made their way to him in Philadelphia, arriving in October of 1790. The detailed packing list from this shipment still survives in the Library of Congress.

Included in this tremendous quantity of stylish French furnishings were tables, commodes, chiffoniers, mirrors, paintings, statuary, books, silver, and at least fifty-nine chairs of a variety of forms. Most of these were employed in outfitting his 274 Market Street house, which he rented from Thomas Leiper. Jefferson made some alterations on the house, and after extensive delays, was finally able to live and dine in his home by January 8, 1791.<sup>17</sup> Jefferson lived, worked, and entertained in this house until his resignation on December 31, 1793, when he moved with his furnishings to Monticello.

Many French objects owned by Jefferson and used at his Market Street home still

survive. Among them are two large gilded pier mirrors, a set of four silver vegetable dishes, and numerous French chairs (see Chapter Four). In addition to the French furnishings that Jefferson owned in Paris and subsequently had shipped in 1790, he continued to order French furnishings that he had sent to Philadelphia. Among these is a clock that Jefferson designed, and that Short had executed in France by Louis Chantrot. The clock arrived at Jefferson's Philadelphia home on October 22, 1791.<sup>18</sup> Through William Short, Jefferson also ordered a large quantity of French wallpaper, supplied by the Manufacture Royale des Sieurs Arthur et Robert, presumably to adorn the walls of his new Philadelphia home. In 1790 he received the order that totaled 145 rolls, including pea green and sky blue papers. These were supplemented by a variety of edging, corner papers "stamped with the representation of curtains hanging in furbelo," festoons, and "22 rouleaux of lattice or treillage do. (This is in imitation of a treillage, with vines &c. on it.)"<sup>19</sup>

He also continued to buy French goods locally, as he apparently bought two *fauteuils à la reine* from James Monroe.<sup>20</sup> Jefferson also patronized the French upholsterer George Bertault, paying him thirty-two dollars for unknown services in 1791, and buying feathers from him in 1792. Washington had made similar purchases from Bertault during these same years, buying "Feather bds. Bolstr. Pillows" in 1791 and "Large Mattress Makg. &c &c." in 1792, in addition to the previously mentioned chairs and upholstery.<sup>21</sup>

Jefferson had long enjoyed a great enthusiasm for things French, and once

commented that “it is an enthusiasm of which I am not ashamed, as it’s object is to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world & procure them it’s praise.”<sup>22</sup> As with Washington, many of those who were entertained at Jefferson’s home came under the influence of his taste and enthusiasm.<sup>23</sup>

William and Anne Bingham were perhaps the most conspicuous consumers and entertainers of the decade. The beauty and elegance of Anne and the opulence of their home assured them of a prominent place in the Republican court. The Bingham entertained many French guests, including the three princes of France, Noailles, and Volney. They traveled in France, and spoke French fluently. Anne Bingham’s time in Paris was such that she did not want to return to America, as she had acquired a “passion and thirst after all the luxuries of Europe.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, while they entertained like others in the Republican court, William Bingham was a Federalist. During the politically polarized years of the 1790s, he stood with other Federalists in support of strong ties with England. Despite this fact, the Bingham continued to welcome French émigrés and political opponents into their home, and they seem to have found no fault with the French taste in interiors.<sup>25</sup>

The taste of the Bingham home seems to have been eclectic and cosmopolitan, rather than strictly French or English. The mansion on Third Street was copied from the stylish London house of the Duke of Manchester, and certainly some of the interior furnishings were English. Henry Wansey commented of it in 1794 that it was

**A magnificent house in the best English style, with elegant and even superb furniture: the chairs of the drawing room were from Seddons's in London, of the newest taste; the back in the form of a lyre, adorned with festoons of crimson and yellow silk, the curtains of the room a festoon of the same: the carpet one of Moore's most expensive patterns: the room was papered in the French taste, after the style of the Vatican in Rome.<sup>26</sup>**

**They had evidently "brought from Europe everything for the house and table which the taste and luxury of the times had invented."<sup>27</sup>**

**William Bingham died in 1804, and in 1805 a public auction was held at the Mansion House. The sale was advertised on November 16 in the *United States Gazette*, and a "Catalogue of the principal articles of furniture and plate" was included.<sup>28</sup> This room-by-room partial inventory reveals the prominent role that European furnishings played in the decoration of the house. The entry hall, for example, contained pedestals and marble busts of Voltaire and Rousseau, 4 bronze figures, marble medallions in gilt frames, and a "female figure composition stone."<sup>29</sup> The library also contained bronze figures, urns, busts, and a collection of paintings and prints. Arabesque wallpaper by the French firm Reveillon adorned the walls.<sup>30</sup> While few of the other furnishings are specifically noted as French, the Bingham's taste for opulent European interiors is apparent.**

**The European style extravagance of the house is also indicated by the range and scale of other noted objects. The house contained no less than a dozen massive looking glasses, two in the front parlor measuring "8 f. 4 i. by 4 f. 3 i." and "7 f. 10 i. by 5 f. 11 i."**

**The dining room contained a pair of glass chandeliers, marble vases, and "1 Large**

plateau with 17 marble figures,” probably similar to those that Washington purchased through Gouverneur Morris in France. In addition, the dining room china included “1 Large dining set white French china, gilt edges-- 350 pieces,” and “1 dining set French china about 100 pieces,” “2 Save (Sevres) china bowls and plates,” and a “Tea set French china about 30 pieces.” The extensive list of silver includes French flatware, and “4 sauce tureens” that may have resembled the set purchased in France by Jefferson. To accompany their fine French china and silver, the Binghamms also imported French wine and delicacies to serve their many guests. They also employed a French cook.<sup>31</sup>

The furniture in the Mansion House was extensive, and included at least 137 chairs and 10 sofas and settees. While some of the chairs were Windsors, and many were noted only as “mahogany arm chairs with dimity covers,” or “24 chairs morocco bottom,” some were perhaps gilt or painted. Listed in the “Front Room Up Stairs S. W. Corner” (presumably a drawing room) was a set of “12 Yellow and pink chairs with silk bottoms,” perhaps the set from Seddons’ that Henry Wansey noted. While he wrote that they were “adorned with festoons of yellow and crimson silk,” the auction inventory suggests that they were painted, and had silk bottoms. Other seating furniture included a set of six large armchairs and a matching sofa upholstered in Gobelin tapestry.<sup>32</sup> These were perhaps among the furnishings of the drawing room, as the auction inventory lists “6 large arm chairs, 9 small ditto, 1 sofa, 1 sofa... to match.” This set was likely gilt, in keeping with the “8 sets blue sattin Window Curtains with gilt cornices” also listed in the room. Richard Wevill, a London-trained upholsterer, offered “Bed and Window cornices,

manufactured in the newest taste, gilt or painted, to suit the furniture,” and matching cornices seem to have been the norm.<sup>33</sup> The elegant French theme of the drawing room seems consistent, with four gilt candlesticks, two gilt branch candlesticks, three china and gold vases, four gilt figures, and various girandoles, busts, and a glass chandelier. The “elegant carpet” was also apparently purchased in France, and measured an enormous thirty-three and a half by twenty-three feet.<sup>34</sup>

While most of the furnishings are of unknown specific origins, they certainly would have been in keeping with the newest fashions, and may well have been French or in the French style. This is also the case for the “Elegant clock” in the front room upstairs, and the numerous bedsteads, chests, desks, and tables also listed in the house. Perhaps some of the furnishings were even made locally to supplement those purchased abroad. While shopping through agents in Europe was an option frequently employed by the Bingham, it could be extremely frustrating and time consuming. For example, the table linens that William Bingham ordered in the summer of 1791 did not arrive until March of 1793, and then were “too small for the purposes I intended.”<sup>35</sup> The advantages of shopping locally from stocked imported items or custom ordered through local craftsmen or upholsterers is apparent.

Perhaps the Washingtons were following the example set by the Bingham when they furnished their elegant second-floor drawing room in the style of the French state.<sup>36</sup> Certainly they were enormously influential in Philadelphia, both among the socioeconomic elite and those who aspired to it. James Brown of Providence, Rhode

Island, dined often with the Bingham's, and thought the drawing room altogether "most superb, I can scarce form an Idea of superior Taste, neatness, Propriety & Splendor." Soon after, his father John Brown ordered French papers for his drawing room.<sup>37</sup> Anne Bingham's cousin wrote of her entertainments that she "attracted to her drawing room all that was distinguished and accomplished in the country..." and that the Bingham's were known for "brilliant balls, sumptuous dinners and constant receptions..."<sup>38</sup> The historian Rufus Griswold wrote of Anne that "Her Style, her beauty, her influence, the elegance of her house, the taste and aristocratic distinction of the assemblages which frequently adorned it... are historical in the annals of the higher social life of America..."<sup>39</sup>

Not all were happy with their display, and Brissot de Warville notes his dismay that Mr. Bingham had chosen to "affect, in his buildings and furniture, a pomp which ought forever to have been a stranger to Philadelphia."<sup>40</sup> The Boston architect Charles Bulfinch thought the "elegance of construction... the richest furniture and the utmost magnificence of decoration... far too rich for any man in this country."<sup>41</sup> Yet, while many French revolutionaries and Quaker members of the "elder part of the 'provincial aristocracy'" disapproved of the Bingham's opulence, many nonetheless indulged in their hospitality.<sup>42</sup> The influence of the Bingham's and their furnishings are unmistakable, as are the desires of many Philadelphians to participate in their extravagances.<sup>43</sup>

James Madison was also an important patron of the French taste in Philadelphia. By the time he married the widow Dolly Todd in 1794, Madison was a influential and well-known politician, and had previously earned the title "Father of the Constitution."<sup>44</sup>

Madison was a powerful member of the Republican Party, which was distinctly pro-French and opposed the pro-British Federalist Party. Madison's position and his long time friendship with Jefferson, combined with Dolley's desire to entertain, to embrace the current fashions, and her knowledge of French were good chemistry for a stylish household furnished in the French taste.<sup>45</sup>

The Madisons lived in several different houses in Philadelphia during the first two years of their marriage, and continued to spend summers in their Virginia home of Montpelier. In Philadelphia, they first rented the house vacated by James Monroe when he left for France to serve as Minister Plenipotentiary. The recently married Madisons were much in the limelight and needed to establish a fashionable household. In 1794 James Monroe offered them his services to this end, writing from Paris "Give me a list of what you want, such as clocks, carpets, furniture, table linen &c." Madison replied that "The wants incident to my new situation seduce me into (a)... tax on your goodness," and directed Monroe to buy a large quantity of furnishings on his behalf.<sup>46</sup> The total of his first order came to about twenty-five hundred pounds, and included a wide range of fine French furnishings. Iron bedsteads, carpets from the Gobelin factory, and French china were among the goods shipped to Philadelphia. A set of French chairs with a history in the Madison family is known today. Monroe also continued to encourage Madison to acquire a suite of seating furniture for his drawing room, offering to procure a set of twelve to eighteen chairs, two or three tables, one or two sofas, a clock and a chimney-piece from France. Madison initially settled for a clock and two large looking glasses.

Some years later it seems the Madisons acquired some stylish French style furniture from the New York émigré craftsman Charles Honore Lannuier.<sup>47</sup>

In 1801 the Madisons relocated to Washington from Montpelier, and they continued to embrace the French taste, often with the help of Monroe. Monroe and Jefferson continued to influence their taste in furnishings, and Monroe even sold them some of the French furnishings from his home when he was sent to France in 1803.<sup>48</sup> Among these were silver and porcelain objects of earlier manufacture, such as a 1789 pair of silver candlesticks. Elizabeth Monroe also continued to procure articles of French dress and fashion for Dolley. The Madisons never visited France themselves, but maintained through their years in the public eye an enthusiasm for things French.<sup>49</sup>

While in Philadelphia, the Republican Madisons had ample opportunities to entertain and show off their fashionable French furnishings. During his years as a Congressman in Philadelphia, Madison entertained numerous dignitaries and members of the Republican Court. Later, as Secretary of State under President Jefferson in Washington, the Madison's house "emerged as a center for social entertainments in the Federal city." Over the years, they continued to buy French goods, often from Monroe, and remained "very much Frenchified in (their) politics" as well as in their interiors.<sup>50</sup>

Another prominent businessman who clearly embraced the French style was Robert Morris. Morris had a very lucrative monopoly on the tobacco trade with France, and traveled there often. In 1795 he hired the French architect Pierre L'Enfant to design for him a French style mansion on Chestnut Street. Morris also hired French émigré

craftsmen in Philadelphia to execute the interiors and decorative elements of the house.

John Faipoux was hired for the decorative ironwork, and Peter Beauvais for the ornamental interior painting.<sup>51</sup> French china was ordered from Le Havre, and French cooks were hired to help him entertain his many guests.<sup>52</sup> A Frenchman cut his hair, another taught him dancing, and yet another instructed his son in the art of fencing.<sup>53</sup> He also ordered French furnishings, including tapestries, chairs and sofas.

However, the extravagant Chestnut Street house was never finished, as Morris met financial ruin before its completion.<sup>54</sup> As Morris faced bankruptcy, the edifice was dismantled and the materials sold.<sup>55</sup> While a full account of the furnishings intended for his new house is not known, there are enticing hints of the nature of his acquisitions.<sup>56</sup> In 1841, in a "Description of Robert Morris' Edifice," one author notes that "he has provided, by importation and otherwise, the most costly furniture..."<sup>57</sup> Another notes that, at the time Morris stopped construction on the house, "a ship sailed up the Delaware carrying 5000 guineas' worth of mirrors Morris had ordered in Europe."<sup>58</sup> The Frenchman La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt noted in his diary that Morris' extravagance was "completely European."<sup>59</sup> While few pieces owned by Morris have been identified, a *secrétaire à abbatante* in the Directoire style survives in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and a set of chairs with a reputed history of ownership by Morris is also known.<sup>60</sup>

Morris was one of the wealthiest Philadelphians, and Mrs. Morris was known as one of the foremost ladies of the Republican court. They played an important role in

helping the Washingtons decorate the President's house in 1790. Washington noted to his secretary Tobias Lear that Mrs. Morris was a

...notable lady in family arrangements, (and) can give you much information in all the conveniences about the house and buildings; I dare say would consider it rather as a compliment to be consulted in these matters (as she is so near) than a trouble to give her opinion of them, or in putting up any of the fixtures...<sup>61</sup>

In addition to the imported French furnishings of these prominent statesmen and businessmen, other wealthy Philadelphians are known to have purchased elegant French furnishings during this period. Among them was the wealthy French merchant Stephen Girard, who had emigrated in 1776. While Girard was a patron of many Anglo-Philadelphia cabinetmakers, including Daniel Trotter and Ephriam Haines, he did have some imported French furniture in his Philadelphia home. In 1798 he asked his agent in Bordeaux to send a suite of parlor furniture for his new Water Street house. In the order, under the heading of "Article for my own use" Girard listed

1. Mahogany sofa with 12 arm chairs called fauteuils covered with blue damask finished as plain as possible a la moderne in a compleat manner and put up carefully.

3. Oval looking glasses with gilded Frames 2 feet 4 inches wide, French measure, from outside to inside of the frame. One Hundred weight of horse hair called Crin frise of good quality fit for mattresses.<sup>62</sup>

His agent replied some time later that he had trouble filling the order, as "There was not an upholsterer in Bordeaux who could get the materials to make them for me, and it was

only yesterday that I succeeded in buying six with two arm chairs, a sofa in the moderne style, and a pair of gilt andirons." The sofa had arrived painted white. These and three oval looking glasses made their way to Girard by May of 1798.<sup>63</sup>

Girard's difficulties in getting such orders filled perhaps contributed to his more usual method of acquiring furnishings through local craftsmen. Among them were Jean Baptiste Laurent and Charles Domballe, two émigrés *memusiers* from Santo Domingo. They supplied Girard with several pieces of French style furniture, including an armoire and a buffet, both in a fairly plain, provincial French style. In addition, Girard noted in July of 1797 that "Laurent, Frenc(h) cabinet maker, has agreed to make me with good Mahogany wood an elegant buffet with a table for seventy dollars."<sup>64</sup>

Girard had previously ordered a gilt and marble top table and a gilt framed mirror, and by 1804 he purchased from Simon Chaudron an elegant *secrétaire à abbatante*, of German origin, at the immense cost of \$650. In addition, Girard also acquired a fine French armoire sometime before 1798, perhaps from a needy émigré. He noted the purchase of a "Mahogany Closet" for sixty-three dollars from an unidentified Monsieur Beraud.<sup>65</sup> From another émigré, the Guadeloupian merchant Dufrene Fereire, Girard purchased a number of pieces of French silver in 1794. These included a sugar dish, coffee and water pots, and a pair of silver cruet stands. French style railings, perhaps by the émigré John Faipoux, adorned the roof of his counting house.<sup>66</sup> These are strikingly similar to the railings that adorned the Federal Hall in New York, which were probably designed by the Frenchman Pierre L'Enfant in 1788-89.<sup>67</sup> While not generally known as

ostentatious or a Philadelphia tastemaker, Girard clearly had moments where he embraced the French taste.<sup>68</sup> Girard was one of the wealthiest Philadelphia merchants, and may well have inspired others to similarly furnish their homes in the French taste.

Thus, many of Philadelphia's prominent citizens were beginning to furnish their homes with French and French style goods. While these were often commingled with British and other European goods, some French furnishings were specifically sought out and regarded as fashionable. Other Philadelphians who aspired to the lifestyle and position of these wealthy people were influenced by the conspicuous appearance of French accents in interiors. These French furnishings contributed to the increasingly hybrid nature of Philadelphia interiors, and were less conspicuous against the background of the rising popularity of neoclassicism. The cultural interplay between France and England during these years offered the opportunity for this increased French presence in the interiors that traditionally had followed British precedents. Distinctions between French and British design became increasingly blurred as the popularity of neoclassicism waxed, and as Philadelphians welcomed neoclassicism, they also welcomed a more cosmopolitan mélange of goods and influences in their interiors. The nearing of French and English design combined with the presence of so many French people in the city made the moment ripe for a growing French flavor in local interiors.

## NOTES

1. See Peter Hill, *French Perceptions of the Early American Republic 1783-1793*, 45-78. Hill quotes from James Swan's *Causes qui se sont opposées aux progrès du Commerce entre la France et les États Unis de l'Amérique, avec les moyens de l'accélérer*, 28, 103.
2. Among the Philadelphians who purchased (or won in lotteries) such estates were William Temple Franklin, William Russell, and some American governmental agents such as James Monroe. See Bizardel, "French Estates, American Landlords," 108-115.
3. Alberts, 146.
4. Jared Sparks, ed., *Letters and Recollections of George Washington, Being Letters to Tobias Lear and Others Between 1790-1799*, as quoted in Eberlein, "190 High Street," 164. Eberlein notes that Washington may have referred to it as a single house because it had a four bay fenestration, with the entry off-center, as distinguished from the usual large house with a central doorway. See page 163.
5. Eberlein notes that a luster, which he describes as "the crystal chandelier (Washington) had bought in New York from the French Minister," was intended by Washington for the "largest drawing room at Mr. Morris's." The account of items purchased from Mustier does not mention such a fixture, though Eberlein perhaps found it references in another source.
6. See "Sundries bot on Account of GW" in the Winterthur Museum Libraries, Joseph Downes Manuscript Collection.
7. *Ibid.* The number could be read as 25.9.95, but as the inventory is in dollars rather than English pounds, the figure with one decimal point makes more sense. The nature of the upholstery order is not known, but may have included seating furniture.
8. See Detweiler, 218, and "Sundries bot on Account of GW."
9. Detweiler, 118 and 218.

10. Furniture, glass, books, and architectural plans passed from Paris to the Hudson River Valley during these years as well. James Leray de Chaumont, Gouverneur Morris's one-time partner in land speculation, owned a house in upstate New York that, according to the French scientist Jean-Jacques Milbert, rivaled the "best known Chateaux and estates of France for its luxury and furnishings." See Kennedy, 35, 40.

11. Fitzpatrick, Volume 30, 443-445, as quoted in Detweiler, 211.

12. Letter from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Manuscript Department, as quoted in Detweiler, 211. The plateau and biscuit porcelain ornaments are pictured in Detweiler, 121.

13. See Detweiler, 211-213.

14. Gouverneur Morris purchased many fine French furnishings for himself as well. In addition to patronizing some of the finest craftsmen of Paris, he also bought at the auction sales of royal furnishings. These sales were designed to "put to the service of the defence of liberty and of the growth of national prosperity the sumptuous furniture of the last tyrants of France, as well as the vast possessions which they reserved for their pleasure." Morris' purchases from these sales seem never to have come to Philadelphia, rather they were probably among the furnishings sent to New York in 1794. Morris wrote that "all my books, liquors, linens, furniture, plate, and carriages..." were on their way with his servant. Morris followed in 1799, building for himself a new house at his estate "Morrisania" in what is now the Bronx. See Pierre Verlet, *French Royal Furniture*, 54, Louis Schreider, III, "Gouverneur Morris: Connoisseur of French Art," 481.

Some of Morris' exceptional French furnishings from the royal sales in Paris (and later from Morrisania) were sold at auction by Christie's in 1983. Among them a fauteuil, a pair of canapes, a semanier, a bureau a cylindre, and a regulateur. See Christie's sale catalogue, "Important French and Continental Furniture, Objects of Art, Clocks, Tapestries and Sculpture," New York, November 22, 1983.

15. Letter of Miss Sally McKean to a friend in New York, as quoted in Baker, *Washington after the Revolution*, 203.

16. Mrs. John Adams to Mrs. William S. Smith, as quoted in Baker, 203.

17. See Susan Stein, *The Worlds of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello*, 43-46.

18. Stein, 374. Stein illustrates and discusses many of Jefferson's surviving French goods, including those mentioned above.

19. See Stein, 114, and Beatrice Garvan, *Federal Philadelphia*, 62. See also Marie Kimball, "Thomas Jefferson's French Furniture." There is no evidence that the papers were used at Monticello, leaving us to conjecture that they were employed in Philadelphia.

20. See Stein, 300.

21. Jefferson's purchases from Bertault, quoted from Susan Stein, telephone conversation February 19, 1998. Regarding George Washington's purchases, see "Sundries bot on Account of GW" in the Winterthur Museum Library, Joseph Downes Manuscript Collection.

22. Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 1. Julian P. Boyd, ed., as quoted in Dickson, 112-113.

23. Further indication of the potential impact Jefferson may have had on the taste of other Philadelphians is seen in the presence of French style furnishings that were appearing in Virginia households after Jefferson's return to Monticello. Jefferson maintained his French design preferences after his move to Monticello, as manifested in the works of the Monticello joinery. See Hurst and Prown, *Southern Furniture 1680-1830*, 142-146, and Stein, 273-299.

24. Brown, 293, quoting *Letters of Mrs Adams*, Dec. 3, 1784. Anne Wharton notes that "It was Mrs. Adams who said of Mrs. Bingham that she had come home from Europe to give the laws to Philadelphia women in fashion and elegance, and these laws they seem to have followed with no thought of rebellion." See *Salons Colonial and Republican*, 150.

25. "Political opponents, as well as allies, were welcomed at the Bingham's receptions, and frequently guests included such ardent Democrats as Jefferson and Albert Gallatin." See Nicholson, "Anne Bingham," 53.

26. Henry Wansey, *An Excursion to the United States of North America in the Summer of 1794* (Salisbury, 1798, 2nd ed.), as quoted in Margaret Brown, "Mr. and Mrs. Bingham of Philadelphia," 297.

27. Brown, 297, quoting Joshua Fisher, *Recollections*, 200-202. Fisher also notes that they introduced the first silver-pronged forks to Philadelphia.

28. See Alberts, appendix four.

29. Bingham also bought for the Library Company an Italian white marble statue of Benjamin Franklin, which was said to cost him over five-hundred guineas. See Peterson, "Library Hall,"

- 136.
30. Garvan, 62.
31. Alberts, 215.
32. *Ibid.*, 158.
33. O'Donnell, 114.
34. The French carpets are noted in Alberts, 158. It is not clear which of the several carpets listed in the inventory were purchased in France.
35. Alberts, 214.
36. Washington dined "in great splendor" with the Bingham's on May 21, 1787, and spent many other evenings with them over the next decade. See Baker, 75, 373, etc.
37. See Cooper, "John Brown," 129. He selected royal blue and gold papers adorned with squirrels, oak leaves, classical columns, and urns, manufactured by Barabe et Cie, Paris. See Low, *France Views America*, 25. The French presence in Providence was not new. See Forbes and Cadman, "Souvenirs of the French in Providence and Bristol, Rhode Island."
38. Fisher, *Recollections*, 200, 202, as quoted in Alberts, 213-214.
39. Griswold, *The Republican Court*.
40. Brissot de Warville, 175-176.
41. Barquist, 326. Nonetheless, Bulfinch seems to have copied elements from the house in his design for the Harrison Gray Otis house.
42. See Griswold, 11, on the bipolar nature of the elite in Philadelphia.
43. Brissot de Warville noted that Anne was "Accused of having contributed more than any other to this taste for extravagant show." See page 256.
44. Hunt-Jones, *Dolley and the "great little Madison"*, 8.
45. Dolley was expelled from the Quaker Church when she married in 1794, as James was not a Quaker and marrying out of the faith was forbidden. The freedom she found

outside the church allowed her to embrace a more opulent style of dress, and one critic quipped “she has been very much admired, and is still fond of admiration-- loads herself with finery and dresses without any taste.” However, Dolley was known as a woman of taste, and even helped the widowed Jefferson procure the appropriate accessories and wigs for his daughters, when he was expecting a visit from them to Washington in 1805. See Hunt-Jones, 13.

46. Hunt-Jones, 18.

47. A circa 1805 card table in the collections of the Henry Francis Du Pont Winterthur Museum has a tradition of ownership in the Madison family. See Hunt-Jones, 87, 139.

48. For an account of the Madison’s furnishings in Washington, see Hunt-Jones.

49. The Madisons later commissioned Benjamin Latrobe, who worked in a style that combined his knowledge of French, English, and Classical styles, to design a suite of furniture for the drawing room of the President’s House. See Jack Lindsey, “An Early Latrobe furniture commission.”

50. Hunt-Jones, 22.

51. Garvan, 58. Bas reliefs for the house were executed by the Italian sculptor Jardella, who had recently arrived in Philadelphia. See Young, *Forgotten Patriot Robert Morris*, 216.

52. The mansion on Chestnut Street was never completed due to Morris’ financial failure. The half finished structure was torn down just before the turn of the 19th century.

53. Garvan, 58.

54. Young notes that three stories were built underground, with arches, vaults, and labyrinthine passages. See *Forgotten Patriot*, 215.

55. The enormous quantity of bricks and marble were sold to dozens of customers, including Benjamin Latrobe and the “Black Methodists.” By 1801 the lot had been cleared and divided into smaller lots, and those not sold immediately were offered at “Public Vendue at the Coffee House on Wednesday evening the 20th May (1801).” The dispersal accounts of the house and the notice of sale of the lots is located in the Reed and Forde papers, Robert Morris folder, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In this folder is also a footprint of the house, which indicates that it was located between Seventh and Eighth Streets, between Chestnut and Sansom Streets, rather than between Eighth and Ninth Streets, as is sometimes suggested. For a synopsis of the French craftsmen

employed to execute the interior and ironwork of the house, see Garvan, *Federal Philadelphia*.

56. More information may be in the papers at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, but its temporary closure precludes further research at this time.

57. See *Life of Robert Morris, The Great Financier*, (Philadelphia: Desilver, 1841), 8.

58. See Alberts, 319.

59. See Childs, 113.

60. The chairs are discussed in Chapter 4.

61. Jared Sparks, ed., *Letters and Recollections of George Washington, Being Letters to Tobias Lear and Others Between 1790-1799*, as quoted in Eberlein, 166.

62. Wick, 88.

63. See Wick, 84-89. Wick also notes that the upholstered parlor suite furniture arrived damaged, and Girard had to again order from his agent the fabric necessary to recover the pieces. He also requested enough extra fabric to make curtains for the windows. The parlor suite as well as the armoire and the buffet discussed below are in the collections of Girard College.

64. Robert D. Schwartz, *The Stephen Girard Collection: A Selective Catalog*, no. 35.

65. The armoire is noted in a bill from Laurent and Domballe in 1798, where they record having "moved and replaced the great wardrobe in order to (put down) the carpet." See Schwartz, catalog no. 65.

66. Garvan, 65.

67. Currently located in the collections of the New York Historical Society.

68. Regarding his role as a tastemaker in Philadelphia, Wick notes that "In examining (his) personal taste, his homes, and the way they were furnished, it appears that he did not have the kind of influence that might be expected." See page 71.

## Chapter 4

### **FRENCH-STYLE SEATING FURNITURE**

The surviving Philadelphia furnishings that embody French influences in their surface or form suggest that seating furniture played a particularly important role in the dissemination of the style. Many chairs and settees, both French and American made, survive with histories of ownership in Philadelphia, sometimes even with attributions to Philadelphia chair makers and upholsterers. This group of seating furniture helps document the changing social and visual landscape of the city, with their differences and interrelations illuminating both the role that the French style furnishings played in some contemporary settings, and the increasingly hybrid French-English neoclassical style. The group suggests that it was perhaps the impression of a tasteful European interior that was sought, rather than one strictly French or English.

The cultural exchange between France and England was such that distinctions in surface and form based on the line of the English Channel are often hard to formulate.<sup>1</sup> Despite being at war much of time, England increasingly looked to France during this period for the most stylish interior furnishings. Certainly the Prince of Wales, later King George IV, was one of the leaders of this charge across the Channel. An avid collector of French furnishings and art, he was among the first Englishmen to take advantage of the

availability of confiscated émigré and royalist property. He spent decades filling Carlton House with such finery, securing some furnishings by the same makers as James Swan had a few years earlier.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the French during this period often embraced English designs for their stylish interiors, sometimes even mimicking the English accent in their speech. The scholar Roger Kennedy notes that “In the neoclassical period there was so much commercial traffic passing back and forth from one nation to another that neither aesthetic nor economic autarchy could survive.”<sup>3</sup> With the arrival of French émigrés and the rise of neoclassicism, the stylistic interplay was ever more apparent in Philadelphia.

The chair in Figure One is illustrative of this interplay. In design and ornament, this chair, from a set of eight Philadelphia made chairs, is fundamentally English. Yet, to modern-day eyes, and perhaps to the eyes of late 18th-century Philadelphians, it retains a French flavor. Four chairs from this set have a reputed history of ownership by Robert Morris. Would the Francophile Morris, always on the leading edge of fashion, have recognized these chairs as English in design and ornament, or French? Or would he have simply viewed them as fashionable drawing room chairs, European in accent rather than French or English? Well-traveled, cosmopolitan Philadelphians of this period may well have understood them as English style chairs, but how specific their recognition of this design source was is not known. Gilt and white painted furniture and interiors had been in fashion in France and in England for quite some time, and had been introduced into Philadelphia in an English context by the early 1770s. By the 1790s the white painted surfaces were again in style, this time in a classical rather than a rococo context, and with

an increased interest in gilding.

Several features of the chairs indicate their debt to English design sources. Most notably, the form relates to Sheraton's designs for drawing room chairs. While several of his designs published as early as 1792 have design parallels to this set, the chairs in Plate 6 in the 1802 *Appendix to the Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book* are the most strikingly similar (Figure 2). Some elements of both of the chair designs in this plate closely mirror the Philadelphia set. Most notably, the distinct profile of the arm of the chair on the left suggests that the maker of these chairs was familiar with this plate, or with an imported English chair with some connection to this plate. Elements of the chair on the right are also present in the elongated urn form of the upper part of the front and rear stiles, and the upholstered back. However, these chair designs, particularly the one on the right, closely mirror numerous French *fauteuils* of the late Louis XVI period. Variations of this basic design were popular on both sides of the English Channel, but the crooked arm design of the set is apparently specific to England and English designs. Another pair of chairs with this arm profile but executed in mahogany with an oval upholstered back, are in the Winterthur Museum collections (Figure 3).<sup>4</sup>

While the painted and gilt set could have been copied from English chairs imported into Philadelphia that predate Sheraton's 1802 appendix, it seems unlikely that the set predates 1800. Further suggestion of a date of manufacture after the turn of the century is the distinctive profile of the turned spade feet. These relate closely to the turned feet on furniture often associated with the cabinetmaker Henry Connelly of

Philadelphia. Connelly was not active until the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1806 he labeled a sideboard that is supported by feet closely related to those on this set of chairs.<sup>5</sup> While many other craftsmen doubtless incorporated similar turned feet into their furniture, Connelly and his school are associated with the first decade of the nineteenth century. Also, English designs tend to emphasize feet more than French designs, which often exhibit understated or diminutive feet.

Sheraton's comments suggest that the surface treatment is also English in taste. He notes of plate six that the "frame of the right hand chair is intended to be finished in burnished gold, and the seat and back covered with printed silk. The chair on the left may be finished in japan painting interspersed with a little gilding in different parts of the banister, which has a lively effect."<sup>6</sup> The execution of the gilt and white painted surface of the chairs follows the contemporary prescriptive literature, such as Jean Felix Watin's 1770 publication *L'Art du Peintre, Doreur, Vernisseur*. Watin and Sheraton both considered a varnished white surface very refined. Watin referred to it as "Chipolin," and noted that "Nothing is so magnificent for a drawing room or a suite of rooms as a superb paneling painted in this manner."<sup>7</sup> Yet Sheraton notes of drawing room chairs that "the French finish them in mahogany, with gilt moldings." The range of ornament employed in both countries suggests that surface treatment alone does little to differentiate between the two.

While Sheraton suggested a gilt surface, the applied composition ornaments of this set are unusual. Such ornaments were extremely popular as interior architectural

ornament, but are rare on American furniture of this period. Surviving mantle pieces from federal Philadelphia document the use of such ornaments, and these chairs may well have been complimented by a mantle that incorporated similar bows, oak leaves, and acorn motifs, creating a unified interior in keeping with the elegant drawing rooms of England and France. While fairly generic, the specific elements of these chairs are traceable to composition-work designer Jean Jacques, who published some of his designs in London about 1794. Almost all of the composition design elements on these chairs are seen in number 378 of Jacques' publication, where he illustrates a design for a mantle (Figure 4). The leaves and flower held by a tied ribbon that appear on the rectangular panels above the front legs is repeated, though in the form of acorn and oak leaves, and the long passages of acorn and oak leaves that center a floral patera are clearly evident in this design.<sup>8</sup> Knowledge of Jacques' work in Philadelphia is documented by the following advertisement that appeared in the *Federal Gazette* on January 1, 1798:

Composition Ornaments. Whereas the co-partnership of Zane, Chapman & Co. Being dissolved by mutual consent, the public are hereby notified that the Manufactory of said ornaments is now carried on by William Zane & Co. At the sign of the canister and handsaw, No. 23, south Second street, Philadelphia; and executed by a person immediately from London, who has produced sufficient vouchers of his serving a seven years regular apprenticeship, and worked several years as a journeyman to the celebrated--- Jacques of London, the inventor of the art...

This unknown worker apparently worked first for William Poyntell, who noted in a 1795 advertisement that the man's work included "several patterns from the newest designs" that form "altogether as complete asset (sic) of patterns as the London artist could

procure.”<sup>9</sup> The artist may have brought with him the recently published designs of his master Jean Jacques. A mantle with closely related composition elements is in the collections of the Winterthur Museum. It is attributed to the Philadelphia composition ornament maker Robert Wellford, and several other Wellford-attributed mantles are known. More research is needed to determine the relationship between Jacques’ apprentice and Wellford. It may prove that they are one and the same.

Thus, a variety of sources were likely used as inspiration for the design and in the execution of these chairs. The chair maker, upholsterer, or commissioner of the set drew on a number of sources to compose a stylish set of chairs unlike any one published source. Tradition has it that the set also had a *settee en suite*. The owner may have further unified the interior not only with a mantle after the design of Jean Jacques, but also with wallpaper that contained similar motifs. The Providence, Rhode Island merchant John Brown adorned the walls of his fashionable home with French papers that included motifs of acorns, oak leaves and squirrels. Through his son James he was influenced by the interiors of wealthy Philadelphians such as William Bingham, and may have seen such motifs on drawing room papers in the home of the original owner of this set.<sup>10</sup> Anne Bingham’s sister, Mrs. Thomas Willing Francis, was depicted by Gilbert Stuart in the late 1790s seated in a similar gilt armchair with padded arms.<sup>11</sup>

The date of manufacture suggested by the 1802 Sheraton plate raises some questions regarding the tradition of ownership by Robert Morris.<sup>12</sup> After his financial failure in 1797, Morris spent the next 3 years in debtor’s prison, owing nearly three

million dollars to his creditors. In August of 1801 he was finally free again, but was ruined, and noted "I now find myself... without one cent I can call my own."<sup>13</sup> While Morris enjoyed some moments of prosperity before his death in May of 1806, his days of opulent living had perhaps passed him. However, the annuity Gouverneur Morris arranged for Mrs. Morris may have allowed the purchase of this expensive set, and he did move into a house on Twelfth Street with his wife soon after his release from prison. There is also some indication that just before his death Morris considered "purchasing fine articles at public sales and selling them again," though whether he did so is not known.<sup>14</sup> In his last will and testament in June of 1804 he bequeathed to his daughters some fine London silver that he "imported from London many years ago and have since repurchased," suggesting that he may in fact have had the opportunity to once again embrace to a certain degree the opulent style of living to which he had grown accustomed.<sup>15</sup>

The chairs were probably intended for a drawing room, as the title of Sheraton's plate suggested. He instructed that the drawing room was to "concentrate the elegance of the whole house," and should contain the "highest display of richness of furniture." He further noted that drawing room chairs "should always be the produce of studied elegance, though it is extremely difficult to attain to anything really novel."<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the elegant Gobelin tapestry that Gouverneur Morris purchased on behalf of Robert Morris was meant to accompany these chairs, but it instead was used to upholster another set thirty years later.<sup>17</sup> Physical evidence suggests that this set originally had a salmon

colored silk upholstery, and the Winterthur chair has been re-upholstered with this evidence in mind. The upholstery foundations indicated that the chairs had a “French edge,” or a slightly raised, square stitched edge around the seat and back, which has been reconfigured on the Winterthur chair (see also Figure 9, where La Londe suggests a French edge in his design for a *fauteuil*). The French called this technique “Piqûre à l’Anglaise,” or English stitching. The feature may be English or French in origin, further confusing the French-English visual distinctions.<sup>18</sup>

This set of chairs is constructed entirely of ash, a construction detail it shares with most of the other painted and gilt American-made chairs illustrated here. Many of those constructed of mahogany also utilize ash as a secondary wood. Ash shares some of the qualities of beech, the wood commonly used on painted chairs in England and France. Ash was also a preferred wood in Europe, and Sheraton provides notes on its growth and properties:

The common Ash is a native of most part(s) of Europe, and particularly of England. The second sort grows naturally in the southern part of Europe; and the third in Virginia... Ash is reckoned in strength next to the oak, and is much in use amongst wheelers, plow-makers, and country wrights.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, ash was specific neither to America nor to England or France. While it was perhaps employed most frequently in Philadelphia, it was also used by New York cabinetmakers such as Duncan Phyfe. It is, however, noteworthy that it appears with such frequency on this group of chairs.

With the social and monetary value of associations with George Washington, it is

not surprising that a great number of chairs carry with them a history of ownership by him. Many of these histories can not be verified, and in some cases have doubtless been embellished over the years. The 1856 label of one such Washington owned chair, the whereabouts of which are currently unknown, explains the motive for this embellishment:

When Genl. Washington left Philadelphia to reside in Washington City-- All his furniture was sold in Phila. Many persons were desirous of having some relics of their belov'd Genl and his drawing room chairs, were sold separately (two dozens). Dr. Thoa. Redman purchased *this* Chair, and gave it to his Sister, Mrs. Rebecca Lawrence-- it descended to me at her death and I now give it to my ever kind and affec friend Lieut. Foxhall A Parker with the hope that it may descend to his children-- Eliza Lawrence  
April 27th-- 1856<sup>20</sup>

A matching chair in the collections of the Historic Society of Delaware (Figure 5) has a similar provenance. A modern plaque affixed to the chair describes this history:

Chair of Gen. Washington which he presented to his old friend and colleague in the First Continental Congress George Read of Delaware "the signer." At the time the chair was given Washington was President and Chief Justice Read was U.S. Senator from Delaware in the first senate after the adoption of the U.S. Constitution which he and Washington had helped to frame.

Another chair from this set that perhaps descended with the Read chair is known only through an image in the Harmon Pumpelly Read scrapbook, and is distinguished from this example by its reduced feet (Figure 6).<sup>21</sup>

These lyre back chairs recall the drawing room chairs described by Henry Wansey in William Bingham's Mansion House, which he noted in 1794 were "from Seddons's in London, of the newest taste; the back in the form of a lyre, adorned with festoons of

crimson and yellow silk.”<sup>22</sup> Such classically inspired lyre back chairs were popular both in England and in France, and perhaps Washington was inspired by these chairs in Bingham’s home. The Washington connection leads us back again to his purchases of French furnishings from the Count de Mustier in 1789 (see Chapter Three).<sup>23</sup> Among the purchases was an armchair bought as “a model,” perhaps to be copied by local craftsmen. While this model seems more likely of another form, it is quite possible that Washington had a Philadelphia chair maker (or upholsterer) copy an imported French or English example to produce these chairs.

Washington dispersed many of his furnishings before leaving for Mount Vernon in 1797. The Presidential office was not a lucrative position, and Washington was both raising money and lightening the load that was to be shipped to Virginia.<sup>24</sup> In his inventory of the contents of the house at 190 High Street, he indicated that most of the green drawing room furnishings were to be sold. The seating furniture was all to be liquidated, and the looking glasses, brackets, lusters and landscapes were also available for purchase, “though the sale of them (was) not desired.” Among the furnishings listed were a sofa of green flower damask, 12 arm chairs with green seats, “6 small do.,” “6 do. do. added,” and two round stools. While there is uncertainty regarding his “ditto” notations, the sofa, 12 chairs, and six of the “small” chairs were doubtless the drawing room suite purchased from the Count de Mustier in New York in March of 1790. The six “added” chairs and the two stools were likely those purchased from George Bertault in January of 1793, noted in his household accounts as “G. Berteau-- 6 chrs. & 2 stools G.

Drwg. Rm. 32.11.” These were perhaps made to match or compliment the Mustier suite in the green drawing room on the second floor of the Presidential house. As previously noted, Washington patronized Bertault on a number of occasions, purchasing sundries and upholstery, a feather bed, pillows, and other items.

Thus, at the 1797 sale where Thomas Redman and perhaps George Read were shopping, there were at least six chairs and two stools that were of local manufacture and likely in the French style. While the three lyre-back examples were perhaps some of those purchased from Bertault, there is circumstantial evidence suggesting that this is not the case, and that the lyre back chairs are from another source. They differ in form, surface, proportion, and construction detail from other chairs known to have been purchased from Bertault just five months later.

Bertault completed an elegant set of French style armchairs (Figures 7 and 8) and two sofas for Andrew Craigie of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the summer of 1793.<sup>25</sup> His Philadelphia agents Nalbro and John Frasier wrote him on June 20, indicating that the furniture was “now finished, and we are only waiting for an opportunity of shipping it to you...”<sup>26</sup> Bertault had indicated when the order was first placed that it would take two months to complete, though it actually took more than a year. These examples are nearly identical to several other sets of chairs, all attributed to the cabinetmaker Adam Hains and upholsterer George Bertault, who executed the frames and the upholstery of the Craigie chairs. Original owners of the other sets included Alexander Hamilton, Theodore Lyman, and perhaps Jefferson and Washington in addition to Craigie.

While Washington may have ordered these strikingly different lyre-back chairs from Bertault, the coincidence in the timing suggests that the Craigie chairs were perhaps inspired by those ordered by Washington. There are two “Craigie-type” chairs, probably executed by Hains and Bertault, currently in the White House collections. A former owner wrote in 1907 that they had been in her family since being purchased at Washington’s 1797 sale, and while their purported history of ownership by Washington has not been substantiated, it does make sense.<sup>27</sup> A possible scenario is that in January of 1793, Washington paid Bertault for copying his “model chair” purchased from Mustier. Washington installed these six chairs and two stools in his green drawing room, along with many of his Mustier purchases. Andrew Craigie, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and probably other patrons of George Bertault were entertained in this room. Upon their inquiring about the furniture, Washington may have indicated his satisfaction with the services of this local upholsterer. Jefferson had plenty of opportunities to see these chairs, and also spent thirty-two dollars with Bertault in 1793, though what he purchased is unknown. Hamilton also obviously had ample opportunity to see the green drawing room chairs. Craigie knew Washington from the Revolutionary War, and in 1791 purchased the house in Cambridge where Washington had his headquarters during the siege of Boston. Craigie had begun negotiations for his furniture by April of 1792, and it is unclear if this predates Washington’s order from Bertault.<sup>28</sup> However, Washington was purchasing other goods from Bertault by November of 1791.<sup>29</sup>

One conflict in this scenario is that Washington paid just over thirty-two pounds

for his six chairs and two stools, or roughly four pounds each for the chairs, while Craigie paid about seven pounds eight shillings for each of his armchairs. While this suggests that the chairs differed greatly, it can perhaps be accounted for in the difference in upholstery. Craigie was unable to get the blue damask that he desired, but settled for a green and white silk damask instead. Washington's choice in upholstery is unknown, but he perhaps instructed Bertault to supply him with an elegant but less expensive fabric. Craigie could well afford what he wanted, while Washington's financial situation demanded that he exercise restraint. Another variable that could account for the price difference is finish. It is sometimes assumed that the Mustier suite had a gilt surface, but no extant chair is documented to this set is currently known. Washington found many of Mustier's furnishings too opulent, but deemed the set he purchased as appropriate for a public drawing room. We know only that it was expensive and elegant, which does not exclude a mahogany finish. As noted above, mahogany finishes on such chairs were also popular in France during the period. How the mahogany finish of the Craigie-type chairs would have integrated with the Mustier suite is not known.<sup>30</sup>

The construction of the lyre back chairs further suggests a frame maker was perhaps someone other than Adam Hains. Aside from the obvious differences in form and surface, the chairs have quite different proportions. The lyre back examples are taller, narrower, and not as deep as the Craigie-type chairs. The rails of the seat frames differ in width from the Hains examples, the legs of the lyre back are thicker, and the "cap" on the top of the seat back is applied, rather than integral as with the Craigie chairs.

The crest rail has seven notches on both sides instead of ten, and the lyre-backs have large acorn or artichoke finials, rather than the small bell shaped finials of the Craigie-type chairs. Yet, there are some differences in the details of the group of Craigie-type chairs attributed to and labeled by Hains, even within the same set. Furthermore, some similarities to the lyre backs, such as the use of ash, do exist. It possible that Hains was closely following a model provided by Washington or Bertault, or that Bertault was simply using a different frame maker.

French seating furniture was not new to Washington and other governmental officials. Members of Congress and the House of Representatives sat on French style chairs (Figure 9), likely designed by the French architect Pierre L'Enfant, who was the architect responsible for the remodeling of Federal Hall.<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly L'Enfant was inspired by other French chairs or designs for such chairs. The design for a *fauteuil* by La Londe, published circa 1785, is one such possible design source (Figure 10).<sup>32</sup> The design has much in common with other French style chairs produced in Philadelphia following the governmental move in 1790. The cabinetmaker Thomas Burling was also apparently supplying French influenced furnishings to then-New Yorkers such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who both ordered cylinder desks from him. Washington's desk was ordered for the home he took over from the Count de Mustier.<sup>33</sup>

A good example of such copying of French prototypes is found in a pair of chairs that descended in the family of Juliana Sitgreaves and Lewis Allaire Scott (Figure 11).<sup>34</sup> In this rare example, the French model chair and the American copy have stayed together,

allowing a comparison of their details. Here, the American copy is virtually identical in construction, and varies in appearance only in detail. Even the placement and number of pegs that secure the mortises of the seat frame to the legs are the same. Notable differences are the heavier legs and the slightly thicker side and front rails of the American chair.

The French chair is in the late Louis XVI style, and likely dates to the 1770s or 1780s. When it was imported is not known, nor is it known when the copy was executed. It could have been copied soon after its arrival, which would have likely been in the 1790s (Lewis Allaire Scott died in 1798). While it could have been executed later in the nineteenth century, there is little to suggest that, other than the evidence of a removed spring seat. The basic construction of these chairs is in keeping with other Philadelphia examples, perhaps in part as a result of similar close copying of imported examples. In form they are also in keeping with the French style productions of Philadelphia craftsmen such as Hains and Bertault. They do, however, have a higher arch in the crest rail, no finials, and the arms butt into the rear stiles, as opposed to the graceful continuation of the molding of the stiles in to the arms in the Hains chairs.

Such close emulation is not seen between any of the known French made chairs with Washington histories and any of the known American made French-style chairs. One chair at Mount Vernon does relate to the Craigie-type chairs, yet differs in arm supports, arm-to-stile attachments, patera, and proportions. It has no more or less in common with the Craigie-type chairs than some of the French chairs that survive with

Jefferson histories.<sup>35</sup> One possible candidate for Washington's model chair is in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It has a history of use by Washington in Philadelphia (Figure 12). It could be the model chair, but is perhaps more likely a survival from the large Mustier suite. There is some evidence that this chair was also copied by an American craftsman, as the files at the Historical Society indicate that an antique dealer once owned an identical chair that contained American woods.<sup>36</sup>

The presence of this chair, or one nearly identical to it, in Philadelphia about 1790 is documented by a sketch by the artist James Peale (Figure 13). Peale also sketched a Louis XV style armchair at the same time (Figure 14). The sketches are not dated, though "1789" does appear in a different part of this small book. Peale and other Philadelphia artists utilized such elegant French and French style chairs in their portraits of prominent Philadelphians. For example, Gilbert Stuart depicted William Bingham in his Mansion House in 1797, and beside him stand two gilt armchairs in the English or French manner.<sup>37</sup>

Other French made chairs with Washington histories also survive. In the collections of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association is an upholstered *bergere* that was apparently one of Martha Washington's favorites, as she was unwilling to part with it when she and George left Philadelphia for Mount Vernon. The chair was apparently used in her bedroom.<sup>38</sup> While this chair was probably among the furnishings purchased from Mustier, it is likely the "Chair and Stool called a Shepperdess" (minus the stool) listed in the inventory of the Mustier purchase, rather than part of the drawing room suite.<sup>39</sup> A

related chair is among the Swan furnishings now at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Other French made seating furniture with Washington connections include a *fauteuil* and a side chair (Figure 15) with scrolled backs, and a *tabouret*.<sup>40</sup> All three descended from Oliver Wolcott, Jr., friend of Washington and friend and successor of Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury. Wolcott perhaps purchased these elegant French furnishings from Washington in the 1797 sale. Washington in turn may have acquired them from Mustier, and the original green silk out back liner preserved on the *fauteuil* suggests a green drawing room placement. The side chair could similarly fit under the heading “6 do. small chairs” on the Mustier inventory. However, this remains speculation, as there is nothing to specifically connect the chairs to the Mustier purchase. If they were from this 1790 purchase, they would have been on the very leading edge of fashion at the time. The forms and surface treatment were just coming into fashion in Paris.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps they were acquired by Monroe during his stay in Paris a few years later, and subsequently made their way to Washington. A second example of the *fauteuil* that has lost its painted surface is recorded in the Decorative Arts Photographic Collection at the Winterthur Museum, and yet another similar chair with a purported Washington history is also known.<sup>42</sup>

Chairs were prominent among the French furnishings that Jefferson imported into Philadelphia to furnish his home while he served as Secretary of State. Under Jefferson’s orders, forty-eight French chairs arrived in Philadelphia in 1790. Of those that survive from this impressive array are several that bear close affinities to the Craigie-type chairs,

and could have served as models. As he had just arrived from Paris, and was America's most adamant Francophile, it is logical, though entirely speculative, that Jefferson's chairs inspired the production of these similar sets. Those illustrated in Figure 16 and Figure 17, and particularly Figure 18, all have much in common with these American made-chairs, but none is so close as to suggest its use as a direct model. If the two chairs in Figure 11 are any indication, such a model would have been followed in every detail by the American chair-maker. A related pair of chairs with a Jefferson provenance and with a history in another presidential family as well, was recently sold with the personal effects of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (Figure 19).<sup>43</sup> Finish analysis has indicated that these chairs originally had a mahogany finish, and that the painted surface was added at a later date.

A scattering of other French chairs owned in Philadelphia during this period exist, as do a few American made chairs in the French style. One example is in the Kaufmann collection (Figure 20), and is sometimes attributed to Adam Hains.<sup>44</sup> Others have appeared occasionally at auctions, or are known with only distant Philadelphia connections.<sup>45</sup> Sadly, few have surfaced with solid provenances.

With only a dozen and a half or so examples to consider, it is clear that the French style did not take Philadelphia by storm. Rather, during these years Philadelphians were perhaps gradually warming up to the idea of French furnishings, and while some goods, like porcelain and wallpaper, quickly became the standard in fashionable homes, French-style furniture seems to have taken root more slowly in most households. It was in the

homes of the more cosmopolitan Philadelphians, those well traveled politicians and wealthy merchants that it caught on most quickly. In furniture, and particularly chairs, it seems the French style was embraced as the English adopted and adapted the French designs. Perhaps because the domestic cabinet trades were so well established, and accustomed to following British precedents, the pure French style and French cabinetmakers were unable to fully establish themselves until the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, the rocky, ever-changing public sentiment regarding the French did not help in the propagation of a stricter French style. Thus, the imported and domestically produced chairs presented here represent more the exception than the rule. However, one cannot ignore the several sets of clearly French-inspired chairs produced by Hains and Bertault, and perhaps in the future more documented examples will surface and shed more light on the appearance of the French style.

## NOTES

1. Similar comments might be made of French and English architecture. The scholar Roger Kennedy notes in *Orders from France* that “simple observation confirms that as Frenchmen moved about America, they made architecture that is seldom distinguishable from that produced by British designers working in the same regions.” See page 11.
2. By 1783, when he moved into Carlton House, the Prince of Wales was collecting French art. The émigré and royalist property became directly available to the English only during the 1801-1803 interlude in the Napoleonic Wars, and in the period after 1814. See de Bellaigue, “George IV and the arts of France,” 700-705. De Bellaigue also quotes Horace Walpole, who wrote of the interior of Carlton House in 1785 that “...it is the taste and propriety that strike. Every ornament is at a proper distance ... all delicate and new.” See page 700 (source not cited).
3. Kennedy, 12.
4. For a chair with related arm profile and similar (though more elaborate) carved decoration, see *English Furniture: Irwin Untermeyer Collection*, plate 128.
5. See *The Philadelphia Museum Bulletin*, vol. XLVII (Spring 1953) for an illustration of the sideboard and a discussion of Connelly and his school.
6. Sheraton, *Appendix*, 11.
7. Watin, *L'Art du Peintre, Doreur, Vernisseur*, as cited in Shelton, “White-Painted Furnishings.” I am grateful to Chris Shelton for providing me with a manuscript of his article, which will appear in the forthcoming book *Painted Furniture*. Sheraton indicates specifically that in “gilding chairs with burnished gold,... the gold... ought to be varnished to secure it.” See *Thomas Sheraton's Cabinet Dictionary*, 232.
8. Some of these elements are also illustrated in other design books. See for example *Furniture Ornaments*, a collection of plates of unknown author and date, in the Victoria and Albert Museum (a photocopy is in the Winterthur Museum library), which illustrates a similar acorn and oak leaf design. However, this collection of plates may well lead to

Jean Jacques as well. A similar design is also illustrated in Pain, *Practical House Carpenter*, plate 91.

9. *Gazette of the United States*, June 2, 1795, as cited in Prime, 317. Perhaps the advertisement is suggesting that the person “immediately from London” and executing the composition ornaments was Zane himself?

10. See Low, *France Views America*, 25.

11. See *John Brown House*, 159. Numerous other paintings of Philadelphians portray their sitters in French style or gilt chairs. For example, John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*, painted in France, portrays the signers seated in distinctly French style chairs. More research is needed to understand the wide range of styles of seating furniture represented in contemporary paintings.

12. There is a puzzling letter in the registrar's files at Winterthur. Written by the former owner of one of the chairs from this set (perhaps Winterthur's 91.66), the letter retracts a Robert Morris history that was initially reported for the chair, indicating that this history had in fact belonged to another chair altogether. Perhaps the retraction is in fact a mistake, but the Morris history has yet to be fully documented.

13. Eleanor Young, *Forgotten Patriot Robert Morris*, 252.

14. Young, 256.

15. Young, 257-258.

16. *Thomas Sheraton's Cabinet Dictionary*, vol. 2, 218, 201.

17. This set, originally owned by Edward Shippen Burd, is currently in the collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and apparently dates to 1833. See *Philadelphia: Three Centuries*, 206, and the object file in the American Art Department.

18. The French edge is discussed in Passeri and Trent, “Some Amazing Washington Chairs!,” 3-C.

19. *Thomas Sheraton's Cabinet Dictionary*, 20-21. Sheraton also notes of beech that it is much used amongst chairmakers, and is “now the cheapest wood in use.” See 44-45.

20. Quoted in Sotheby's Americana Sale catalog, January 27-30, 1982 (New York).

21. The Harman Pumpelly Read scrapbook is in the collections of the Historic Society of Delaware. The chair is pictures in volume three.
22. Wansey, 136.
23. For a discussion of some Washington chairs, with particular emphasis on their upholstery foundations, see Passeri and Trent, "Some Amazing Washington Chairs!," 1-3.
24. John Adams wrote to his wife on December 30, 1796 that "The President says he must sell something to enable him to clear out." Eberlein, 174, quoting C. F. Adams, *Letters of John Adams to his Wife 2: 235*, Boston, 1841.
25. For an excellent discussion of the Craigie chairs and related examples, see Catalano and Nylander, "New attributions to Adam Hains, Philadelphia furniture maker."
26. Craigie Papers, from a transcription in the files of The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
27. In a telephone conversation, Betty Monkman, Curator of the White House collections, indicated her doubt that the chairs had any real connection to Washington.
28. Craigie's negotiations with Nalbro and Frasier is documented in Catalano and Nylander, 1114. Much of the information regarding the histories of these chairs is from this excellent article.
29. Washington's household account titled "Sundries bot on account of GW" documents his purchases of "Feather bed Bolstr. Pillows" on November 19, 1791. However, the dates in this document are scrambled, and it is possible that this purchase was made in a later year.
30. Notwithstanding Sheraton's comments of the French preferring them "finished in mahogany, with gilt moldings," the gilt chair with green upholstery at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania is a likely candidate of a survival from the Mustier suite.
31. See Williamson, 250-256.
32. See *Cahier d'Ameublements par La Londe* in the Winterthur Museum library.
33. See Gilbert Vincent, "Bold, Simple And Regular," 123-128. Washington's cylinder desk, while having much in common with English examples, is ultimately derived from French sources. It is currently in the collections of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The Society also apparently has another cylinder desk and bookcase with Washington associations. It has fluted legs, and a marble top with a brass gallery. It appears to be French, or a remarkably close copy of a French design. Further research upon the reopening of the Society is needed to confirm the origin and the Washington connection.

34. I would like to thank Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., for allowing me to examine these chairs.

35. See below, and see also Stein, 300-304.

36. The object files include notes that David Stockwell owned an identical chair constructed with American woods. There is considerable confusion in the file regarding the country of origin and the woods used in the Washington chair, and the French origin of this chair cannot be confirmed, as currently there is no access to the objects at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

37. Illustrated in Alberts, 366.

38. Helen Fede, *Washington Furniture at Mount Vernon*, 35-36.

39. This chair bears a close resemblance to the two sofas with upholstered sides that have Bertault and Hains connections. One is in the collections of the Museum of the City of New York, with a history of ownership with Alexander Hamilton, and the other is in the collection of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, with a history of ownership in the Lyman family. As these two sofas both have a distinctive scrolled volute at the top of the rear stile, it is possible that they were made *en suite* and later separated.

40. The side chair is in the collections of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, the *tabouret* is in the Connecticut Historical Society, and the *fauteuil* is still privately owned by Wolcott descendents. For a discussion of these and some other Washington chairs, see Passeri and Trent, 1C-2C.

41. Archaeologically correct neoclassical forms with painted surfaces were just coming into style at this time, and are usually associated with the *Directoire* and later periods. Jacques-Louis David depicted a related scroll-back Grecian sofa in his 1788 *Paris et Helene*, in the *Musee des Arts Decoratifs* in Paris. A *fauteuil* with a similar scrolled back that retains fluted Louis XVI legs is discussed in de Grandry, *Le Mobilier Français: Directoire Consulat Empire*, 31. A related stool is among the Swan furnishings now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, though it only hints at the coming archaeologically correct style.

42. The latter chair is documented in the files of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities. It bears a plaque that reads "Washington Chair: It was at Mount Vernon in 1790. It was taken to Alexandria in 1812." While it has much in common with the Wolcott chairs, the treatment of the back is quite different. It does not appear to scroll back, but rather is flat and angled back. The crest rail is in the form of a triangle, and the stiles are fully turned, with the upholstered back separated from the stiles by a narrow gap.

43. The Estate of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Sotheby's New York, April 23-26, 1996, lot 40.

44. This researcher has yet to personally examine this chair. It is published in Michael Flanigan's *American Furniture from the Kaufmann Collection*. Flanigan rightly notes the chair's debt to English design sources, but within the context of this thesis, the chair qualifies as an example related to the French taste. While it could be by Adam Hains, as Gilbert Vincent suggests in "Bold, Simple and Regular," details in the design and the use of walnut in the rails suggests otherwise. Marie Kimball pictured in "The Original Furnishings of the White House, Part II" an apparently identical chair that had lost its painted surface. Further research is needed to fully connect these chairs to Philadelphia, let alone Adam Hains or one of his contemporaries.

45. Files on the Hains chairs at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities contain references and photographs of other privately owned chairs that relate to these examples. However, they could prove to be French in origin, rather than American. Also, Bernard and S. Dean Levy picture two from a set of six chairs in the Spring, 1986 catalog. The chairs are attributed to Adam Hains, and do have some characteristics in common with the Hains chairs discussed above, but with very different back and leg treatments.

## **CONCLUSION**

**While the new French community in Philadelphia did much to transform the visual and cultural landscape, the people of the city were not quick to entirely shed the familiar, conservative English design precedents that had been dominant since the city's founding. The French played an increasingly important role in setting the taste in the city, yet it seems that the more purely French style in interiors pervaded only within a small group of the city's elite. There were certainly exceptions to this rule, but surviving documents and objects suggest that interiors that were consciously and overtly French were largely limited to this small section of the population. With the exceptions of Thomas Jefferson and a few others, there seems to have been little specific allegiance to French goods, consumers instead preferring simply that the furnishings be fashionable and "of the newest taste." Stylish goods were to be chosen eclectically, and while the city had in many ways gone "French mad," patronage of English goods certainly did not disappear.**

**Fashionable interiors, such as that of William and Anne Bingham, seem to reflect the confluence of English and French tastes under the influence of neoclassicism, resulting in a "European" or cosmopolitan interior. In addition, an interior more generally European in flavor, rather than a strictly French interior, perhaps helped one sidestep the divisive politics of the time. An opulent French interior was bound to draw**

the criticism of Federalists and French revolutionaries alike. In other wealthy households, French wallpapers and china were often combined with stylish furniture “in the newest style,” whether English-made, French-made, or American-made forms that combined the influences of England and France with an American twist. It seems many Philadelphians were in a state of transition, beginning to grow accustomed to larger quantities of French goods in their homes. Some simply made the transition faster than others, with some members of the government and the Republican court seemingly leading the way.

The French population seems to have had a deeper impact on some of the more ephemeral aspects of daily life in Philadelphia. While references to French craftsmen and French furniture are relatively uncommon in period newspapers and documents, references to émigrés in the context of social concerns are ubiquitous. Dancing, fencing, personal grooming, fashions, cuisine and other important concerns within the social sphere were all heavily impacted by the arrival of this cultured group of French people. Documents confirm that Anglo-Philadelphians turned to the French to set the standard for these aspects of life, and it was these very skills that the disenfranchised French aristocrats had to offer upon their arrival. Good social graces, manners, and entertainment skills were crucial to success within the high social circles of the city, and it was here that the émigrés excelled. Many contemporary anecdotes attest to their success within this sphere. James Brown, for example, wrote from Philadelphia to his sister Abby

in Providence, Rhode Island, on December 18, 1782:

I am more than ever convinced how... Manners... are necessary to those who appear in High Life... I never felt the Want more than when I was at the M[inister] of France . The French do exceed all the people in the World for ease and Dignity of Manner—you'll re[ceiv]e an acct. of that Days Entertainment by a Genl. Varnum, if it does not miscarry... I have a Letter from Mr. Morris to Dine four days hence. I am told that he lives in the most elegant stile. That his Table exceeds the Ministers of France in Variety of Dishes, and Neatness of Plaite.<sup>1</sup>

This sentiment continued through the end of the eighteenth-century, and the talents of the French within the social sphere were regularly noted in the diaries and correspondences of Philadelphians. Émigrés fueled the perceived necessity of such skills by offering a constant stream of festive balls and other social occasions when such skills and fashions could be demonstrated and exhibited to one's social equals and rivals alike.

While their interactions with Anglo-Philadelphians were numerous, as a group the French émigrés were never fully admitted into the city's high society, and instead remained on the periphery. In addition, the French community that grew in Philadelphia during these years remained socially and politically disparate, never completely reaching a cohesive, comfortable state. Most had come to the city with the intention of leaving as soon as the political climate in France allowed. The community never seemed entirely comfortable with itself, and similarly Philadelphian's opinions of the French fluctuated from day to day. Toward the end of the decade, as political and social sentiment turned

more solidly against the French, culminating in the Alien and Sedition Acts. These Acts signaled a deepening hostility toward the émigrés, and the majority made their way back to France by the end of the decade. Their legacy in the city seems to have been largely ephemeral, though certainly their impression on the psyches of Philadelphians was tangible. The next two decades witnessed numerous successful French craftsmen in the city, many working in the popular French Empire style. The seed of the French taste had taken root, and continued to grow into the nineteenth century.

### **Note**

1. As quoted in Cooper, "The Furnishings of John Brown," 126.

## **APPENDIX: FIGURES**

## **NOTE TO USERS**

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**Figures 1-20, pages 115-134**

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