

JAMES THACKARA.

Engraver,

of

PHILADELPHIA AND LANCASTER, PA.

"The recollections of past occurrences, whether painful, hazardous or agreeable, have sufficient interest in them to be kept alive for a future day; and more than repay the labour of reciting them, by the interest we feel, and the importance we attach to scenes of former days; scenes that, when mellowed by time, shine more luxuriantly than any the present day affords."¹

Twenty-nine-year-old William Wood Thackara of Philadelphia may have had his father, James, in mind when he penned these words in 1820. In any event, the writings of the son have helped bring to light the works of the father, who was an early Philadelphia engraver, pioneer in the arts, prison builder and political leader. Unknown to even his direct descendants until less than two years ago, James Thackara's works on copper-plate, and in the political arenas, and for the massive stone monument of Eastern Penitentiary, Philadelphia, are restoring to him some measure of the "every object recollect, to add a grace or give effect" about which his son wrote 138 years ago.²

A number of historians have told fragments of James Thackara's story in the past, but none came to realize that here was a man of ordinary circumstances, and a second generation American, who crowded an extraordinary file of experiences into his span of life, 1767-1848. Continued research undoubtedly will add much to his dossier of enterprises.

Thackara, fiercely patriotic, typified the middle and upper-middle class surge for recognition and power by the offspring of immigrants to Philadelphia from the British Isles during the mid-18th century. He obtained both during his lifetime, but died an aged and rather lonely man, in relative obscurity.

While engraving was his underlying vocation, and first love, most of his adult life, he spilled over enthusiastically into the fine arts, as one of the founders of the important "Columbianum," the first art academy attempt in the United States, and later as a long-time curator of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, which followed, and into politics as Commissioner of Southwark District in Philadelphia, Clerk of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, member of the House, and as a Commissioner for the building of the "Prison at Philadelphia," which was the first to use separate confinement of prisoners.

He also comes down as a leader of the "Old School Party" in Philadelphia, and as one of the "original Jackson men" of that city who turned with great vehemence on "Old Hickory" some years later when the General scuttled the program of internal improvements, and rechartering of the Second Bank of the United States, protective tariffs, and other projects dear to the hearts of Pennsylvanians.

And, as the uncle (by marriage) of William Strickland, whose wife, Rachel Trenchard, Thackara and his wife reared to a striking Philadelphia beauty, some of Thackara's strong stands in favor of the famous architect are more easily explained.

Still, his greatest claim to fame will rest, probably, with his engravings, done for the most part in partnership with either John Vallance, (1770-1823) as **Thackara & Vallance**, or with his son, William Wood Thackara, (1791-1839) as **J. Thackara & Son**. In this field, the New York Public Library ranked him (and Vallance) as among the "One Hundred Notable American Engravers—1683-1850" in a catalogue and exhibit of the same name, in 1928.

James Thackara also had the distinction of producing one of the nation's earliest art instruction books, in 1814, and of engraving many plates for Dobson's monumental first American encyclopedia.

He engraved the membership certificates of at least two famous organizations—the American Philosophical Society, and the Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia, which are still in use. The original plate of his famous first City Map of the District of Columbia, in 1792, with Vallance, still exists, and can still produce fine prints.

In between all these things, he also took a turn as a bookseller around the turn of the 19th century. This was the only thing in which he is recorded as a failure.

He spent much time in Lancaster when that City was capital of Pennsylvania, and three of his descendants resided their entire lives there.

A definite picture of Thackara's ancestry, and early life, is given in the valuable "Diary of William Wood Thackara, 1791-1816," in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.³

James Thackara was the first of five children of William and Catharine Farthing Thackara. According to the "Diary," William, a native of Gloucestershire, England, and later a seaman in His Majesty's Navy, emigrated to Philadelphia with his wife in November, 1767, although he apparently made a preliminary visit to America in 1764.

They settled "in a house in Union Street (now Delancey), South side, between Second and Third Streets, at the Corner of Drinker's Court," which still stands, and is occupied, on a street which has become a scene of considerable activity in the "Society Hill" restoration program.⁴

There, in March, 1769, the diary states, James was born, in variance with all other records of Thackara, including his tombstone inscription in St. Peter's Episcopal Church graveyard, 3rd and Pine sts., Philadelphia, which records March 12, 1767, date of birth.

If the November date of the arrival of his parents in America is correct, it is apparent that Thackara was born either in England, or Cork, Ireland, which was the home of his mother, and point of departure of the ship "Sally," on which they journeyed. The "1769" date of the diary is obviously an error.

Four other children — three brothers and a sister — followed James into the world, and all achieved some distinction in their native City. These were William Thackara, Jr. (1770-1823), master plasterer of some of the great buildings of B. Henry Latrobe and William Strickland, including Latrobe's U. S. Capitol, and Strickland's Second Bank of the United States (Old Custom House), among many others; Captain Samuel Thackara (1773-1844) sea captain, ship chandler (Pierce & Thackara), and marine insurance broker; John Thackara, a first mate who died at sea, circa 1796; and finally, Ann, who married Captain Daniel McPherson, master of a number of Philadelphia ships, including the "Delaware," "Jean," "Betsy Rutledge," "George," "China," and "Voltaire," the last of which, Stephen Girard's vessel, he died aboard in 1822.

Catharine Farthing Thackara, after whose father James was named, died July 13, 1780, and was interred in Old St. Paul's churchyard, Walnut st. above 3rd, in Philadelphia, now the Protestant Episcopal City Mission. She was 35 years old. James, the oldest, was only 13 at the time.

William Thackara, Sr. married again within a few years. His second wife was described as a "woman who inherited all the virtues and meekness of her sex, and her husband's children, who had early lost their own mother, looked upon her, not as a petulant stepdame, but as one, indeed, with all the fondness and affection of the real parent. John, the youngest, never knew any other mother, and was tenderly attached to her."⁵ She died ca. 1796.

Old William, who was to enjoy still another wife before he died, had a number of professions, including mariner, and salt and grain measurer. The latter occupied most of his life in Philadelphia. For a time, he was grain measurer of the Port of Philadelphia.⁶

Blind in his last days, William Thackara, Sr., died suddenly in April, 1817, in the 80th year of his age, mourned by his third wife, the former Mrs. Eleanor Spurrier, of near Chester, Pa., his four surviving children, and a growing throng of grandchildren. One obituary notice described him as for "upwards of half a century, a

constant inhabitant of the City of Philadelphia — who, through the course of an extended life, sustained the character of a truly honest man.”⁷ He was interred beside his first wife in Old St. Paul’s, and a few years later a large monolith was erected over them by their children. It still stands in the middle of the old burial ground, the inscriptions now barely legible.

While there is no manuscript or other written evidence of any kind that William Thackara, Sr. ever turned the graver’s tool, the earliest known Thackara engraving in America, a frontispiece to “The Instructor, or Young Man’s Best Companion, etc.” by James Fisher, published at Burlington, N. J., by Isaac Collins in 1775, could have been done by the elder Thackara. Stauffer expressed the belief it may have been the work of the “sailor father of James Thackara,” adding that no other examples of this engraver had been found.⁸

The line engraving, with a little stipple, shows the interior of a bookshop, and is signed only “I. Thackara, sculp.”

Line engraving was the same medium James was to work in, later, and it would seem that if William Thackara, Sr. did dabble in the engraving arts, his son came by his skill naturally.⁹ In any event, the elder William bound his eldest son over to apprenticeship to James Trenchard, engraver, “for 3 yrs. and 6 mos., father to find him in apparel, in case of death his master to find him,” on July 17, 1786.¹⁰

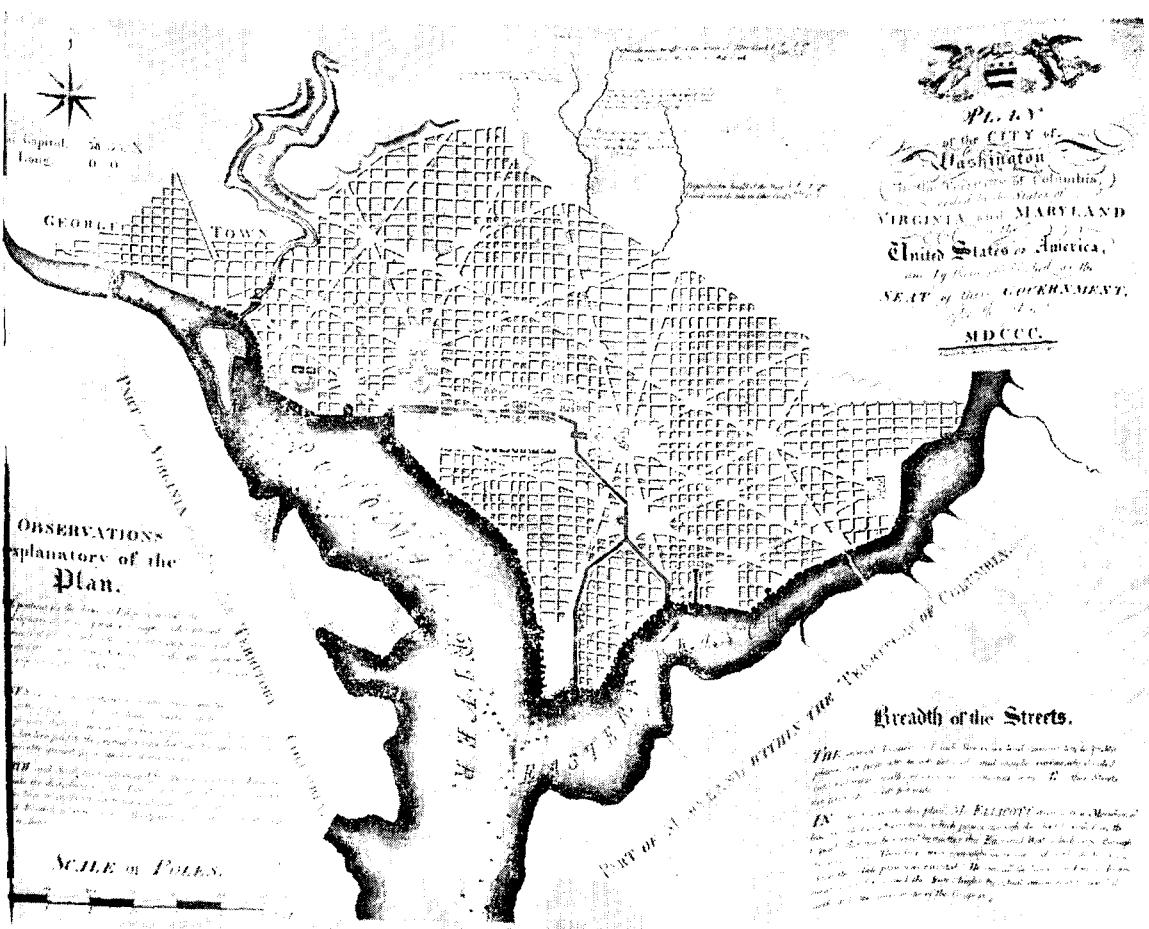
“My father learnt the engraving business with Mr. Scott, and James Trenchard, a brother of my mother,” wrote W. W. Thackara. The former was undoubtedly the Robert Scott, English engraver and watchmaker, who settled in Philadelphia in 1781, and who later was engraver for the U. S. Mint in that city.¹¹ In this period, Trenchard’s engraving and seal cutting shop was located on the North side of Spruce street between Second and Third streets, which proximity to the home of William Thackara, Sr., at No. 70, on the South side of the same block, may explain James’ attachment to engraving, and to Mr. Trenchard.

Trenchard, famed as the editor-publisher of the elegant “Columbian Magazine,” was to have a profound effect on the life of James Thackara, and not only as a teacher of engraving, in which he was a recognized master. The indentureship of Thackara to Trenchard was cancelled “by mutual consent of both parties” on April 14, 1789. Thirteen months later, James Thackara married the attractive, dark-haired sister of Trenchard, Hannah, 22 years old.¹² The new bridegroom was barely 23.

The marriage was performed on May 26, 1790 by the Rev. Dr. Joseph Pilmore, then assistant minister at Old St. Paul’s, where James worshipped.¹³

Hannah, daughter of George and Jane Wood Trenchard, of Salem, N. J., came from a distinguished “West” Jersey family dating back to the early 18th century in that former colony. Her father was an attorney-general, surrogate-general and judge in Salem and/or Cumberland counties.¹⁴

During his apprenticeship, young Thackara had gained a close appreciation of the “Columbian,” described as the finest publication of its kind of the time, with which James Trenchard became associated in 1786, with Matthew Carey, T. Siddons, C. Talbot and W. Spotswood. Trenchard became the sole proprietor in January, 1789.¹⁵



THE FIRST CITY MAP OF WASHINGTON, D. C.

Engraved by Thackara & Vallance, in 1792, at the order of President Washington, this map was the first official map of the Capitol of the United States. The plate still exists and can produce fine prints.

Courtesy U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey

THE FIRST THACKARA ENGRAVING

This engraving, signed "I. Thackara," and showing the interior of a book-store, is believed to have been engraved about 1775 by the father of James Thackara, William Thackara, Sr.

Courtesy Boston Museum of Fine Arts



In his first year with Trenchard, Thackara published what is regarded as his earliest known work, the frontispiece to Robert Dodsley's 1786 edition of the "Selected Fables of Esop."¹⁶ And, two years later, the embryo engraver progressed enough to have one of his better works reproduced in the "Columbian." This was a "View of the New Market from the Corner of Shippen and Second Streets."¹⁷

In the same year, an 18-year-old stripling by the name of John Vallance, a native of Scotland, published in the magazine, "An East View of the Meeting House in Hollis Street, Boston." For men so new to the trade, and so young, it must have been quite a distinction.

Thus, it was no accident that the firm of **Thackara & Vallance**, engravers, was formed, sometime in 1790. The new partners were well acquainted, and with the probable support of Trenchard, they joined forces at No. 72 Spruce st., in a house belonging to William Thackara, Sr., and "having a shop built by my father in front for copperplate printing and engraving," by the account of W. W. Thackara.¹⁸

Since 1790 is the first year in which engravings signed **Thackara & Vallance** appeared, it can be assumed that this was the year of the founding of the firm. The first known works of the men as partners appeared in Trenchard's "Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine," to which its title had been lengthened by that year. These were "Views of Falls of the Niagara," in Volume 4, 1790, and the frontispiece to Volume 5, in the same year.

This date of founding is four years earlier than any previous published account concerning **Thackara & Vallance**.¹⁹

John Vallance, also apprenticed to James Trenchard, followed the same line as Thackara in taking a wife — he, too, married a Trenchard, in his case, Elizabeth, the daughter of Curtis Trenchard.²⁰ She was a niece of James Trenchard and Hannah Trenchard Thackara. The couple settled nearby, in 1791, in a house on the same street.

In the same year, on Feb. 9, the first born of James and Hannah came into the world, and was promptly christened William. The youth added the middle name of Wood (apparently after the maiden name of his grandmother Trenchard) on his 21st birthday, probably to differentiate himself from all the other William Thackara's living at the time.²¹

Strangely, in a work filled with details much less important, the "Diary" never discussed the partnership of James Thackara and John Vallance. In fact, the entire volume mentions Vallance by name only once, and then some 10 years after the partnership ended, and in a cursory fashion.

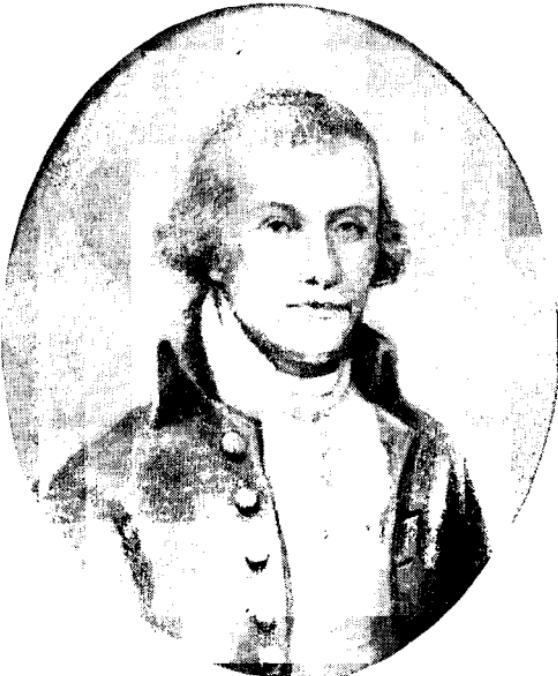
This was the period of what must have been the biggest single customer of the engraving careers of the two men, whether singly or as partners. It was, of course, engraving some of the hundreds of plates in Thomas Dobson's Encyclopedia, which was described as "the greatest literary enterprise that had yet been undertaken in Philadelphia." This ran to 21 volumes, with supplement, and was not completed until 13 years after the project began, in 1803.²²

At first, we are told by Scharf and Westcott, "only two or three engravers could be procured" for the massive undertaking. Whether these included James and John is not known, but they did turn out scores of subjects ranging from heraldry

JAMES TRENCHARD

This little portrait is the only known likeness of James Trenchard, editor-publisher of the famous "Columbian Magazine" and engraving preceptor of James Thackara and John Vallance. Thackara married Trenchard's sister, Hannah, in 1790.

Courtesy of Robert C. Hall of Lancaster, great-great-great grandson of James Trenchard.



to cannons, ships, flowers, musical instruments, and hippopotamusi, "boiling fountains" (geysers), and birds, to name only a few. The pair was probably the best represented among the ultimate throng of engravers whom Dobson hired for his work.

In any event, as Dunlap put it, "Dobson's Encyclopedia bears their **Thackara & Vallance** marks on many a plate."²³

Alexander Lawson, Scots-born like Vallance, served his apprenticeship with **Thackara & Vallance** during this period.

He described their work in a letter to a friend:

"Thackara and Vallance were partners when I came to Philadelphia (in 1794). I engraved with them two years. They thought themselves artists, and that they knew every part of the art; and yet their art consisted in copying, in a dry, stiff manner with the engraver, the plates for the Encyclopedia, all their attempts at etching having miscarried. The rest of their time, and that of all others of this period, was employed to engrave card plates, with a festoon of wretched flowers and bad writing. Then there was engraving on type metal — silver plate — with an attempt at seal cutting. Such was the state of engraving in 1794."²⁴

Lawson, who was to win fame for his plates for Alexander Wilson's "American Ornithology," had some praise for Vallance while Dunlap had somewhat less for Thackara. "He (Vallance) was certainly the best engraver at this time in the United States," Lawson commented.²⁵ Dunlap described Thackara as "inferior to him (Vallance) as an engraver." But he did add the backhanded compliment of "Mr. Thackara is a respectable citizen."²⁶

Copyists or not, the two partners had achieved an engraving triumph in 1792 which would firmly imprint their memory in the history of the Capitol City of the United States. To them went the honor of engraving what has come to be known as "The Official Map" or "Thackara and Vallance Map of Washington," widely reproduced, even to this day.

Actually, it was a combination of circumstances involving Maj. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, who planned the City of Washington, and his assistant, Andrew Ellicott, which brought to the young engravers — by order of President Washington — the job of engraving the first map.

Rear. Adm. Leo Otis Colbert, chief of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, now retired, who did considerable research on the first maps of the City of Washington, wrote that a disagreement developed between L'Enfant and the Commissioners of the City, resulting in the Frenchman withholding his manuscript of the plan.

"The plan was to be engraved in Philadelphia, but L'Enfant, instead of sending his large completed manuscript, released for engraving a sketchy type plan which the engravers found unsuitable. President Washington was informed of the situation and he at once instructed Ellicott to add to the incomplete manuscript the necessary data for preparing the engraving.

No appreciable changes were introduced by Ellicott in correcting and completing the engraver's copy . . . it is quite clearly indicated . . . that Ellicott did not devise any new scheme, but filled in some of the lacking details in L'Enfant's drawing. Thus the Ellicott map became official for the City, although it only carried out L'Enfant's original design."²⁷

Colbert related that Ellicott actually prepared two plans for engravers — one was sent to Boston, where it was engraved by Samuel Hill, and the other was assigned to **Thackara & Vallance**, at 72 Spruce st. Andrew Ellicott resided in Lancaster from October, 1801 to November, 1813, during which time he served as secretary of the Land Office of Pennsylvania.²⁸

The second circumstance which contributed to the ultimate selection of the **Thackara & Vallance** plate came when the proofs of the Boston work arrived in Philadelphia in 1792. It was found that this engraving did not show depths of the Potomac River, and its Eastern Branch.

As a result, data was quickly assembled at the request of Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, and the soundings dispatched quickly to **Thackara & Vallance**, whose shop was almost within shouting distance of the national capitol, then in Philadelphia.

"This plate came into general use in the new City (Washington) and was regarded as the authoritative scheme of the City.

"The original copperplate, as engraved by **Thackara & Vallance** of Philadelphia, in 1792, is now in the possession of the Coast and Geodetic Survey. Good impressions can still be pulled from the plate."²⁹

Another historian wrote in 1899, "The . . . Philadelphia engraving was first sold at 4 s. 8½ d. and (the) . . . Boston engraving at 2 s. 6 d., showing which of the two was better."³⁰

The **Thackara & Vallance** work, entitled "Plan of the City of Washington, in

the Territory of Columbia," was 28 by 31 inches. It was not surprising that a smaller reproduction of this map appeared in the Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine for March, 1792.

In the following year, 1793, James Thackara was felled from mid-summer to September by "biliary cholic," although it was probably an attack of yellow fever which swept the City that year.

The family fled to Greenwich, N. J. upon his recovery, but not soon enough to save the couple's 18-month-old daughter, Mary, who died there on Sept. 19.³¹

With the horror of yellow fever behind him, Thackara plunged into the year, 1794, which was to mark accomplishment of some of his greatest achievements in the art and engraving field, and his entrance into politics. Also, on Jan. 4, his second son, and last child, was born. The boy was named George Trenchard Thackara, after his well-known grandfather.³²

One of Thackara & Vallance's finest engravings — a profile of Benjamin Franklin — was done four years after the death of the great Philadelphian. It was advertised in Philadelphia's Gazette of the United States, June 2, 1794, as a "striking likeness" of Franklin. The newspaper announced:

"Just published by Benjamin Johnson, and sold at his bookstore, No. 147 Market Street, The Life of Dr. Franklin, with a striking likeness, executed in a masterly manner by Thackara & Vallance. Price five shillings."



BENJAMIN
FRANKLIN
By
Thackara & Vallance

This profile, engraved at 72 Spruce Street, Philadelphia in 1794, is generally regarded as one of the finest works of Thackara & Vallance, engravers.

Courtesy New York
Public Library

It was one of the few prints done by the two men, but as Charles Coleman Sellers put it, the work "shines among the many rather indifferent portraits produced by American engravers.³³

In the same year, Thackara & Vallance produced profiles of John Howard, LL.D., and Frederick Baron Trenck, along with a large map of Maryland measuring 60 x 56 inches in size. The map, for a Dennis Griffith, of Philadelphia, came in two parts. It was about this time, also, that the pair did a handsome certificate of commission for officers of the United States Army.

There were many other engravings, for the firm was going full tilt . . . illustrations for books and pamphlets, and probably continuing all the time, work for Dobson's Encyclopedia, among other things.

In the political field, Thackara was elected on April 10, 1794, a commissioner of the District of Southwark for three years, which is the earliest known affiliation of this kind for him.³⁴ It was about this time that he also recorded an address at 23 George St., Southwark, which fulfilled any residence requirement of the new office.

It was late in this same year (1794) that Thackara and Vallance joined a number of other engravers, artists, and friends of the arts in forming the "Columbianum" or "The Association of Artists in America for the Protection and the Encouragement of the Fine Arts."

The date — Dec. 29, 1794 — was later to prove to be an historic moment in the art history of America when the first effort at opening an art academy was launched in this country.

"We the undersigned," the articles of agreement read, "from an earnest desire to promote, to the utmost of our abilities, the Fine Arts — now in their infancy in America — mutually promise and agree, to use our utmost efforts to establish a School or Academy of Architecture, Painting, Sculpture, etc. within the United States.³⁵

Thus, the field encompassed a pioneer effort in not only art as we know it today, but architecture, a science that was also in its infancy in that era.

Westcott lists both Thackara and Vallance as "professional members" of the group which signed this agreement,³⁶ but in all truth to James Thackara his name does not appear among the signatories transcribed by the first secretary on the original founding paper.³⁷ Among those who were listed as signers were the venerable Charles Willson Peale, his brother, James, William Rush and William Birch, James Trenchard, and Vallance, to name a few. And Westcott even lists a William Thackara as an "amateur and friend of art" of the original group.³⁸ This could have been only aging William Thackara, Sr., or William, Jr., gaining fame as a master plasterer, and a true artist in his own right with plaster.

But, if not a member of the original group, as Westcott said, James Thackara did take a leading role within days of the founding meeting, signing his name boldly "Jas. Thackara" with C. W. Peale and Birch to amendments to the original articles of association. On Feb. 14, 1795, he served as chairman of a "committee of the whole" of the new association, meeting at Peale's Museum, at which the "Constitution was proceeded and debated by paragraph until the same was gone through."



1775

PRESIDENT of the UNITED STATES of AMERICA.

To all who shall see these Presents Greeting:

Known Sir, that you are great, wise and frugacious in the preservation of your Country and
and大力的 George Washington I have inclosed and by and with the Order and
powers of the Senate do appoint you Lieutenant-General and Commander-in-Chief of all the Armies raised or to be raised for
the Service of the United States.
He is therefore lawfully and adequately enabled to make the Army of Lieutenant-General Commander-in-Chief by doing and
performing all such of things about his Delight. But I do hereby charge and require all Officers and
Soldiers under his Command to obey him in his Orders, Instructions and Commands in Chief, and he is to
have and take such Orders and Instructions from time to time as he shall receive from me or the
President of the United States of America.

Given under my Hand at Philadelphia this Fourteent^h day of July
in the Year of our Lord One Thousand seven hundred and Sixty eight
and in the Ninety third Year of the Independence of the United States.



COMMISSION, UNITED STATES ARMY

This fine engraving, done between 1790 and 1797, is one of the few works of Thackara & Vallance in which they state they also made the drawing for the engraving. It is also one of the earliest examples of the eagle so symbolic of the government of the United States. This is the commission for George Washington, as a Lieutenant-General, commander-in-chief of the Army.

At the same meeting, he, and Birch and Maj. Richard Claiborne, of Virginia, the Secretary, were appointed a committee of three to prepare a "corrected and fair copy of the Constitution."³⁹

Thus, James Thackara took a major part in this pioneering, but unsuccessful, bid at forming the first art academy in the fledgling United States. Sellers tells that "in the light of subsequent events there can be no possible doubt that everyone concerned took this purpose most earnestly to heart. All were fully aware of the significance of what they proposed to do, in its relation to the cultural history of America, and to the career of every member."⁴⁰

The association failed within a few months — eight members withdrew in a quarrel over making President Washington honorary head of the group (Thackara & Vallance not among them), and after an apparently successful exhibition of six weeks in the Senate Chamber of the State House — the first of its kind in America — the "Columbianum" came to an end.⁴¹

Although they failed in this undertaking, the group had set the spark (that C. W. Peale was to ignite 10 years later) which resulted in the formation of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Of the original group, Thackara and Vallance were among the few who were later to take an active part in the affairs of the newly formed Pennsylvania Academy. Certainly, they must be remembered as among those who occupied prime roles in this first society for the promotion of fine arts in America. Their later careers did not suffer because of the setback.

The partnership of **Thackara & Vallance** continued despite the rebuff in their artistic designs. Well established themselves, and well-known throughout the City and the nation, they were teaching others their craft. Lawson was among the first. Another was William Kneass, later to become engraver and die sinker at the U. S. Mint.

Kneass had come to James Thackara as an apprentice on July 24, 1796, "without shoes or stockings on his feet and ragged as a colt."⁴²

Among later pupils of Thackara — the time of their apprenticeship is not known — were William G. Mason, and probably Edward G. Troye, both of whom remained in Philadelphia after their study was concluded.⁴³

The exact date of the ending of the partnership is not known, but the last recorded engravings of the pair is 1796, although copies of their work were reproduced and post-dated as late as 1831. **Thackara & Vallance** advertised with Dobelbower concerning the "Encyclopedia" on Oct. 2, 1796. A "Map of the World" for Carey's edition of Guthrie's Geography also was engraved by them in 1796.

Apparently, the partnership was ended by late 1796, or sometime during 1797, after nearly seven years of productive, and outstanding work.

In the same year — 1797 — James Thackara, alone, made 95 engraved certificates for the American Philosophical Society, in Philadelphia. These were evidently the certificates of election of membership to the Society, identical with those still used today. He received 15 shillings for the work, which was not signed.⁴⁴

In 1804, Thackara printed 100 certificates for the same society, receiving \$3.50. These were probably re-runs of the 1797 certificate.⁴⁵

It was in the following year that Thackara made the first engraved certificate of membership for the Carpenter's Company of Philadelphia, which is still in use.

A dilatory trait in Thackara appears to have irritated the officers of the Carpenter's Company since the newly engraved certificate (as opposed to type-set printed) had been proposed as early as Dec. 3, 1794, and at least three anonymous designs for the device had been considered by Oct. 19, 1795. The text was approved by the Company on May 31, 1797 and the "Committee on the Device" continued their "considerable endeavours with the engraver" until April 16, 1798. At that juncture, impatient of further postponement, the Company "Resolved that if the Engraver does not execute the plate in a satisfactory manner, before our next quarterly meeting, the Company will not take the same & the Secretary is desired to hand him a copy of this Minute."

So stern a measure seems to have stirred Thackara to action, for his work was accepted by the Company on July 16, 1798, and two days later his bill of \$168 was ordered paid "for Engraving &c, the Company's Device."

At least part of the long delay in producing the plate for the Carpenter's Company may have been occasioned by Thackara's preoccupation with the six folding plates for the War Office's translation of A. P. J. Belair's "Elements de Fortification" (Paris, 1792) printed in Philadelphia by John Ward Feno in 1799; or — even more likely — with the 24 plates for his edition of William Pain's "The Carpenter's Pocket Directory" published by J. Thackara and J. H. Dobelbower, Philadelphia, 1797.⁴⁷

Also, the yellow fever epidemic of 1797 undoubtedly contributed to the delay. Chastened by their sad experience of four years earlier, Thackara and his family left the City, probably again going to relatives of Mrs. Thackara in Southern New Jersey.⁴⁷

Sugar refiner Peter Miercken, who was to serve later with Thackara on the Eastern Penitentiary commission, announced to him in a letter on Aug. 22, 1797 that he was appointed a member of a committee "to report such cases of malignant and contagious fevers to the inspectors of health for this District (Southwark) as may occur in their respective wards."

Nine days later, Thackara regretfully resigned the appointment, "In consequence of my removal into the country." He added, hopefully, in closing, "that the health and usefulness of yourself and each gentleman of the board may be continued through the present calamity and for many years to come."⁴⁸

Following his return to Philadelphia, an event occurred which was to have a considerable effect on his own family, and in shaping the later life of one of the nation's greatest early architects.

In 1798, Rachel McCulloch Trenchard, then only nine years old, daughter of the late Thomas Trenchard, and his wife, Rachel, came to live with the Thackara family, at 72 Spruce St. She was the niece of Mrs. Thackara.⁴⁹

Rachel's father, an engraver and surveyor of Salem, N. J., died on Aug. 13, 1797, explaining in part, why the child was sent to the Philadelphia home of her Aunt Hannah to live.⁵⁰ The arrangement may have been made while the Thackaras were away from Philadelphia during the epidemic of 1797.



RACHEL TRENCHARD STRICKLAND
(1789-1866)

Wife of the distinguished architect, William Strickland, she came to live with James and Hannah Trenchard Thackara in 1798 following the death of her father, Thomas Trenchard, and resided in their home until her marriage to Strickland in 1812. This portrait, which was in the Strickland family until World War I, was ascribed earlier to Gilbert Stuart and Jacob Eicholtz, and is now believed to be the work of Thomas Sully, who was associated with her husband and James Thackara in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Courtesy of the owner, Mrs. R. D. Crompton, Glenside, Pa., who acquired it in 1957 from a source in Lancaster, Pa.

James Thackara was doubtless well acquainted with John Strickland and his family who had lived down Spruce Street only a few doors away as recently as 1791.⁵¹ Strickland was a carpenter by trade.

Rachel was to marry John's son, William, a budding architect, engraver and artist, 14 years later. Time and further investigation may reveal that young Strickland got some instruction in engraving with Thackara, reacting to Rachel much the same as James Thackara had to his preceptor's sister years before.

In any event, it is evident that Rachel Trenchard spent the formative years of her life in the home of James Thackara, and was wooed by the handsome Strickland under the watchful eyes of her aunt and uncle.

After splitting with Vallance, Thackara remained on at 72 Spruce with his shop, maintaining a residence on George Street. But business, except for Belair's book, and the carpenter's directory with Dobelbower, seemingly was sparse.

On Dec. 6, 1799, Thackara "purchased a stock of books and commenced bookselling at the Southeast corner of Dock and Second Streets, in a curious old fashioned two-story building — removing from George Street, Southwark, there."⁵²

This was probably the only time in his life that Thackara outwardly professed a trade other than engraving. Still, while his bookplate for this period proclaimed him as "J. Thackara, Bookseller and Stationer," he couldn't leave entirely work with copper-plate. At the bottom of the bookplate, in small letters, he added, "copper-plate printing neatly executed."⁵³ Also, there are several engravings credited to him during this period.

The stock of books, stationery and "fancy articles" for his new venture were purchased "from Matthew Randall, delivered for George W. Loxley and Morgan I. Rhees, amounting to \$3,432.90, discount of 25 per cent, 858.22, leaving 2,574.65."⁵⁴ It was a tidy sum of cash for an engraver of that day, indicating that his venture with Vallance had been successful, at least from a financial standpoint.

The bookselling business, however, lasted less than four years, during which time the family moved in 1801 from Second and Dock Streets to No. 43 S. 2nd st., above Chestnut, and then, a year later, to No. 55 2nd St., on the other side of the street.⁵⁵

In the fall of 1803, Thackara gave up his stock to his creditors and returned to the old home at 72 Spruce, his funds apparently seriously depleted since his wife, Hannah, opened a crockery business in the reopened engraving shop to "assist in supporting the expenses of the family."⁵⁶

Midway through his brief bookselling career, though, Thackara had adopted another source of income, in Lancaster, Pa., where the state capital had been moved in 1799, and was to remain for 13 years.

In December, 1801, he was appointed assistant clerk of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives by Matthew Huston, the Clerk. A year later he rashly petitioned the House for election as full Clerk, against Huston. Huston was re-elected, and naturally appointed another man for his assistant.⁵⁷

During his brief assistant clerkship, on March 17, 1802, Charles Willson Peale wrote to his old associate of "Columbianum" days, at Lancaster, to thank him for "transcribing a resolve in my favour" giving Peale free use of the State House for his Museum and offering the "freedom of the Museum" to the members of the Legislature.

At the same time, the great artist told Thackara that his son, Rembrandt, was going to London with a brother and that Rembrandt was confident that the Museum would become "the most useful in the world."

"Will the Governor send me the resolve or must I wait to see the Journal?" asked Peale. "I don't know what is customary." He signed the letter, "with respect, your friend, C. W. Peale."⁵⁸

One of the few known engravings of Thackara in these years is a "Map of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and Maryland, with the parts adjacent," done in 1805, in Philadelphia, and signed only "Thackara, sc." It was for an edition of Robert Proud's "History of Pennsylvania."

It is probable, to , that Thackara made the bookplate of John Lenthall, of Philadelphia, (who was clerk of the works of the United States Capitol in Washington, under B. H. Latrobe) sometime between 1800 and 1808, when Lenthall was killed by the fall of the ceiling of Supreme Court Chamber of the Capitol.

This signed engraving is the only known example of his bookplate work, other than his own as a bookseller. It is described by Charles Dexter Allen as "a large and very interesting example of the Ribbon and Wreath style (of bookplate). It is an excellent piece of engraving, full of style and graceful in design."⁵⁹

From 1803 to 1806, Thackara persisted, unsuccessfully, for appointment as Clerk of the House. Each time Matthew Huston, his old boss, won the office.

It was not until 1807 that Thackara, then just 40 years old, finally gained election to the Clerkship, which was a powerful office in a period of growing political intrigue. Thomas McKean, of Philadelphia, was the Governor of the Commonwealth. Thackara continued in the office in 1808, and 1809, under Gov. Simon Snyder, but was depressed late in 1810.⁶⁰

At his first term, the Lancaster "Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser" reported, Dec. 8, 1807, that James Thackara was elected Clerk of the House by the closest possible margin, 43 to 42, over Joseph Webb, and that John Passmore was reappointed assistant clerk.

Back in Philadelphia, which Thackara saw rarely during sessions of the Legislature, Philadelphia directories continued (until 1813) to list him as "Engraver, 72 Spruce st." Aristocratic Gov. McKean resided less than three blocks away on Third Street between Union (Delancey) and Pine Streets. Although in different spheres of life, the two men must have seen much of each other, both in Lancaster and in Philadelphia. At least, they belonged to the same political party.

William Wood Thackara joined his father in Lancaster on Jan. 8, 1810, the younger man related, when "Mr. John Woodward, father of Judge Woodward, transcribing clerk, (took) sick. I took his place and commenced transcribing minutes of the Journal of the House for the printer."

The youth, then 19, returned again in February as a transcriber at the request of Woodward, and told on March 20, 1810 how "the Legislature adjourned after fruitless attempts to prolong the session at $\frac{1}{2}$ eleven at night . . . received for my services, \$350."⁶¹

On Dec. 9, 1810, James Thackara returned unhappily from Lancaster, his fourth term having been voted down.

Although Thackara never returned to Lancaster again in a political office (the state capital was moved to Harrisburg two years later) his love of the City was reflected later in two of his grandsons settling there, with his son's widow, following the death of James Thackara, in 1848.

Eleven months later, on Nov. 1, 1811, Thackara went to Washington, probably seeking another political appointment, with the Federal Government. He was described at the time as returning six days later — "Disappointed — 140 applicants for."⁶²

This was a period, between 1805 and 1812, when Thackara apparently produced few engravings; only one is definitely known — plates in "Looking Glass for Mind" by Arnaud Bergum, Philadelphia, 1810, and this may have been a reprint from a 1798 engraving for the same man.

William Wood Thackara had been employed in the Spruce Street Wharf counting house of Jesse Waln, for whom his uncle, Capt. Samuel Thackara, was a ship's master. Later, he worked in several other counting houses of merchants.

Presumably, at this time of possible financial stress in the household, his mother was also continuing to add to the income in some way. By this time, the little Spruce Street dwelling was getting crowded—there was Hannah and James, William Wood, George, Rachel, and Mary, Rachel's sister, who was also living with the family.

These were a lot of mouths to feed in a time when Napoleon Bonaparte was striking fear all over Europe, and the world, and the Port of Philadelphia was feeling the effects of slackened trade.

Still, even in those troubled times, the Thackara family enjoyed life, in the old Anglican tradition, particularly at Christmas and the New Year.

On Christmas Day, 1811, two of the heads of the family were home from the sea at the same time. Captain Daniel McPherson and his wife, Ann Thackara McPherson, and their three surviving children, Edward, Catharine, and Mary Ann; and Captain Samuel Thackara and his wife, Margareta Sutter Thackara, joined a family party at the home of William Thackara, Jr. at 218 Pine Street. James Thackara and his wife and son, William Wood, were there, too, making it a complete foursome of the children of William Thackara, Sr.

Capt. McPherson, whose home was at 100 S. 5th st., at Powell, (Delancey) had just returned home in the "Delaware," with a broken rudder. Capt. Thackara's most recent trip had been in the ship, "Augustus."

On New Year's Day, 1812, practically the same group went to Captain Thackara's for a party at his home on Front Street below Federal, near the new Navy Yard. Old William, Sr. patriarch of the family, and his wife, joined the group, then on Jan. 6, 1812, in turn, entertained the whole family at a Twelfth Night party at their home at 35 South Sixth Street, near Chestnut, in the shadow of the State House.

On February 14, James and Hannah Thackara and son, W. W., gave a party for Rachel and Mary Trenchard, with about a dozen guests present. Neither William Strickland nor Enoch Hudson Moore, who were later to marry Rachel and Mary, respectively, attended this party.

However, on May 7, Strickland and Rachel and William Wood Thackara and a girl whom he identified only as "A.E.S." went to "Woodlands" for an afternoon's outing.⁶³

On Nov. 3, 1812, Strickland and Rachel Trenchard were married at the home of her cousin, Mrs. Maria Graff Emlen, widow of Caleb Emlen, hardware merchant, on New Street. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. James Abercrombie in the presence of the Thackara family and other friends and relatives of the young couple. Mary Trenchard was one of the attendants.⁶⁴

By this time, Rachel was well acquainted with the mysteries of engraving — the daughter of one engraver, foster-daughter to another, and the wife of still another engraver, the latter now described in the announcement of the marriage, as "Architect." Her sister, Mary, married Enoch Moore less than three months later.

Mrs. Thackara did not long survive the safe marriage of her two "adopted" daughters. She died on Sept. 10, 1813 "after a severe indisposition" while on a visit with her husband to the home of William Reeves, in Evesham Township, N. J.⁶⁵ She was 45 years old.

Funeral services were conducted the next afternoon from her home at No. 35 Spruce Street where the family had recently moved. She was the first to be interred in the new family burial plot at St. Peter's Episcopal churchyard, nearby, at 3rd and Pine sts.

By 1813, William Wood Thackara was taking a hand in his father's business although the young man was to leave shortly for service in the War of 1812, with the 3rd Company, Washington Guards of Philadelphia, which saw no battle action.⁶⁶

Before leaving, W. W. did help his father prepare "Thackara's Drawing Book for the Instruction of Young Ladies and Gentlemen," Philadelphia, 1814, which displayed on its frontispiece an easel bearing a drawing of the new Academy of Fine Arts building on Chestnut Street.

This volume was one of the early art instruction books in the country, and by a man who tried, but failed, in attempting to start its first art academy. It contained 32 illustrations. Only one publicly held copy is known to exist today — that in the John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R. I.⁶⁷

At this time William Wood may have helped his father with a series of maps he was producing for books of one R. Mayo, of Philadelphia. In this early association, the young man was molding a skill in drawing which was to bring much admiration from his own children, and later generations of his family, and others, in the very few examples of his illustrated sketch books which have survived to posterity.

With the death of Mrs. Thackara, the marriage of Rachel and Mary, and George (now a mariner) at sea most of the time, the house on Spruce Street must have been strangely lonely. William Wood, a private, was away in service less than one year, getting only as far as Kennett Square, Pa., Camp Brandywine, and New Castle, Del., Camp DuPont, in training. Then the war ended.

Although Stauffer indicates a much later date, 1832, for the firm of J. Thackara & Son (James and William), this is now known to have been at least seven years after William Wood Thackara gave up the title of engraver and went into

partnership (1825) in the profession of conveyancing with his first cousin, Samuel Wilton Thackara.⁶⁸ S. W. was the oldest son of Captain Samuel Thackara.

Probably the partnership of father and son — formally — dates as early as the return of the son from the War of 1812, in 1815. Some large (9½ x 11 inches) engravings of flowers which may be seen today in the John Crerar Library, Chicago, and in many private collections, are signed "Published By J. Thackara & Son Engravers 35 Spruce St. Philada," which address places the time of their making at sometime between 1814 and 1816-17, when James and William moved into the Academy of Fine Arts building.⁶⁹

The 1832 figure may have been based on the fact of their work appearing in an 1831 edition of Rhee's Encyclopedia. In that year, however, William's conveyancing business was flourishing, and James was listed as an engraver at a third Spruce Street address—No. 115.⁷⁰ The Rhee's prints may have been re-runs, and post-dated.

Stauffer also slighted James Thackara in stating that he was "keeper" or curator of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts "after 1826."⁷¹ Actually he is listed in annual catalogues of the Academy as curator as early as 1816, continuing in that capacity in every year through 1828.

When he was appointed curator in 1816, Thackara succeeded the artist Thomas Birch. From then on, the "keeper" was known as curator. At this time, John Vallance, Thackara's old partner, was treasurer of the Academy, living at 23 George Street, a few doors from where Thackara once resided.⁷²

Even at the Academy, where he came into contact with some of the greatest artists of the period, he preferred to retain the identity of "Engraver, Academy of Fine Arts, Chestnut above 10th" to the general public through the city directories.

Evidently, both father and son carried on their engraving trade at the Academy since their names are bracketed together as engravers at that address for several years in this period, according to the directories.

With his father as curator, William Wood also took time to act as teller of the elections of officers and directors of the Academy, at least twice, in 1819 and in 1822. Vallance was elected to the board in the latter year. William Strickland, James' nephew, also was a member of the board during this period.⁷³

James and William Wood also were exhibitors at a number of exhibitions of the Academy, in the planning of which they presumably played a considerable part. In 1819, for example, they displayed "Philadelphia Library," although it is not stated in the catalogue of that year whether this was an engraving or a painting.⁷⁴

As curator, Thackara met many rising young artists. Young John Neagle, a pupil of the great Gilbert Stuart, was among them. Later, when Thackara was in his 60's, Neagle is believed to have been the artist who painted the very fine full-length, cabinet-sized portrait of James Thackara, which is now back in family hands. He may have sat in the Academy of Fine Arts for this work, which shows a plaster bust at his right, and an array of books at his left. It is thought to have been painted between 1825 and 1835.

With maul-stick in hand, he looks much like a stern schoolmaster in this portrait, the only one of him of any type known to exist today.⁷⁵

Bearing out his schoolmaster appearance, Thackara was stern but kind with the art students. Dunlap, for example, tells how Thackara helped Thomas Cole (1801-1848), pioneer of the "Hudson River School" of artists:

"He (Cole) obtained through the kindness of Mr. Thackara, the keeper, permission to draw at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, but was so overwhelmed by the specimens of art that he used to go day after day and gaze on the casts and pictures, until the keeper aroused him, saying 'Young man, this is no place to lounge in, your permission is for you to draw here.' This was a hard cut to the sensitive youth, but the old gentleman meant well and was afterwards kind to him."⁷⁶

Among the other artists with whom Thackara was well acquainted was Matthew Pratt, who died in 1805. "From the venerable Mr. Thackara," Dunlap wrote, "we learn that Pratt, when a boy, was a schoolmate of Charles Willson Peale and Benjamin West, at Videl's School, up the alley, back of Holland's hatter's shop, Second Street below Chestnut. At ten years of age he wrote 12 different handwritings, and painted a number of marine pieces which are still in the family."⁷⁷

John James Barralet, the engraver and artist, also was a close friend of Thackara for it is understood in the Thackara Family that Barralet presented him with the portrait, "Elm Tree At Kensington," which was in the family for many years, and which now hangs in the office of a Philadelphia executive. It originally bore a note on the back, "To James Thackara from his friend, John James Barralet." This is now believed to be the earliest known painting of the Penn Treaty Elm.

The painting was exhibited at the Academy of Fine Arts several years between 1824 and 1828, when Thackara left as curator. Presumably, since Barralet had been dead some years, Thackara was then the owner. It is probably a safe assumption that his own fine portrait also was on view at some exhibition of the Academy during this time, masked as "Portrait of a Gentleman."

Thackara was succeeded in 1829 as curator by Samuel Scarlet(t), an English-born artist, who was to hold the post until 1846.

Continuing a trait — good or bad — which marked him most of his life, Thackara combined at least three occupations in all or most of the years he was at the Academy of Fine Arts. He was, first and foremost, perhaps, an engraver; then, curator of the Academy responsible for the safe keeping of the building, and its many art treasures, and last, a political figure of some note in Philadelphia.

Politically, Thackara took a leading role following the War of 1812 in the affairs of a party known, variously, as the "Old School Democrats," "Old School Party" or "Anti-Caucus Democrats." The party gained the latter designation because they were firmly opposed to the caucus nomination system, by which Congress and the State Legislatures signified their presidential preferences.

He appears in September, 1815, as the secretary of a meeting of old-school Democrats which promulgated a three column review of local politics in Philadelphia for a dozen years previous.⁷⁸

Among the leaders of the party were Dr. Michael Leib and William J. Duane,

who may have been the son of the William Duane whom James Thackara befriended just after this Duane's arrival from abroad "wretchedly poor and friendless" in 1796.⁷⁹ Whether or not this was the same William Duane who later became editor of the "Aurora," William J. Duane and James Thackara were very close friends, political allies, and strong backers of the internal improvement program.

It was in August, 1816, that members of the party met at the Town Hall, in Northern Liberties, to pass a series of resolutions attacking the caucus system. That fall, at Carlisle, Pa., the party nominated, for the first time, a full slate for Congress, and the State Assembly, with Duane the Congressional candidate and Thackara an Assembly nominee.⁸⁰

Both men were beaten by the Federalists. It was Thackara's first attempt at election to the House of Representatives.

In 1817, he tried again, running with William J. Duane, Lewis Rush, Robert Kennedy, and Edward D. Coxe for the assembly as a member of the anti-caucus Democratic party supporting Joseph Hiester for Governor against William Findlay. Findlay won and Thackara went down to defeat again.⁸¹

The next year, Thackara was back again as a candidate of the old school and Federalist ticket with Edward D. Coxe as one of his running mates, and this time the combined ticket was successful. Thackara was elected.⁸²

In 1819, Thackara appeared as the Democratic candidate for assembly on a "Firemen's Ticket" with William J. Duane, and several Republicans, in another combination slate for the House of Representatives. This ticket, according to Scharf and Westcott, resulted from the indignation of the volunteer fire companies of the City at not being able to pass legislation for an association of fire companies which would act as an insurance company, too. The volunteers claimed they got no financial assistance from the existing insurance companies in the City.

"This (ticket) caused the greatest excitement among the politicians, nor were the firemen themselves unanimous in support of the step," as a number of companies met and passed resolutions opposing the slate.⁸³ Not among them was the old-line Delaware Fire Co., of which William Wood Thackara was a recent new member.

The opposition notwithstanding, the "Firemen's Ticket" won, four out of five being elected — Thackara, Duane, Josiah Randall and William Lehman.

One of Thackara's outstanding accomplishments in the House came in 1819, while teaming with his good friend, Duane. Duane's Biographical Memoir tells how:

"In 1820, Mr. Duane and Mr. Thackara introduced a series of strong resolutions . . . against the admission of any new slave holding States into the Union; concluding with resolutions of instructions to the Senators of Pennsylvania, and of request to the Representatives of the State in Congress, to vote against such admission. (Date should have been December 16, 1819 for passage of bill)

"On the 16th of December the House of Representatives by a unanimous vote, adopted the resolutions, 74 Democrats and 20 Federalists voting for them. They were also passed by the Senate of Pennsylvania.

"During the presidential campaign of 1856, these resolutions were printed and extensively circulated by the supporters of Col. (John C.) Fremont, under the

title of 'The Protest of Pennsylvania Against the Extension of Slavery.'⁸⁴

This was Thackara's last term in the House. In 1821, Gov. Joseph Heister, who had won the office in 1820, and whom Thackara had supported both in 1817 and in the recent election, named him a member of a commission "to erect a State penitentiary within the bounds of the City and County of Philadelphia."

The assignment — to erect a prison for the Eastern District of the Commonwealth designed on the principle of separate confinement, with a capacity of 250 cells. The commissioners were to receive no compensation.

Joining a commission comprised of eight other Philadelphians of as many different professions or trades, James Thackara surely had no idea whatsoever of the tremendous task that was to confront him and the others when they first met in the Old Walnut Street Jail, Sixth and Walnut Streets, on April 6, 1821.

The bitter struggle that followed over the selection of an architect to design the prison prolonged the completion of the famous Eastern State Penitentiary, or Cherry Hill, until 1833.

The candidates were two — William Strickland and John Haviland.⁸⁵ In this dispute, James Thackara was a determined supporter of his nephew, Strickland, to the end, although Haviland ultimately prevailed as the architect of the prison.

In the light of his close past association with Strickland — the fact that Strickland was Rachel Trenchard's husband, that Strickland was once an artist and engraver, perhaps taught by Thackara, and that Strickland was probably the most noted architect of the day, it is much easier to comprehend James Thackara's dogged devotion to his cause.

Dr. Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, in telling a fascinating story of how the commission met more than 400 times between 1821 and 1833, acting on countless ramifications of the building program, gave this tribute to its members:

"Their fidelity, civic interest, and dogged perseverance in the face of much discouragement and bitter internal strife are unparalleled in the field of penology. . . . They argued with the time-honored procedure of parliamentary debate; they met with architects, the master builders and contractors; and they made decisions of great moment in penology."⁸⁶

Teeters also observed that "regardless of their quarrels and personal recriminations, they represent a faithful and even courageous group of public servants who were cognizant that they had embarked on a pioneer venture of further developing the new concept of penal treatment, the penitentiary movement."⁸⁷

In siding with Strickland, Thackara was supported by his friend from Southwark, Peter Miercken; Thomas Bradford, Jr., an attorney; Daniel R. Miller, hardware merchant, and George N. Baker, lumber merchant. For most of the 12 years, Roberts Vaux, merchant and civic leader, was chairman of the commission. He was a backer of Haviland.

Thackara was listed on the commission rolls as "James Thackara, Engraver, Academy of Fine Arts."

At first, the group supporting Strickland was in the majority, but replacements and new appointments on the commission soon reversed the balance of power, and, after much controversy, Strickland was released as "superintendent" of the work and Haviland was appointed the architect.

Teeters and Shearer emphasized the importance of the final action of dismissal of Strickland, Sept. 17, 1822, by the majority members of the commission in noting that "not one member of the Strickland, or minority group, was present."⁸⁸

So, the big prison, with its unique system of separate confinement, and cell blocks designed like the spokes of a wheel, was built by Haviland, a former student associate of Strickland. Even at that, James Thackara, at the dedication ceremonies, must have enjoyed the accomplishment of so great a monument to the commission's long labors. The prison is still standing and in daily use. Thackara had helped mold penological history.

While he was embroiled in the midst of problems of erecting the new prison at Philadelphia, James Thackara turned again to partisan politics late in 1823 as one of two secretaries of a meeting of Democrats on Dec. 23 which backed Gen. Andrew Jackson as a candidate for President of the United States. At the party's convention in Harrisburg, March 4, 1824, Jackson speedily won nomination, but lost the election despite the strong support of these Pennsylvanians.⁸⁹

As one of the first supporters of Jackson in Philadelphia, Thackara stuck with the Tennessean through the election of 1828, when Jackson easily triumphed. But he and other Pennsylvanians who had backed Jackson began to sour when the new President questioned the expediency of the Second Bank of the United States, at Philadelphia, in his inaugural message of 1829, and generally opposed internal improvement projects. In the latter field, William Strickland was one of the leaders in Pennsylvania and the nation.

When Jackson, on July 10, 1831, vetoed a bill for rechartering the Bank of the United States, which was by now a proud Philadelphia institution, Thackara bolted Jackson with scathing denunciation.

Philip Shriver Klein describes the violent reaction of Thackara and others this way:

"In July, 1831, the 'original Jackson men' of Philadelphia, Stephen Simpson, James Thackara and those who had in 1823 touched the spark of publicity to the powder of his (Jackson's) own personality, now published a long and solemn address renouncing their love. They had taken up Jackson for five reasons: in order to establish a precedent for single term for president, to stop the appointment of Congressmen to office by the executive, to support the tariff, and protect home industries, to promote internal improvements, and to establish the principles of rotation in office.

"All these principles, they complained, had been abandoned. 'A total revolution of character, of principal, of purposes, of opinions like this, requires no argument . . . to prove, we must reverse the position of the individual (and) dissolve all affinities of party cohesion . . . on the same grounds that we first accorded him our adhesion, do we hereby withdraw from ANDREW JACKSON our future support, convinced that time, circumstances and power have destroyed that identity of political character that once attracted our admiration, won our confidence, and secured our affection.'"⁹⁰

**FRANCES GORDON
THACKARA**

(right)

Daughter-in-law of James Thackara and wife of William Wood Thackara, she lived with her son, James Gordon Thackara, in Lancaster from 1854 until her death in 1864 at the age of 65.

Picture was taken in 1861. She was a native of Hampstead, N. H.

**WILLIAM HALL THACKARA
OF LANCASTER**

(left, opposite page)

Grandson of James Thackara named after his great-uncle, William Hall of Philadelphia, printer, who was the son of a partner of Benjamin Franklin, Hall spent most of his life in Lancaster, and was for many years engineer of "Cotton Mill, No. 2." He is shown in the uniform of a private in the Lancaster County Regiment during the Civil War. He was discharged for medical reasons before the unit saw action.

**JAMES GORDON THACKARA
OF LANCASTER**

(right, opposite page)

Grandson of James Thackara, he settled in Lancaster about 1848, and resided in the city until his death in 1886 at the age of 64. He was an Adams Express agent in Lancaster for many years. This picture was made in 1862.

Photos from daguerrotypes, courtesy, Mrs. R. D. Crampton, Glenside, Pa.

Klein identified the drafting committee of this address as Thackara, Nathan Jones, Stephen Simpson, J. M. Taylor, and Henry S. Hughes.⁹¹

That was probably the last big political affray for Thackara, who returned to his engraving business at 115 Spruce Street to let younger men carry on the fight. Among the latter was William J. Duane, his fellow candidate of years back, risen to Secretary of the Treasury in Jackson's cabinet, only to be replaced in 1833 when he refused to order the removal of deposits from the Bank of the United States.

In 1837, at the age of 70, James Thackara finally relinquished the title of "engraver" and moved into the home of his son, William Wood, at 88 Arch Street, south side, between Fourth and Fifth Streets. He was to be, from then on, a "gentleman" in retirement, enjoying his son's family of seven.⁹² The youngest was only one-year-old.

James must have felt great pride in his sole surviving offspring (George is believed to have died at sea in the intervening years) because the partnership of W. W. and S. W. Thackara, Conveyancers, S. E. Corner, Third and Walnut Streets, was doing well; William Wood was named the next year a director of the Mechanics Bank, nearby on Third Street (built by Strickland), and followed his father into the political limelight by being elected to Common Council and the School Board.

With the new Councilman-elect's wife, Frances (Fanny) Gordon Thackara, James watched happily in a throng at the State House when William and 18 others were sworn in on Oct. 12, 1838 as members of Council.⁹³ This was one office James had never sought.





The happiness was short-lived. James Thackara was crushed by sorrow seven months later when William W. Thackara died suddenly of what his physician described as "dementia," probably a form of stroke.⁹⁴ On April 21, 1839, the grieving father, widow, and children followed William's fellow members of Council to his grave in Old St. Peter's churchyard.

William's survivors, in addition to his father and widow, included Hannah Trenchard, 17; James Gordon, 16; Frances Gordon, 9; William Hall, 6; and George Trenchard Thackara, 2nd, 3.⁹⁵ A sixth child, Elizabeth, died in 1827 at the age of two.

William Wood Thackara, dying intestate, left an estate estimated for probate purposes at \$4,000.⁹⁶

How the family survived in the following few years is a matter of conjecture. In 1844, they moved to Spruce Street, No. 132, and two years later were listed in the directory at 126 Pine Street, where Fanny operated a boarding house. In 1847, they moved again to 22 South 6th Street, another boarding house.⁹⁷

In 1848, in a three-story brick dwelling on 12th Street above Parrish, far to the north of the Society Hill area he loved, James Thackara died on August 15. From the cause of his death, he must have been a victim of the cholera epidemic which was brewing in the City at that time.⁹⁸ He was 81 years old. His decease passed almost unnoticed in the newspapers of the day.

On hand at the end was Dr. John W. Moore, a physician in Society Hill for decades, who came all the way from No. 63 Spruce to attend an old friend and patient. The body was laid to rest in the family plot in St. Peter's, appropriately, not far from the tomb of his compatriot of Academy and "Columbianum" days, Charles Willson Peale. A colorful career was ended.

At the time of James' death, at least one member of his family already had, like the deceased at the turn of the century, looked Westward for his fortune. James Gordon Thackara is recorded as having been baptized in Saint James' Episcopal Church, Lancaster, on March 5, 1848, at the beginning of a 38-year

residence in that City.⁹⁹

His mother, and at least three of the children, Hannah, Frances and George, remained on 12th Street. Frances died there on July 16, 1850, in her 20th year.¹⁰⁰

By 1853, the widow Thackara disappeared from the Philadelphia directories, establishing this as the year she moved to Lancaster to live with her sons, James and William, the latter of whom also had come to the City by this time. In 1854, mother and sons purchased from one Michael Bundel a two-story brick house on Franklin Row, along the West side of Queen Street, between Lemon and James streets.

Family tradition also has it that George, 2nd., the "baby" of the family, then about 18, accompanied his mother to Lancaster but remained "only a few years" before returning to Philadelphia to found a refrigerator factory and to follow his father into Common Council. Hannah Thackara remained behind, too, to marry a man by the name of Knowles.

In the same year the house was purchased, James Gordon Thackara was elected to the vestry of Saint James' Church, a capacity in which he served for many years.¹⁰¹ He was a rising young businessman and is recorded in 1859 as an express and news agent at No. 3 Chestnut Street, the Adams' express office.¹⁰² The site is now the Hotel Brunswick.

James Gordon Thackara married Mary E. Trout, of Paradise, Pa., who outlived him by 41 years, dying in 1927 at the Henry G. Long Home in Lancaster. The union was childless.

On Dec. 6, 1886, the Lancaster Daily Intelligencer reported under "deaths":

"Thackara—in this City on 6th inst. James G. Thackara, in 64th year of his age. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to attend the funeral from his late residence No. 328 Church St. on Thursday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Interment at Lancaster Cemetery."

William Hall Thackara, who lived at 506 Church Street, Lancaster, was an engineer for many years at what was known as "No. 2 Cotton Mill" in that City. He also served as an engineer for Union Fire Co. No. 1 for many years, and is said to have rarely missed a meeting.

He was the subject of a lengthy article in the **Lancaster Daily Intelligencer**, March 31, 1896, concerning a supposed miniature of Peggy Shippen, wife of the traitor Benedict Arnold, and two letters of Arnold to Martha Washington, which had been in the Thackara family since about 1780 when Arnold's property in Philadelphia was seized and sold at auction.

According to the newspaper account, William Hall Thackara told how his great-grandfather, William, Sr., bought Arnold's chaise coach at the auction, and that the carriage remained in the family for many years — until it literally fell to pieces.

When this happened, out of the lining of the carriage's hood tumbled the three-inch long miniature, encased in a metal container, and the two letters of Benedict Arnold.

One of the letters, dated Philadelphia, June 30, 1778, was evidently a covering letter for a second letter of Gen. Washington. Arnold's covering letter, never

PRIZE FROM THE CARRIAGE OF A TRAITOR

This fine miniature, believed at first to have been of Peggy Shippen Arnold, tumbled from the hood of a carriage which William Thackara, Sr., father of James Thackara, bought at an auction of the effects of the traitor Benedict Arnold in 1780. It was in the Thackara Family until the death, in 1948, of Ellen Gordon Thackara of Lancaster. It is now believed to be the work of the great English miniaturist, Samuel Cooper, and of a daughter of Charles I, of England.



Courtesy of Miss Ida Edelson, Philadelphia, the present owner.

posted, was to have told Martha Washington that her husband's letter contained "all the particulars yet at hand" about the victory "which his excellency obtained over the enemy the 13th near Monmouth in the Jerseys."

The newspaper said the second letter was at that time (1896) in the possession of George Trenchard Thackara, 2d., William's brother, in Philadelphia. But George's daughter, Mrs. Blanche Thackara Woodward, now 89, and living in Philadelphia, states that she never recalled such a letter in her father's home. He died in 1905.

The miniature was a myth, as far as being of Peggy Shippen. Expert appraisal by the late Edmund Bury for Miss Ida Edelson, of Philadelphia, the present owner, established conclusively that the miniature is not of Peggy but rather a considerably older work (mid-17th century) by the English miniaturist, Samuel Cooper, of a daughter of Charles I, of England. How Arnold came to have it and why he put it in the hood of the carriage will probably remain a mystery forever.

William Hall Thackara married Mary Donnelly of Lancaster and the couple had one daughter, Ellen Gordon Thackara, born in 1857. William died March 5, 1907, and his daughter, who was remembered as an accomplished singer in her earlier days, died in St. Joseph's Hospital, Lancaster, on Oct. 31, 1948. She was interred in St. Mary's R. C. cemetery, in Lancaster.

At her death, the portrait of James Thackara now ascribed to Neagle, the Treaty Elm painting by Barralet, the Diary of William Wood Thackara, the Cooper miniature from the old chaise, and a number of other still unidentified treasures of the family dating back nearly 175 years, were sold to settle her estate. The present

whereabouts of the Arnold letters is not known. The rest of the estate, including several sketch books with some fine portraits, landscapes and flowers, and other scenes, also were scattered to various unknown purchasers.

These were all that survived to posterity of James Thackara, engraver, friend of the arts, prison builder and political leader. They are reminiscent, as William Wood Thackara wrote long ago, prophetically, of "scenes, that when mellowed by time, shine more luxuriantly than any the present day affords."

Glenside, Pa.

ROBERT D. CROMPTON

NOTES

¹ William Wood Thackara, *Journey of a Journey by Sea From Philadelphia to Boston, 1820*, p. 1, original manuscript owned by Mrs. R. D. Crompton, Glenside, Pa., microfilm copy, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. It was this handsomely illustrated volume, first shown to the author some years ago, which spurred the "rediscovery" of James Thackara.

² *Ibid.*, p. 1. The complete poem:

"I'll do as other sketchers do—
Out anything into view;
And every object recollect,
To add a grace or give effect—
Thus, tho' from truth I haply err,
The scene preserves its character."

³ William Wood Thackara, *Diary, 1791-1816*, in HSP, hereafter referred to as Thackara Diary. In the homes of Thackara family members in Lancaster for nearly 100 years until the death of the last survivor, Miss Ellen G. Thackara, in 1948, it chronologically records history of the family from early 17th century, in England.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, the name of second wife is, so far, unknown.

⁶ *Philadelphia Directories, 1785-1817*.

⁷ *American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, April 11, 1817.

⁸ David McNeely Stauffer, *American Engravers upon Copper and Steel (New York—1907)*, Vol. 1, p. 267.

⁹ Stauffer, op. cit. Vol. 1, p. 268, wrote that James Thackara's work "was done entirely in line and was confined to subject plates."

¹⁰ *Thackara Diary*.

¹¹ George C. Groce & David H. Wallace, *The New York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America (New Haven—1957)* p. 566.

¹² *Thackara Diary*.

¹³ *Register of Marriages*, Old St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, in collections of Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁴ John Carey, Salem, N. J. to Courtland Skinner, June 12, 1772, quoted in Lewis D. Cook, *George Trenchard of Salem, N. J. and Descendants*, in *Pennsylvania Genealogical Magazine*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 11-12.

¹⁵ Albert H. Smyth, *Philadelphia Magazines and their Contributors, 1741-1850 (Phila.—1892)* p. 63.

¹⁶ That Thackara made one of his few known woodcuts for a 1794 version of *Select Fables of Aesop* and other Fabulists, published by William Gibbons, Philadelphia, is noted in Sinclair Hamilton, *Early American Book Illustrators and Wood Engravers (Princeton—1950)*, p. 14.

¹⁷ In addition to those listed in Stauffer and Mantle Fielding, the author is indebted for titles of **J. Thackara & Son** and **Thackara & Vallance** engravings to Clarence S. Brigham, director, American Antiquarian Society, The New York Public Library, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Library of Congress. With additional titles added from scattered sources, the author is preparing a detailed check-list of these engravings.

¹⁸ **Thackara Diary.**

¹⁹ Stauffer, op. cit., p. 127, Vol. 1, calls them "partners in 1794 or earlier."

²⁰ Cook, loc. cit., pp. 31-32.

Family papers in the possession of Dale Vallance, of Westgate Hills, Haver-

town, Pa., great-great-grandson of John Vallance, show that Vallance was born on July 4, 1770, in Glasgow, Scotland, and emigrated to America with his parents, Robert and Christiana Vallance, two years later. This record proves that John Vallance was in this country much earlier than previously believed, in other written accounts. The present Vallance is also a great-great-great-great grand-
son of the artist, Matthew Pratt, mentioned elsewhere in this account, whose grand-
daughter, Margaret, was the second wife of John Vallance.

²¹ **Thackara Diary.** In addition to himself and William Thackara, Sr. and Jr., there was also, in 1812, William Thackara (1809-1835), son of Capt. Samuel Thackara, who became a sea captain like his father and who was lost at sea with all hands on the "Vesper" in 1835.

²² J. Thomas Scharf & Thompson Westcott, **History of Philadelphia, (Phila.—1884)** Vol. 1, p. 459.

²³ William Dunlap, **History of the Arts of Design** (1834; F. W. Balmey and C. E. Goodspeed, eds. Boston, 1918) Vol. II, p. 121.

²⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 123-124.

²⁵ Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 121-122.

²⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 122.

²⁷ Rear Adm. Leo Otis Colbert, USN, **Earliest Maps of Washington, D. C. in The Military Engineer, July-August, 1949**, pp. 249-250.

²⁸ M. Luther Heisey, Andrew Ellicott, Surveyor of the Capital of Our Nation L.C.H.S. Papers, Vol. LIV, pp. 1-14.

²⁹ Colbert, op. cit., p. 250.

³⁰ John Stewart, **Early Maps and Surveys of the City of Washington, D. C., in Columbia Historical Society Records, Vol. 2, 1899**, pp. 55-56.

³¹ **Thackara Diary.**

³² Ibid.

³³ Charles Coleman Sellers, Carlisle, Pa. to R. D. Crompton, Aug. 18, 1957.

³⁴ **Thackara Diary.**

³⁵ Academy of Fine Arts **Minutes and Papers**, HSP.

³⁶ Thompson Westcott, **Westcott's History of Philadelphia** (Phila. ca. 1885) extra-illustrated edition, HSP, p. 2357. Opposite this page is a drawing of the portrait of James Thackara now ascribed to Neagle which was then in the possession of James Gordon Thackara, of Lancaster, Pa., Thackara's grandson.

³⁷ Academy of Fine Arts **Minutes and Papers**, HSP.

³⁸ Westcott, op. cit. p. 2357.

³⁹ Academy of Fine Arts **Minutes and Papers**, HSP.

⁴⁰ Charles Coleman Sellers, **Charles Willson Peale**, (Phila.—1947), p. 67.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 65-74. In a list of 56 persons associated with the "Columbianum," Mr. Sellers names a "Thomas Thackara." This is undoubtedly a misinterpretation of the signature "Jas." in James Thackara's handwriting which looks very much like "Thos."

⁴² **Thackara Diary.** Two letters of Kneass to James Thackara on a delicate subject are quoted at this point.

⁴³ George Steinman, Lancaster, Pa., to David McNeely Stauffer, July 12, 1901, in Stauffer Collection, New York Public Library. Steinman visited William Hall Thackara, cited hereafter, at his home and was told of W. G. Mason "and another

apprentice . . . by the name of Troy (or Trey, writing illegible) who he did not know anything about."

44 Received bill, James Thackara to American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, June 27, 1797, in APS Archives.

45 *Ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1804.

46 I am indebted for this information from the Carpenter's Co. minutes and other sources to Dr. Louise Hall, of Duke University.

47 **Thackara Diary.**

48 *Ibid.*, both letters quoted therein.

49 **Thackara Diary** and Cook, *loc. cit.*, p. 28.

50 Cook, *loc. cit.*, p. 28.

51 U. S. Census, 1791.

52 **Thackara Diary.**

53 Book bearing this plate inside front cover in Manuscripts Dept., HSP.

54 **Thackara Diary.**

55 **Thackara Diary**, although the **Philadelphia Directory**, 1801, lists a 177 S. 2nd st. for Thackara.

56 *Ibid.*

57 **Journal**, Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1801-1802.

58 Charles Willson Peale, Philadelphia, to James Thackara, March 17, 1802, APS Archives.

59 Charles Dexter Allen, **American Book-plates (London—1895)** p. 195.

60 **House Journals**, *op. cit.*, 1803-1811.

61 **Thackara Diary.**

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*, giving accounts of all three parties and the visit to "Woodlands," a famous mansion which Strickland later captured in watercolors, exhibiting the work at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1827.

64 *Ibid.*

65 **American Daily Advertiser**, Sept. 11, 1813, and **Thackara Diary**.

66 **Thackara Diary**, which devotes many pages to his short career in the War of 1812.

67 Steinman to Stauffer, *loc. cit.*, contains a crude drawing by Steinman of the title page of this book, which he sketched during a visit with William Hall Thackara. Of the book, Steinman said, "it is full of eyes, ears and noses for pupils in drawing to copy." One of the few copies in private hands is owned by Mrs. Joseph Carson of Bryn Mawr, Pa.

68 Stauffer, *op. cit. Vol. 1*, p. 167.

69 **Philadelphia Directories, 1814-1817.**

70 *Ibid.*, 1831.

71 Stauffer, *op. cit. Vol. 1*, p. 268.

72 **Catalogue of Exhibitions**, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and Society of Artists in America, 1816-1828, HSP.

73 **Academy of Fine Arts Minutes and Papers**, HSP.

74 **Catalogue of Exhibitions**, Academy, etc., *loc. cit.* 1819.

75 Stauffer, *op. cit. Vol. I*, p. 268 calls the work a "very good . . . seated oil portrait."

76 Dunlap, *op. cit. Vol. III*, p. 148.

77 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 114, but Dunlap expressed doubt as to the accuracy of the statement of "my venerable friend, Mr. Thackara."

78 Scharf & Westcott, *op. cit. Vol. I*, p. 581.

79 **Thackara Diary.** "In the year 1796 William Duane came to this country wretchedly poor and friendless — occupied a room with his family in a small frame house — an alley looking west from 5th st. between Race st. and - - - Alley, abreast of - - -, or 14 chimnies." Two letters from Duane, June, 1798, implored James Thackara to help him in difficulties with his irascible landlady.

80 Scharf & Westcott, *Vol. I*, pp. 583-584.

81 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 588.

82 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 592.

83 *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 595.

84 **Biographical Memoir** of William J. Duane (Phila.—1868) pp. 17-18, in HSP.

85 Paradoxically, in this same year, Thackara made an engraving of the design of the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia. John Haviland was the architect. See Joseph Jackson, *Early Philadelphia Architects and Engineers* (Phila.—1923) p. 151.

86 Negley K. Teeters and John D. Shearer, **The Prison at Philadelphia—Cherry Hill** (New York—1957) p. 34.

87 Negley K. Teeters, compiler, "Controversy in the Building Commission of Cherry Hill Relating to the Selection of an Architect and a Plan." (mimeographed) (Phila.—1957) p. 1.

88 Teeters and Shearer, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

89 Scharf & Westcott, *op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 606.

90 Philip Shriner Klein, **Pennsylvania Politics, 1817-1832, A Game Without Rules** (Phila.—1940) p. 345.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 345.

92 **Philadelphia Directory, 1837.**

93 **Journal of Common Council of Philadelphia, 1838.**

94 Board of Health, Philadelphia, **Death Records, 1839.** (HSP).

95 The extreme youth of George T. Thackara, only one in this generation to have descendants today, partially explains "loss" of any recollection of James and William Wood Thackara. Children of three have few memories. He was only 12 when James died.

96 **Philadelphia Administrations, Book P. No. 111**, p. 53.

97 **Philadelphia Directories, 1840-1848.**

98 Board of Health, Philadelphia, **Death Records, 1848** (HSP), which incorrectly lists his age as "in 84th year."

99 **Register of Baptisms**, St. James' Church, Lancaster, Pa.

100 Tombstone Inscription, Old St. Peter's Churchyard, Philadelphia.

101 **Register of Vestrymen**, St. James' Church, Lancaster, Pa.

102 Boyd's **Lancaster Directory, 1859.**

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF AUTHOR

Robert D. Crompton is the husband of a great-great-great-granddaughter of James Thackara, and since learning two years ago that not a single memory of Thackara remained among his living descendants, the author devoted considerable research to the object of establishing Thackara's place in the history of early Pennsylvania. A bicentennial commemoration of the family in Philadelphia is being planned for 1967.

Mr. Crompton has crammed into his thirty-five years a wide and well-founded experience in journalism, public relations and historical writing. A native of Delaware, he graduated from Temple University, and after service in the U. S. Air Force in England during World War II, the author became night editor of the United Press bureau in Philadelphia. In 1953 he was named publicity manager of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia, and three years later the Reading Railroad appointed him a public relations representative, in which capacity he helped write the 125th Anniversary History of that company.

In addition to numerous civic duties, the author is active as a member of the Study Committee of the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks, and of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.