

## INTRODUCTION

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The last days of February 1778 brought rain, snow, hail, and ice to the frontier town of Winchester, Virginia, where a group of Quaker men had been held since their banishment from Philadelphia six months earlier. Forcibly torn from their families, friends, and useful lives, the eighteen remaining exiles—a dozen of whom were leaders in the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) of the Religious Society of Friends and members of an elite cadre of transatlantic merchants—found comfort only by trudging several miles from their separate places of confinement (see map 2) through ugly winter weather to join together in worship. Illness proliferated, and relief was unlikely to arrive in time even for those exiles who, like Henry Drinker, suffered such relatively minor afflictions as “the Fever upon me, my head disordered with it, and a pain pretty constant a little above my left Groin.”<sup>1</sup> Even if the presence of two armies between Winchester and Philadelphia had not prevented the free movement of individuals and goods, Henry noted that “the roads are likely to remain so deep & bad for a considerable time to come that we are discouraged from sending for many necessaries we are in want of.”<sup>2</sup> On March 2, Thomas Gilpin, a fifty-year-old husband, father, milling entrepreneur, merchant, and scientist, whose invention of a hydraulic pump had delighted Benjamin Franklin, became the first of the Quaker exiles to die.

Days later, a second exile, sixty-two-year-old Quaker minister John Hunt, experienced a mortification of one leg. It had suddenly lost all utility. Doctors concluded that amputation was the only way to save Hunt’s life. When it came time to perform the operation, the only surgeon available had

a curious history of inebriation, and, unlike the pacifist Hunt, had served—as a general—in George Washington’s army. Hunt survived the operation without anesthetic, and his condition briefly seemed to improve. He, too, however, would die before the month was out.

March 1778 represented the absolute nadir of the Quaker sect’s ninety-six years of political life in Pennsylvania. After nearly a century as the predominant cultural force in the colony and state, its members were out of office, out of influence, and out of business. Some struggled to survive out of their native state, where they were out of supplies and nearly out of luck. They were at the lowest ebb of their powers. Although in some senses they had never felt so helpless, the Quakers remained stalwart in their faith and strict in their religious principles. John Hunt, a pious man, had prepared himself for martyrdom. Still, he must have wondered as he lay dying how he and his coreligionists, who had not been accused of any crimes by either the Continental Congress or the Supreme Executive Council (SEC) of Pennsylvania, had ended up in this situation—and how it would end.

Politics and religion are a volatile combination—whether in 2023 or in 1777. The same is particularly true when individual civil liberties come into conflict with a perceived threat to national security. These conflicts are at the core of the narrative here. Long the preeminent power in Pennsylvania, in 1776 the Quakers found themselves out of step with revolutionary sentiments. Though the general population was well aware of their refusal to bear arms, to Patriot leaders, this minority religious sect now constituted a serious, persistent, and perhaps existential security threat to the new republic and the state in which they lived.

After Congress, in mid-August 1777, ordered Pennsylvania and Delaware to apprehend their disaffected Quakers, Major-General John Sullivan of the Continental Army sent a letter to Congress asserting strongly that if what he suspected was true, Quakers were “the most Dangerous Enemies America knows . . . Covered with that Hypocritical Cloak of Religion under which they have with Impunity So Long Acted the part of Inveterate Enemies to their Country.”<sup>3</sup> With that letter full of dire accusations, he enclosed some papers—what came to be called the Spanktown Papers—confiscated from a suspected deserter. On the surface, the papers appeared to confirm his fears that Quakers were feeding military intelligence to the British. The timing, virulence, and look (with supposed tangible evidence) of Sullivan’s accusations suggest strongly that these factors played a major

role in Congress's unprecedentedly harsh actions against the Quaker leaders arrested in their wake.

In response, on September 11, 1777, the Second Continental Congress and the government of the newly organized state of Pennsylvania exiled twenty men. Seventeen of the exiles were Quakers. Their objections to the revolution and the war were sincere, religiously rooted, and courageous. Though they were never formally accused or convicted of any crime, the exiles were arrested and summarily banished—with no chance to be heard in their own defense—for over seven months to a frontier village in Virginia where prisoners of war were held in barracks (though the exiles would be housed separately). They were also stripped of traditional rights held sacred for centuries—particularly that bundle of rights embodied by habeas corpus, the right to be heard by an impartial judge and released if he found them to be illegally arrested (which the Quakers—Israel Pemberton and Miers Fisher, very knowledgeable in such matters—strongly believed was the case). In dealing with a perceived threat, Patriots seemingly betrayed the principles underlying their own rebellion against the British.

The Quaker exile was common knowledge in the years during and after the revolution. A significant swath of the populace avidly followed the exile and thought the banishment of the Quaker leaders appropriate. Today, however, few—even among scholars—have ever heard of it, and still fewer know fully why or how it happened. After two hundred and forty some years, no previous historian has ever written a comprehensive story of the Quaker exile. This book does that and thereby restores the Quaker exile to its unique and proper place within the literature of the American Revolution, deepening our understanding of the British Army's Philadelphia Campaign and the surprising strategies Patriots used to deal with the well-organized, contrarian Quakers. The book also addresses a comparatively understudied phenomenon that has received relatively little attention in the annals of Quaker history in America: What happened to the relatively small Quaker sect between their colonial dominance in Pennsylvania for nearly all of its first century and their later reemergence as nationally prominent leaders in nineteenth- and twentieth-century education, reform, abolition, and peace movements?

As *Prisoners of Congress* reveals, nascent ideas about the relationship between political dissent and national security determined the fate of the Quaker leaders in 1777. The exile represented one of the first times that Congress called for the arrest of a group of citizens of one religion who seemed to

some to pose an existential national security threat yet had not been accused of committing any chargeable crime. Suspected Loyalists, sympathetic to the Crown and grateful for the support of the British Empire in their business ventures, the Quaker exiles endured a more than seven-month preventive detention in which they were held as political prisoners (likely the first in the new republic), though it took two centuries before someone applied that term to them.<sup>4</sup> Political prisoners are not an entirely unheard-of phenomenon in the American experience. For example, some woman suffragists in 1917 were arrested, convicted, and imprisoned more for their views than for actual misdeeds. Few, however, are aware that socially and commercially prominent, pacifist merchants in the former colonial capital could become the targets of the supposedly enlightened founding fathers during the American Revolution—and for their thoughts and speech, not for acts they committed. With this treatment, Congress adhered at first to a template established for removing out of harm’s way former Crown officials who had committed no crime but were straddlers, neither Patriots nor overt, active Loyalists. Congress placed these men in states remote from their usual residence, away from the coast and port towns, making it harder for them to escape or communicate with outside forces. But Pennsylvania upped the ante. When the Quaker leaders protested their exile, Patriots also stripped them of their English common law and Pennsylvania constitutional rights, accomplished by a rare suspension of the privilege of habeas corpus, which protects individuals against an arbitrary government’s overzealous confinement. Parliament had in earlier times passed such laws for the protection of autocratic, divine-right kings; during the revolution, it suspended habeas corpus for Americans captured on the high seas.<sup>5</sup> Such a suspension could even happen today: the United States Constitution allows it “when in Cases of Rebellion or Invasion the public Safety may require it.” Far from a niche story, the Quaker exile is relevant to conflicts occurring today.

Led by John Adams, who had developed a strong bias against Philadelphia Quakers, the Second Continental Congress recommended scrutiny of the sect. Then, using as a pretext the Spanktown Papers, faked evidence of Quaker collusion with the British, Congress instigated the arrest and exile of men solely because they were Quaker leaders, arresting a few ordinary Quakers as a further act of intimidation. Equating Quakerism with suspected loyalty to the British Crown, Patriots determined the Quaker leaders constituted a serious threat to national security, though they claimed only

that the Quaker leaders had an unspecified “correspondence and connection highly prejudicial to the public safety.”<sup>6</sup> Pennsylvania’s government had already placed the Quaker leaders on its own secretive hostiles list of men deemed “inimical to the cause of America.”<sup>7</sup>

Once Congress acted, Pennsylvania rounded up the Quaker leaders and other suspected British sympathizers. At this point in time, between September 2 and 11, 1777, Philadelphia Quakers were situated at the virtual epicenter of the American Revolution, though historians have consistently portrayed them as quaint or curious but decidedly peripheral players in the revolutionary drama. On September 8, the Quaker leaders delivered a dramatic protest letter to Pennsylvania’s executive requesting a hearing in their defense, a right usually afforded almost any defendant under English colonial law (see frontispiece, app. B). Pennsylvania refused, after which Congress reiterated its earlier refusal. On September 9, after spending nine hours debating the fate of the Quakers while the British Army marched toward the city from barely forty miles away, Congress denied the Quakers any hearing and ordered Pennsylvania to send them into exile. The congressional board of war, which would supervise their confinement, chose the location. The exiles were held in loose confinement on the frontier for over seven months.

Quakers had previously refused to bear arms during the French and Indian War (1754–63) two decades earlier. Not content with refusing to bear arms or swear oaths in the mid-1770s, most Quakers adamantly refused to participate in the common defense in more than a dozen documented ways, to the exasperation of military leaders. Quakers would not voluntarily pay any of the cost of the common defense of their city and state. They even refused, and this may have been a tipping point, the government’s request that they donate blankets (for which compensation was offered) to comfort the soldiers who were sleeping in nearby camps. Quakers also continued to sing the praises of their history of prosperity within the British Empire, never evincing any interest in changing the colonies’ status, certainly not in a violent way—all to the increasing anger and resentment of fellow citizens. In the run-up to the Revolutionary War, Quaker leaders self-righteously proclaimed that their entire body of some twenty-five thousand coreligionists in southeastern Pennsylvania were strictly neutral religious pacifists, yet as time passed, their neighbors found confusing the numerous instances where some Quakers acted to the contrary. During the British Army’s sweep through the area, many civilians, including some Quakers and former Quakers, became

active Loyalists, while others fought for the Continental Army or were elected or appointed to offices at the highest levels in the wartime Pennsylvania government. This book focuses on the treatment of people who rejected the government's admonitions to swear or affirm an oath of allegiance to the new republic. Despite claims of neutrality, Philadelphia Quakers leaned toward Loyalism, and between 1778 and 1781, nearly thirty Quakers were among the approximately five hundred people accused of high treason by the new state government. Generally, the legislature or the SEC (also referred to as the Council) of Pennsylvania issued these accusations through the ancient shortcut method of bills of attainder, a legal technique of proclaiming traitors by legislative fiat with names advertised in the newspaper. As a result of this visible Loyalism, many contemporaries cried hypocrisy and came to deeply mistrust all Quakers.

Politics and religion thus became entangled at the birth of the new republic, even in a state known as a haven for religious toleration. It happened even against a supposedly peaceable minority whose loyalties came under intense question, for quite understandable reasons, and never quite recovered. The great difficulty of staying true to founding principles while attempting to ensure the safety and security of civil society is a lesson from the eighteenth century that—amid questions of the global war on terror and cries of religious profiling—remains intensely relevant to the twenty-first century.

This book situates the exile amid the British Army's Philadelphia Campaign, a military exercise lasting from August 26, 1777, to June 18, 1778. Since June 1776, when the British fleet took New York Harbor, Philadelphia's residents had assiduously prepared for a similar incursion into their own territory. The Council of Safety, the SEC, and thousands of civilians collaborated to hide important documents, including the journals of the Continental Congress, and anything that the British could make into ammunition, such as the giant bell at the State House (Independence Hall). Quaker architect Robert Smith designed a clever series of chevaux-de-frise, submerged wooden beams with iron spikes sticking out, which blocked the mouth of the Delaware River. Smith, however, was an outlier. Quaker leaders urged Friends not to cooperate with what they saw as an illegitimate government, including in its preparations to defend the city and state from a powerful invader. Still, despite a defeat at the Battle of Brandywine and a subsequent eight-month occupation of its capital city (September 25, 1777–June 18, 1778), these careful preparations helped the American cause survive the Philadelphia Campaign. Holding Philadelphia also cost the British

forces dearly elsewhere: by being there, General Sir William Howe placed his army beyond the reach of his subordinate General John Burgoyne, who was forced to surrender fifty-eight hundred troops at the Battle of Saratoga in upstate New York. Most importantly, despite his more experienced and better equipped troops, Howe was never able to deal a decisive blow to Washington and the Continental Army. As Benjamin Franklin reportedly observed from France, Howe had not captured Philadelphia; Philadelphia had captured him.<sup>8</sup>

Patriot leaders, of course, could not predict this outcome to the Philadelphia Campaign. This book demonstrates that the Quaker exile was a joint Pennsylvania state and congressional defensive strategy for dealing with the British Army's invasion of the Philadelphia area. Both bodies perceived the exile of Quaker leaders as a vitally necessary strategy against an *existential* threat. The narrative demonstrates what historian Gary B. Nash has called "the glorious messiness" of the American Revolution—something its participants knew well but that earlier historians preferred to sanitize. Even the founding fathers "experienced Revolution . . . as a seismic eruption from the hands of an internally divided people, two decades of problems that sometimes seemed insoluble, a gnawing fear that the course of the Revolution was contradicting its bedrock principles, and firsthand knowledge of shameful behavior that was interlaced with heroic self-sacrifice."<sup>9</sup>

The research for this book benefited from the many Quakers and others in Philadelphia who kept intimate records in diaries and correspondence, much of which survives today. In fact, the vast Quaker archive may be one of the finest bodies of resources available today to explore the experiences of men and women on the home front during the revolution. Archives at Haverford and Swarthmore Colleges, meccas for Quaker research, as well as the extensive resources at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the American Philosophical Society, which now includes the David Library of the American Revolution, opened for me the world of turmoil amid the nation's founding.

Within this story of political and literal warfare is a personal narrative, consisting of the stories of several of the individual exiles and their families. This narrative is focused principally on four families—the Drinkers, Fishers, Pembertons, and Gilpins—representative of twenty families whose primary breadwinner was confined on the frontier, two hundred miles from home. The most central to the story are spouses Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker,

forty-two, and exile Henry Drinker, a merchant, forty-three. A significant portion of the narrative relies on the more than sixty-five unpublished letters exchanged by Henry and Elizabeth Drinker during the exile and her now famous diary, *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, a three-volume publication of enormous value for the wealth of detail it reveals of everyday life before, during, and after a shooting war on their doorsteps.<sup>10</sup>

Elizabeth Drinker also played a crucial role in one phase of the story (see chaps. 12 and 13), the women's mission, that especially deserves to be better known. Toward the end of the exile, when the exiled men were ill and out of medicine, two had died, letters from loved ones were scarce, and there was little hope, Elizabeth Drinker and other women relatives of the Quaker men began to plan their own efforts to get the men released. Though the men of Congress and Pennsylvania state government had agreed to it in correspondence, they were dragging their feet. The Quaker women wrote their own petition, and four of them, at great risk, left their families and homes and traveled with no weapon of defense, no pass, and no guard to see General George Washington at Valley Forge and to Lancaster to see the Pennsylvania authorities (in their own self-exile from the capital city, then occupied by the British Army). At no point did they allow men to speak for them. Though the politicians—all men—resisted and avoided them, the Quaker women held their own, engaging in multiple negotiations with elected officials, and were amply rewarded. In particular, the women's visit with the commander in chief and his wife benefited from previously unknown aspects of George Washington's relationship to the exile. While many Patriots—Washington included—disparaged Quakers generally, he also raised his voice for the release of the exiled men.

The story also highlights the tensions over protections for civil liberties of Americans in wartime. Patriots who had fought for American rights against the oppressive British government (and who thought the privilege of habeas corpus essential for a free society) became for this minority religious sect the tyrannical oppressors, equal—at least three Quakers intimately involved with the exile claimed hyperbolically—to those of the Spanish Inquisition. This was the only time since Pennsylvania's founding as a colony in 1682 that the government suspended the right of habeas corpus, part of English law since the Magna Carta of 1215.<sup>11</sup>

When Pennsylvania suspended habeas corpus in 1777, English law held that it was legally appropriate to suspend these civil rights in times of invasion or rebellion but only for a limited time. In what I call the “darker strain”



of English law, Patriots tested this royal prerogative in the American environment. Would it matter that this test led to the deaths of two Quaker leaders? Only in 1784, when the Pennsylvania Council of Censors found the suspension of habeas corpus to be a violation of the state constitution, did government authorities seem to fully think so.

Lastly, the book highlights two key eighteenth-century social networks. In the early stages of the war, 1774–76, the network of the radical Patriots of Pennsylvania prevailed. As the colonial administrative apparatus faced declining respect, quasi-governmental revolutionary committees pushed Quakers and others to comply with defensive requisitions, bullying and shaming them publicly throughout the war when they did not. In 1777–78, the extensive network of the PYM came to the fore. Though Patriots had first painted that network as a singular threat, its entire mid-Atlantic apparatus of meetings and sectarian reports supported the men in exile and eventually was instrumental in enabling the Quaker leaders to gain release. Hundreds of supporters served as couriers of letters and supplies, as lobbyists protesting to Congress and Pennsylvania, and as sources of news and general comfort.

While the Quaker social network carried a unified message, it harkened backward to the glorious, pioneering political framework of empire-aided Pennsylvania prosperity, whereas the Patriot message looked forward to the promise of self-government and to the developing sense of being American. It is no small miracle that, though not constituting a majority of the American population, the Patriots developed a political message that seized public imagination and won the day. But this effective narrative produced collateral damage.

Only two previously published books are devoted solely to the Quaker exile. Historians of the revolution have tended to see the episode as a Quaker story: quaintly curious but without broader interest or import. Other accounts have downplayed the cruelty of the exile, almost to the point of apologism. In 1976, amid bicentennial celebrations of American patriots, a joint publication by the American Philosophical Society, Historical Society in Pennsylvania, and Library Company of Philadelphia claimed that the exiles “were not ill-treated. . . . They were not confined, were adequately housed and fed, and were allowed to send and receive letters and have visitors. . . . In April 1778, without having been tried on any charge, the ‘exiles’ were allowed to return home to Philadelphia.”<sup>12</sup> Nothing in this summary is factually inaccurate: the exiles were not physically abused, and they received far better treatment than “ordinary” prisoners. Yet this description fails entirely to capture the

emotional tenor and political significance of the exile for either the Patriots who enacted it or the men who endured it. Today, as a much-changed America prepares to observe over the next few years the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding events, the time is right for a franker as well as a fuller, more nuanced look at this complex episode full of such legal, religious, and political significance and redolent of so many aspects of the revolution as a whole.

Quaker historians have also paid scant attention to the exile, conversely because it shines a harsh light on their sect's leaders at a crucial moment in the nation's history, when many others were critical of and distrusted the sect. It is thus unsurprising that the only two books to focus entirely on the exile are a collection of primary documents and a novel. The first to appear was *Exiles in Virginia, with Observations on the Conduct of the Society of Friends During the Revolutionary War, Comprising the Official Papers of the Government Relating to That Period, 1777–1778* [. . .]. This privately printed and distributed volume was published for subscribers in 1848, compiled and edited by Thomas Gilpin Jr., the namesake son of one of the Quaker exiles who died during the exile. *Exiles in Virginia* presents government documents related to the exile alongside excerpts from the diary entries of the Quaker leaders. Thomas Jr. sought to demonstrate that the Quaker leaders had not committed any treacherous acts but rather were religiously pacifist, nonpolitical men on whom a grave injustice had been perpetrated. Gilpin's book glorifies the principled stand of most of the Quakers, attributes no political motives to them, and ignores the broader context and legitimate criticisms Patriots leveled against Quakers. *The Virginia Exiles*, a novel published in 1955 by Elizabeth Gray Vining, a convinced (converted) Quaker, sticks very close to the narrow facts of the exile, ignoring the larger context of the war, while adding a new character and a youthful romance. The exile also appears in books dedicated to the Quaker experience in colonial and/or revolutionary America, and it has been the focus of several journal articles, none ever attempting to plumb its depths.<sup>13</sup>

No previous historian has treated the Quaker exile of 1777–78 holistically in a monograph. This first book-length, nonfiction treatment of the exile since 1848—and the very first monograph—corrects this oversight. None of the existing literature, moreover, answered my questions about the exile. For these reasons, I felt it necessary to bring to the reader a broad range of Quaker-Patriot interactions in the greater Philadelphia area during the two years in question. I found that, simply put, the Continental Army and the Pennsylvania state government had what they considered, justly or not,

to be a second adversary: a small but significant portion of the highly organized, tightly disciplined Quaker populace. Their knowledge of Philadelphia affairs and well-known antipathy toward the new government seemingly threatened to undermine efforts of elected leaders during a critical time. If they were wooed or tortured by the British, would members of this group divulge precious secrets or wittingly or unwittingly aid them in other ways?

In the face of an impending invasion, Quakers and other dissenters seemed to pose a real threat. The exile responded to this threat in several ways: it kept the Quakers away from both the Americans and the British, reducing contacts that could produce plots to impede the defense of the city. As a form of intimidation, it dissuaded others among their cohort from activities that could harm the American cause but without doing any intentional violence or incurring significant public expense. The exile was also a tactic intended to humiliate the Quaker leaders and perhaps intimidate other, particularly younger, Quakers into questioning their leaders. These men were political conservatives who valued established good order, and they were commercial titans and civic stalwarts accustomed to respect and privilege. By depriving them of this stature, the exile was perfectly aligned with the many shaming exercises of the earlier years of committee rule, which were characterized by frightening vigilantism that seemed to yield no deaths but sent a chilling message to pacifist dissenters.

Most importantly, the exile was a forced confinement that flagrantly disregarded traditional due process. Kings through the centuries had deployed this tactic in times of rebellion or invasion. Ironically, in their fight against parliamentary and monarchical oppression, Patriots adopted legal tactics that had previously buttressed autocratic rule.

Laden with questions about the relationships among religion, the citizen's duties to government, and civil liberties during wartime, the exile appears in hindsight as both a cautionary tale and an unfortunate precedent for future generations of Americans. This episode was not the only time when the government held members of a minority group in an internal exile (the internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry during World War II provides an imperfect analogy), arrested them in violation of their free speech rights (woman suffragists starting in 1917), accused them of being threats to national security (the Second Red Scare of the late 1940s and early 1950s), suspended habeas corpus (the Civil War), or simply seemed to take arbitrary and unnecessary action (examples abound). History suggests that the exile will continue to hold relevance, and now with an enhanced understanding

of its many landmarks, join other examples of the complicated messiness and near miraculous success of the American Revolution.

The writing of this book emerged organically from my life. I grew up in rural Edge's Mill, in Caln Township, and West Chester, both in Chester County, and in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in all of which I was surrounded by the remnants of Quaker cultural dominance, their meetinghouses, and their excellent schools. Christian reformers persecuted in England since the sect's founding in 1647, Quakers have deeply influenced Pennsylvania since William Penn's arrival in 1681. For my first six years, in idyllic Edge's Mill, I lived in an eighteenth-century stone house. Quakers lived nearby. I napped on the hard benches at the Downingtown Friends Meeting preschool in 1950. Later, in West Chester, a sign was posted at the entrance to our small town, "West Chester Welcomes Thee." The town boasted two Quaker meetinghouses (one Orthodox and one Hicksite, from an 1820s schism), each within a block of my home. Classmates included both Quakers and those descended from Quaker families. I also attended summer tennis camp held at the nearby Westtown School, a Quaker mainstay.<sup>14</sup> The edge of our town bordered the bucolic landscape where the Battle of Brandywine took place in 1777 in the fields surrounding Birmingham Friends Meetinghouse, in whose cemetery soldiers of both sides were buried. Later, as a lawyer at the Dechert LLP firm in Philadelphia, I had several Quaker clients. In addition, my law partners included among them some men descended from as many as ten generations of Quakers. One of our daughters attended Friends Select School, and the second attended The Shipley School, originally founded by three Quaker sisters. Recently, I discovered that a former legal colleague is directly descended from one of the exiles, and a former high school classmate is descended from two Quaker exiles, Israel Pemberton and his son-in-law Samuel Pleasants.

The real key to my finding the Quaker exile, however, was my maternal fourth great-grandfather, Jacob Brumbaugh (1726–1799). He was a successful German immigrant farmer and member of the pacifist German Baptist Brethren sect in Hagerstown, Maryland. He introduced me (metaphorically) to the Quaker exile by buying land tracts in rural Pennsylvania in the years from 1786 to 1799 from Philadelphia Quaker merchant Henry Drinker and his wife, Elizabeth. On August 23, 1803, Brumbaugh's son showed up at the Drinker home in Philadelphia to pay off the remainder of the mortgage and was invited in for breakfast, thus meriting a mention in both Henry's account books and Elizabeth's diary.<sup>15</sup> These connections led me to learn

more about the Drinkers, central figures in this story, by and about whom much has been written recently.<sup>16</sup>

Despite being an avid reader of history with a lifelong interest in Quakers, the story of the Quaker exile never came to my attention until, when I turned fifty, I first read of it in Catherine Drinker Bowen's memoir, *Family Portrait*. She related that her father, also Henry Drinker (1850–1937), a brilliant lawyer and engineer, president of Lehigh University, and an Episcopalian, was descended from an eighteenth-century namesake Quaker, Henry Drinker (1734–1809). To Bowen's father's great chagrin, this earlier Henry Drinker had been exiled from Philadelphia to Virginia, Bowen wrote, "for refusing to bear arms in the Revolution."<sup>17</sup> This statement took my breath away. I knew immediately that her explanation was seriously incomplete. The contemporaries of eighteenth-century Quakers knew and accepted that sect members refused to bear arms; they were not naïve about Friends' more complex motives. And why to Virginia? This offhand mention piqued intense curiosity, which I stored away. Fifteen years later, now retired from law and fundraising, I went with a friend to visit the Quaker collections at Haverford College's Magee Library, where I first held in my hands the letters that Henry and Elizabeth Drinker had exchanged in 1777–78. I was hooked. As I read further, I realized that my background as a lawyer would facilitate a new—and necessary—resurrection and reappraisal of these seminal events. For the last nine years, I have been determined to tell this unique and important story, so rich with revelations of the country's founding years and the nascent values, on both sides, taking hold in the new republic.

The times covered by this book, roughly 1774 to 1778, were full of turmoil, violence, and partisan clashes, while the Quakers sought calm, quiet spaces in which to contemplate their inward light and recall their prosperous past governing the colony. They had forged William Penn's "holy experiment" as the rare religious sect whose members actively governed a populous, diverse civil society, but now their political power was in free fall, its end in sight.<sup>18</sup>

The way forward for pacifists during a war is never easy. In 1777, the static vision of the Quaker leaders was resisted by articulate men like John Adams and Thomas Paine seeking to throw off the yoke of royalty and colonial masters and create a new way of governing. In this setting, the democratic republic created by the revolution called for a vigilant, active, and well-informed citizenry. At the same time, Quaker leaders called for their coreligionists to cease participation in this process because of a biblical prohibition against

tearing down and setting up governments, but they, too, promoted lasting American values, enshrining healthy skepticism and respectful protest against governmental overreach in the fabric of the new nation. Eighteenth-century efforts of the founding fathers and thousands of others to establish the foundations of liberty and freedom and the necessary norms of democratic and republican behavior seem not unlike the efforts required today to sustain the nation's governmental framework in support of cherished institutions, values, and freedoms.