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The Cosmopolitan South: Privileged southerners, Philadelphia, and the fashionable tour in the antebellum era

By Daniel Kilbride

As he traveled up the East Coast on his way to New York in the spring of 1834, Izard Middleton engaged in the polite tradition of describing his travels to his relatives back home in South Carolina. Young Izard was not interested in musing about sectional politics or northern urban squalor. He was a complacent gentleman, his family's position at the top of the South's planter elite having been secured generations before. The ruthlessness, vision, and enslaved African labor force of his Middleton ancestors had carved an Anglo-American civilization out of the low-country swamps. Izard Middleton was far more interested in enjoying the company of his northern relatives, circulating in high society, and enjoying city life—specifically that of Philadelphia. That city, he wrote to his uncle approvingly, was “the only genteel place I have seen since I left Char[leston].”¹

Middleton's praise for the Quaker City was hardly the slack-mouthed awe of the country bumpkin. Rather, he spoke as a member of a national social elite, which viewed Philadelphia as a capital of sorts, the most conservative and cultured of American cities. Since 1961, when William R. Taylor examined travel to contrast northern cosmopolitanism with southern parochialism, the myth of regional cultural isolation has lost much of its luster. As Michael O'Brien and others have shown, southerners were a ubiquitous presence on the nation's carriages, steamboats, and railroads. And planter families made the grand tour to Europe as well. Few today subscribe to the notion that southern life was “superficial, unintellectual, obsessed by race and slavery, [and] enfeebled by polemic.” This article refines our understanding of the relationship between northern and southern culture by examining the experiences of privileged southerners in antebellum Philadelphia. Many of the planters who traveled to Philadelphia did so because they felt alienated from a regional culture they viewed as vulgar, excessively democratic, and provincial. They felt little kinship with the common folk of the South, their own regional origins notwithstanding. Rather, they sought stronger ties to their northern peers, with whom they shared a sense of privilege, entitlement, and cosmopolitanism—the principles that bound together the American aristocratic community in the first half of the nineteenth century.²

Intersectional travel by elites, particularly to Philadelphia, helped reinforce a national upper-class community that transcended regional boundaries. This community was at once reactionary, national in scope, and nationalistic. A myriad of bonds—schools for young men and women, membership in the American Philosophical Society and other Philadelphia organizations, business contacts, and family connections—tied this far-flung aristocracy together. Travel was particularly important to the social elite, however. Cultivated people believed that travel fostered a cosmopolitan spirit, while local attachments encouraged parochialism and ignorance. Eliza Haywood of North Carolina declared herself “amply compensated” on her trip to Philadelphia in 1824 because of her increased “knowledge of places & things, which constitutes in my estimation, the substantial advantages of travelling [*sic*].” Planters might attend social affairs, inspect

prisons and other civic institutions, and visit patriotic attractions in their home cities. But face-to-face contact at resorts like Saratoga and social capitals like Philadelphia reinforced common manners and morals, established friendships and family alliances, and displayed the cohesion of the American elite in concrete form.³

Most of all, travel facilitated sociability and the maintenance of upper-class culture. A devotion to a profoundly reactionary brand of gentility comprised the cultural glue that bound this leisure class together. A protean term in pre-Civil War America, gentility was never clearly defined even in colonial times. But to these self-conscious aristocrats, it meant a combination of virtues, among which the most important were intellectual sophistication, conservative politics, established family name, and an urbane sensibility. Their vision of refinement was constructed in self-conscious opposition to what might be called “respectability”—the pious, moderate gentility espoused by the emerging middle class. As Dallett Hemphill, Jacquelyn Miller, and Richard Bushman have shown, upper-class gentility and middle-class respectability emerged from the same continental sources yet articulated the distinct political and social visions of their constituencies. American bluebloods sought to fashion a new, American form of refinement, one that combined Old World élan with republican virtues. Southern travel to Philadelphia illuminates the deeply conservative, even reactionary, brand of gentility to which the American aristocracy subscribed.⁴

Students of the Old South are increasingly coming to appreciate the diversity of that region, and the men and women who traveled to the North in the antebellum period were no exception to that pattern. They were Federalist and Republican, Whig and Democrat, evangelical and agnostic, elite and middle class. But the planters who enjoyed leisure travel, circulated in high society, and visited patriotic sites were a distinctive group. Although they might possess diverse political or religious convictions, urbane southerners subscribed to a reactionary vision of class identity that transcended regional—and even national—boundaries. They were more comfortable in the parlors and ball-rooms of Philadelphia than they were at an upcountry barbecue. The Georgia jurist Richard H. Clark observed that his Savannah circle was “much better acquainted with Boston, New York, and Philadelphia than with our interior towns and counties.” This elitist sensibility alienated northern and southern bluebloods from ordinary people throughout the young nation. Indeed, this sense of estrangement helped bind them together. Culturally, the large slave-owning families of the Old South were as isolated from the traditions of the ordinary whites and black slaves of their own region as were the bluebloods of Broadway to the denizens of Five Points.⁵

Leisure-class culture was not only reactionary and urbane—it was also urban. Like most Americans, southerners viewed cities with some suspicion. Steven Stowe, for example, has discussed the ambivalence with which planter-class women viewed both town and country life. But privileged southerners longed for the amenities, cultural contacts, and excitement that only cities and towns could provide. This elite group would likely have seconded Richard Bushman’s conclusion that “the burden of testimony still upholds the image of southern culture as a desert with oases.” Charleston, Savannah, Natchez, and other towns possessed the “libraries, academies, and concert halls” that

made southern urban centers “oases of refinement on a culturally bleak landscape.” Still, southern bluebloods relished the opportunity to visit the great cities of the northeast, with their unparalleled social and cultural amenities. “There is something that possesses my imagination when I am in Phila. that is a little irregular,” Virginian Hugh Rose exclaimed in 1825. “Directly that I get in the midst of city I feel like all the world is a city!” A generation of scholarship on southern cities and towns has shown that the region’s culture was far more urban than its rural foundations would suggest. But the travels of elite southerners to Philadelphia underscore how class imperatives shaped the appeal of cities for this rarefied cohort of southern society. The refinement and grandeur of Philadelphia stood in marked contrast to what elites condescendingly saw as the torpidity of country life. The Alabama planter John Williams Walker planned “an excursion to the Quaker City [to] show my good dame the wonders of the Metropolis & let her figure away among the great.” The experiences of Walker and other southerners support Richard Shryock’s contention that northern and southern elites comprised an “urban culture common to both sections” of the new nation.⁶

Hence the attraction of Philadelphia for the planter elite. Privileged men and women throughout the Atlantic world recognized the deeply conservative, even reactionary, character of the city’s upper crust, a quality that distinguished them from elites in other cities, particularly Boston and New York. As Stuart Blumin argues, historians should not “gloss over the differences between Boston, New York, and other cities, for each had its own configuration of upper-class competition and accommodation.” Boston elites found it relatively easy to integrate the newly rich into their circle because such men “were even more insistent [than old Yankees] that wealth carried with it obligations as well as privileges.” Noah Webster praised New York’s “principal families” for “associating in their public amusements with the middle class of well-bred citizens,” a practice that the New Englander believed “prevent[ed] that . . . affectation of superiority [found] in certain families in Philadelphia.” By contrast, Philadelphians remained proudly unreconstructed. Fanny Kemble observed that Philadelphia had “an air of greater age [than New York]. It has altogether a rather dull, sober, mellow hue which is more agreeable than the glaring newness of” the Empire City. Thus, in addition to illuminating the conservative and pro-southern atmosphere of the city, the favor shown by southern travelers to Philadelphia highlights the differences between the young nation’s urban establishments.⁷

Southerners prized Philadelphia for more than its sociability and conservative character, however. They also basked in the city’s pro-southern atmosphere. Few Philadelphia elites condemned southerners for their ownership of human beings. Slavery, they reasoned, was but another expression of the natural hierarchy that was essential to any well-functioning society. In the Philadelphia of his youth, recalled the journalist Charles Godfrey Leland, “everything Southern was exalted and worshiped. There was hardly a soul I knew . . . to whom an Abolitionist was not simply the same thing as a disgraceful, discreditable malefactor.” Indeed, many southerners were overjoyed to find that Philadelphia—the cradle of abolitionism—enforced a strict code of racial subordination. “I tell you they make the free negroes walk a straight line,” a North Carolina medical student boasted in 1858. “One of the students knocked one down the other day

and beat him like the notion and the police stood and never said a word.” Carrie Fries of North Carolina was shocked when the young woman with whom she was conversing announced she “was an abolitionist” until it became clear that her local hosts regarded the women as a harmless crank. “All the other persons that I have seen here are warm friends of the South,” she wrote home with satisfaction.⁸

The aristocracy remained relatively unsullied by the animosity that increasingly poisoned relations between the North and South in the antebellum decades. In this sense, one is struck more by the continuities than the changes within the culture of the establishment in these years. Their devotion to social exclusion, and their national scope, helped maintain group cohesion until the very eve of armed conflict. Elites were not completely immune from sectional tensions, of course. Travelers to Philadelphia tended to be increasingly wary of their northern hosts, more sensitive to perceived slights, and more self-consciously southern. “I am a southron in soul & feeling,” averred a Georgia medical student after seeing African American men walking in public with Quaker women in 1837. “When I again [visit] my native soil, there will be gladness of heart & abundant rejoicings.” Yet, he reconsidered after witnessing the razing of Pennsylvania Hall during an antislavery meeting the next year. “Philadelphia has by the late proceeding raised herself in my esteem, although she before held a high station in my affections,” he declared in a letter back home. Clearly, relations between Philadelphia and southern bluebloods cannot be isolated from the downward spiral of sectional relations before 1861. But the experiences of privileged southerners in Philadelphia underscore the continuities more than the changes within upper-class culture.⁹

This article examines three areas of interest for travelers—tourist attractions, patriotic sites, and social life—to analyze the national aristocratic vision that southerners shared with their Philadelphia peers. First, their encounters with tourist attractions—particularly prisons, parks, museums, and red-light districts—highlight three elements of aristocratic culture that southerners and Philadelphians held in common: a reactionary social vision, a devotion to exclusivity, and the pursuit of sensual pleasures. Southerners also took in patriotic and historical attractions. They prized their American heritage, identifying primarily with the nation, not their home region. But they also articulated a peculiar American vision, exalting privilege and hierarchy as national virtues. Finally, the most eminent planters would circulate in the city’s fashionable society. Their hosts welcomed them as fellow aristocrats, not second-class slave owners, for the southern and Philadelphia gentry shared the same reactionary mind-set. In visiting Philadelphia, privileged southern families affirmed their place at the pinnacle of aristocratic society in the United States.

Tourist guides urged their readers to visit parks, promenades, prisons, and workhouses. And, in fact, these were among the favorite attractions of southern visitors to Philadelphia. Parks and prisons might seem to have little in common, but both affirmed the elite’s reactionary vision of limited social progress at the same time they promised exclusion from the urban rabble. Middle-class pedestrians enjoyed the same garden paths and urban retreats as did their social superiors, although for different reasons. The gentry believed that civic institutions like the Eastern State penitentiary and urban idylls like the

Fairmount Water Works confirmed a vision of conservative social evolution that Carol Sheriff and Steven E. Siry have identified as “practical republicanism.” Closer to Federalists than Jeffersonians, these men and women combined a belief in directed economic “progress” with a conviction of their moral and social superiority. They tempered their optimism about social improvement with skepticism about the moral capacities of ordinary people. Middle-class folk, particularly evangelicals, were less likely to impose limits on humankind’s potential for moral and economic improvement. At the same time, elites saw urban attractions in largely negative terms, as retreats from the urban rabble. Both middle-class folk and their social superiors were subject to the leers and curses of the poor, of course. But common people seemed to fling their best insults toward the urban establishment. Middling folk enjoyed urban amenities for their own sake, but elites patronized them primarily as havens from the derision of plain folk.¹⁰

The Eastern State penitentiary affirmed the elite’s vision of ordered progress at the same time it promised isolation from the urban rabble. Indeed, in some ways the prison was the ultimate expression of upper-class social control: the dangerous classes were literally locked up behind bars. The jail’s appeal reflected the elite’s commitment to enlightened improvement with their desire to appreciate aesthetic and historical attractions. In describing this and similar sites, tour books employed the idiom of “improvement.” In the pre-Civil War era, the term was a cherished middle-class concept signifying moral and social progress directed by humankind according to the divine plan. This millennial vision was anathema from the world view of the more worldly upper class, who saw Philadelphia’s public spaces and civic amenities not only as evidence of limited moral uplift but as proof of the city establishment’s good taste. Travel books actually called attention to jails, workhouses, and asylums, but not only because interest in humane reforms was part of the gentry’s self-image. Public buildings, they believed, testified to the urbanity of local elites. Thus, one travel book approvingly described the penitentiary as “resembling some baronial castle of the middle ages.” The guide paid lip service to the jail’s ostensible purposes—rehabilitation and incarceration—but emphasized its architectural merits. A visit to the prison seldom prompted soul searching or guilt in privileged tourists, many of whom exhibited a complacency about American society bordering on myopia. Rather, the penitentiary confirmed elites’ prejudices about their superiority and enlightenment. Therefore, it did not seem incongruous to refer to the prison in the language of refinement: the jail affirmed those very values. In the minds of many southern tourists, Eastern State penitentiary actually became an example of the wisdom and virtue of their class.

Completed in 1829 and situated north and west of downtown at Cherry Hill, the jail was a forbidding sight. Its twelve-foot-thick, thirty-foot-high granite walls, imposing battlements, and wretched population might give pause even to the most earnest prison reformer. Nevertheless, it became a must-see for tourists. Because its design reflected the influence of Jeremy Bentham, the English utilitarian, the prison epitomized the spirit of enlightened reform to which most cosmopolitan Americans subscribed. The “Pennsylvania System,” as the method of solitary confinement combined with labor came to be known, stressed private rehabilitation over public punishment. Sympathetic

observers of the prison could assure themselves that they stood in the vanguard of enlightened progress. But the very ways in which many southern tourists described their visit reveal their deeply conservative mind-set. J. C. Myers's guide portrayed the jail as "situated on one of the most elevated, airy, and delightful sites in the vicinity of Philadelphia." Elites were oblivious to any signs of working-class discontent the jail might have prompted. Rather, they believed its aesthetic qualities reflected social harmony. Myers's description, with frequent allusions to "massive square towers . . . embattled parapets . . . pointed arches," and "corbels," all of which "contribute in a high degree to the picturesque appearance," evoked comforting images of fog-shrouded medieval ruins with nary a hint of concern for the miserable population inside.¹¹

The prisoners were not exactly irrelevant to tourists, but few were interested in what they might suggest about social injustice in early Victorian America. Upper-class travelers complacently viewed incarceration as evidence of the inherent depravity of the working class. Visitors could purchase tickets to see the prisoners firsthand, but their curiosity only partly grew out of a concern with reformation. The inmates represented an ideal lower class to genteel visitors—subordinate, deferential, and under control—qualities that contrasted starkly with those to be found in the streets just over the walls. For Virginian Matilda Hamilton, the prison was just another stop on an extended shopping spree. "It is a very nice, orderly looking place, they have solitary confinement there, never permitted to speak, or see each other," she recorded flatly. "They keep articles to sell, made by the convicts, I bought some of them." Elites were far less interested in prison reform than middle-class evangelicals. The latter saw criminals as fellow sinners to be welcomed back into the brotherhood of Christ. Privileged folk subscribed to an older, paternalistic reform tradition. Because poverty, crime, and other manifestations of human depravity were rooted in human nature, they could not be eliminated. They could only be ameliorated by those in whom God had invested the virtue and privilege to care for the less fortunate. So when tourists ogled inmates like zoo animals and showed more interest in prison architecture than living conditions, they thought they were comporting themselves according to the highest traditions of enlightenment humanitarianism. Without a hint of irony, a Virginia traveler characterized prison as a "very extensive and beautiful place of confinement."¹²

Ordinary people would seldom be encountered under such controlled circumstances, however. Tourists spent much of their time in public spaces like streets, shops, and parks where they were vulnerable to the affronts of working folk. A North Carolinian observed that pedestrians in Philadelphia could not "promenade without the risk of being insulted at every step." Such disrespect could not be dismissed as mere vulgarity. Public abuses assumed political and moral significance because bluebloods believed that taunts, spitting, splashing mud, and the like were symbolic acts through which ordinary people expressed contempt for the aristocracy. Robert Waln, a well-traveled Philadelphia socialite, believed that working-class people possessed a "low-bred insolence, and a disposition to insult and abuse those who are their superiors in all other respects." Waln yearned for a day when "the aristocracy of fashion and gentility would be more clearly recognized, and the farce of relative republican equality cease to ornament every ragged vagabond with the same attributes as a gentleman." Few

bluebloods expected ordinary people to be happy about their subordinate position. Rather, they wished that plain folk would concede their inferiority through public demonstrations of servility. What so upset Waln and other aristocrats in the first half of the nineteenth century was that few working people even feigned recognition of their superiority any longer. Insults and physical assaults were clear evidence that they no longer feared the gentry's power and influence.¹³

Female travelers were special targets of the “overbearing impertinence of hack-drivers, wood-sawers, carters, and dray-men.” Waln’s diagnosis—that gentlewomen were the victims of a proletariat drunk on democracy—was quite different from the conclusions of some middle-class etiquette advisers, who actually maintained that women provoked rudeness by their failure to comport themselves in public with propriety. Upper-class women perceived themselves as especially vulnerable to the predations of lower-class men. “I well know it requires great exertions to Deal with the common Class,” a Philadelphia woman empathized to her Virginia cousin. “They are disposed to Cavel and give trouble to our sex when in men instances they would not have courage to contend with their own sex.” South Carolinians Harriet and Charlotte Manigault, walking outside Philadelphia in 1814, trembled at the approach of men whose “loud & laughing [voices] did not at all quiet our fears.” The men turned out to be family friends who teased the girls about their distress. “We explained to him why we looked so strange,” she recorded later in her diary. “Sometimes these men when they meet one [woman] alone, that is without a gentleman in the country, are very apt to be rude.” Perhaps because women’s fashions were conspicuous signs of the elite’s pretensions to superiority, disdainful ordinary folk actually did single out women for special abuse. Whether their vulnerability was real or imagined, however, visiting gentlewomen displayed a special affection for urban refuges like parks, walks, and promenades where, if encounters with the lower orders could not be avoided altogether, they could at least be regulated.¹⁴

In the early nineteenth century, municipal authorities built parks and other urban retreats that brought the country to the city, as it were. Such “improvements” often were thinly disguised attempts to segregate genteel folk from the vulgar mob.¹⁵ Travel guides took pains to point out the quiet squares and high-class residential districts where run-ins with undesirables might be minimized. Middle-class folk enjoyed these havens from the underclass as much as their social betters, but, as the favored recipients of insults and other signs of disrespect, elites tended to seek them out more as refuges than as places of aesthetic enjoyment. No other popular site in Philadelphia combined the virtues of the urban refuge with the social ideal of ordered progress than the Fairmount Water Works. Designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe in the 1790s and reconstructed by Frederick Graff between 1811 and 1822, the works supplied the city with water from the Schuylkill River. Graff’s hydraulic system became the model for water supply systems in almost forty American cities. His mechanical marvel attracted many visitors interested in the works’ scientific apparatus. Even before the nineteenth-century improvements, a visiting southern physician found the works “a Grand display of human ingenuity.” The Fairmount Water Works seemed to affirm the vision of gradual moral and scientific improvement to which many conservative Americans subscribed in the antebellum

years.¹⁶

Travel books described the Fairmount Water Works as the perfect marriage of science and aesthetics. J. C. Myers's travelogue, a work popular with southerners, suggested that the Fairmount Water Works "present an eminent combination of elegance and utility. The grounds are adorned with beautiful walks . . . beautifully ornamented with shade trees of the choicest species." Such descriptions affirmed the complacent, cautiously progressive world view of enlightened elites. And the comments of southern tourists reveal that they interpreted Fairmount much as the guidebooks suggested they should. Jane Caroline North, a Charleston belle, confided to her diary that the "Fairmount works repaid us amply for the fatigue & trouble of going through the dreadful dust" of the dry August streets. Wealthy and well educated, young Jane instinctively translated sights and sounds into the language of refinement. The water works, she wrote, were situated on "a rugged steep rock covered in many places with luxuriant vines . . . the green of the long drooping branches mingling with & seen thro' the spray of the fountain is charming to the eye." North made the conventional observations about the "immense" machinery, but she was far more affected by the "beautiful union of nature and art" manifest in the "small temple[s]" housing the pumps and pipes, the fountains of nymphs and river gods, the whole scene arousing a sense of rustic serenity far removed from the grime of urban life.¹⁷

Both middle- and upper-class folk enjoyed the serenity of public spaces like the works. Yet, most privileged people desired not only to be segregated from the working poor but from the respectable middling ranks as well. Fanny Fern, a fiercely egalitarian antebellum writer, praised the Fairmount Water Works in democratic terms. The estates visible from the river were

enjoyed less, perhaps, by their owners, than by the industrious artisan, who, reprieved from his day's toil, stands gazing at them with his wife and children, and inhaling the breeze, of which, God be thanked, the rich man has no monopoly.

Such an interpretation was anathema to the aristocracy, who practiced exclusion both as an expression of entitlement and as a means of insulating themselves from democratizing trends in popular culture. Philadelphia offered leisure-class southerners a hierarchy of exclusive spaces. The Continental Hotel assured prospective guests that "a Vertical Railway . . . extending from the ground floor to the top of the house" rendered direct access to the "upper rooms—which have always been regarded as most desirable." The escalator was just one of many amenities designed to ensure "entire exclusiveness" from the rabble occupying the lower floors. Similarly, certain tourist sites were reserved to refined men and women. Arriving at Pratt's Gardens without a ticket, John Strobria and his party introduced themselves as "strangers" and gentlemen. After paying a "trifling fee, we were permitted to enter, and every information given us that we required." Not only did the gardener personally direct their tour, he also apologized for his rudeness by explaining that "having received much damage from the depredation of Boys and others . . . the proprietor determined, at last, that no person should enter it without tickets of admission." Once the party identified themselves as Virginia gentlemen, these requirements were relaxed as a matter of course.¹⁸

Other places of interest followed a similar policy, appealing to cultivated people while discouraging the patronage of ordinary folk. Charles Wilson Peale exhibited the common touch in laying out his museum of natural history specimens and historical portraits. For comic effect, he placed the skeleton of a mouse below his celebrated mastodon skeleton. Nevertheless, his collections remained a favorite attraction of cultivated strangers for decades, partly because the Peales treated eminent guests with special hospitality. Dr. Adam Alexander “visited the Museum & was [welcomed] by Mr. R[embrandt] Peale with friendly attention.” Alexander could afford to pay admission, but Charles Peale’s son “would take nothing from me or my friends.” Alexander was a southern physician who exhibited the combination of learning, urbanity, and manners that distinguished a member of the republic of letters. His museum tour, in which the young Peale “shew[ed] us everything,” was an act of professional courtesy to a fellow man of learning. Expressions of sociability were not to be spoiled by commercial transactions.¹⁹

Other attractions went beyond appealing to a rarefied audience to guaranteeing exclusivity by physically limiting admission to the well connected. Private societies like the Athenaeum and the American Philosophical Society opened their doors to strangers only under very restricted circumstances. Usually, the sponsorship of a local notable or a reliable letter of reference was required for admission, unless the aspirant was so renowned that no introduction was necessary. That is, these institutions required membership in the Atlantic aristocratic community. Preachy Grattan visited Philadelphia to take part in the Presbyterian synod in 1837. The Virginia divine was keenly aware that his middling social status limited his access.

The fact that I was a total stranger in Philadelphia & had no person to go with me to see any thing or even to direct me how to set about attaining admission to the various objects of curiosity which abound in Philadelphia, rendered my visit much less interesting than it might otherwise have been,

he complained to his wife. Travel guides described exclusive societies flatteringly but cautioned their readers that admission required a local advocate. “Strangers are admitted to” the Athenaeum, reported G. M. Davison’s popular guide, only “on being introduced by a subscriber, and a register of their names is kept.” Another book praised the Athenaeum for “furnishing a place of resort for persons of leisure who may wish to read the newspapers, reviews, and scientific journals.” Visitors were warned, however, that “strangers” could only be “introduced by subscribers or stockholders.” Only men of undisputed stature in Atlantic high society could hope to win admission. Such exclusivity involved more than snobbishness, although that was important. Limiting access to the wellborn and the cultivated gave elites an air of superiority and—they hoped—legitimacy, but it also helped them isolate their way of life from the corrosive influence of the dynamic, egalitarian culture of pre-Civil War America.²⁰

A final category of urban amusement popular with travelers also deserves mention. Drinking, whoring, and gambling highlight both the class-conscious tone of tourist attractions and the anachronistic character of the aristocratic ethic. A number of scholars, including David Moltke-Hansen and Daniel Walker Howe, have described the “Victorianization” of upper-class culture in the early nineteenth century. Moltke-Hansen argues that a growing “sense of propriety” discouraged the pursuit of the traditional vices

of the gentry, such as “the eighteenth-century custom of wealthy men drinking each other under the table on good madeira and port.” And indeed, upper-class manners had moderated considerably since the days when brawling and womanizing had been aristocratic prerogatives. Even so, the Victorianized practices of the elite looked downright hedonistic next to the pious propriety of middle-class respectability. Evangelical influence had tamed some extreme expressions of upper-class sensuality but had not effaced them altogether. North and South, the gentry still considered it their prerogative to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. Opportunities for illicit sex in Philadelphia and other cities were strong inducements for southern men, particularly young men free of parental supervision or those traveling without families. In 1837, Josiah Nott told a student on his way to the University of Pennsylvania medical school that the mention of his name to his former landlady would be “passport to you, and will admit you to more privileges than you ever dreamed of in your philosophy.” For those visitors without contacts, imagination sufficed. “When we are at a distance from this place knowing the numerous sources of amusement which it holds out we are left to conceive that we would be happy as kings,” confessed a Virginian.²¹

A pamphlet characterizing the “city of brotherly love” as also being “the city of sisterly affection” was aimed directly at male travelers who had more than Philadelphia’s museums on their minds. The author warned “stranger[s] . . . against the possibility of being involuntarily seduced to visit a low pest house” during their stay in Philadelphia. As the pamphlet makes clear, however, even the pursuit of illicit sex was bound up in Americans’ obsession with class and social station. The tract ranked houses of assignation according to the status of their clientele and paid special attention to the refinement of the prostitutes themselves. Hence, “Miss Sarah Turner” won praise for being “a perfect Queen.” Not only was she cultivated and discreet, but her “young ladies are beautiful and accomplished; they will at any time amuse you with a fine tune on the piano, or use their melodious voices to drive dull care away . . . none but gentlemen visit this Paradise of Love.” Images could be misleading, as in the case of Mary Spicer. Her house, while “well furnished and the girls dress well,” nevertheless merited an “X” and a warning about “appearances.” “Sal Boyer, alias Dutch Sal,” put on no such artifices. “This is the lowest house in the city,” warned the pamphlet; “no gentleman ever visits this Sodom.” Although the evidence is scanty—men did not generally highlight such encounters in their letters home—it is likely that southern male travelers patronized prostitutes frequently while in Philadelphia. The pamphlet’s appeal could scarcely fail to excite the imagination of the sensual Carolinian James Henry Hammond, for example. Upper-class men were certainly not unique in soliciting vice in Philadelphia, of course. But at a time when conventional morals were becoming increasingly prudish and restrained, elite class culture remained wedded to an older ethic that excused and even celebrated self-indulgence and excess.²²

The promises of urban amenities—innocent and not so innocent—were important magnets attracting wealthy southerners to Philadelphia. But the city’s patriotic sites were just as important in drawing in tourists from all parts of the young nation. Understandably, historians tend to emphasize the distinctive aspects of the antebellum South over those characteristics it shared with other sections of the nation. Some of these traits—the region’s dependence on slave labor, for example—intensified in the first half

of the nineteenth century and made it highly distinct, not merely in the United States but in the Western world generally. Regional cultural traditions accentuated these economic differences. As David Moltke-Hansen has shown, Charleston elites became increasingly “convinced of and committed to their own region’s cultural character and future.” Much the same could be said for privileged planters throughout the antebellum South. Thoughtful observers—northern, southern, and European—consistently remarked on the social, economic, and cultural gulf that seemed increasingly to separate the two great sections. To many contemporaries, however—particularly elites—the differences between North and South were superficial when compared to the bonds of history, kinship, and culture that bound the North and South together. As Moltke-Hansen observes, regional loyalty became meaningful only within the context of prior national identity. Had the North and South “not been united by ideology and interest, blood and business, they could not have been divided.” Both northern and southern elites “were committed to advancing culturally the nation their ancestors had helped to create.” The gentry’s loyalty to a reactionary social vision contributed to group cohesion, because it isolated them from democratic political and cultural trends. Such isolation rendered high society somewhat musty and sterile, but it helped the aristocracy avoid the “narrow provincialism” that, many in the Atlantic world believed, characterized American popular culture.²³

The elitist national vision that sophisticated southerners and their northern peers espoused was epitomized by the Philadelphia-trained Charleston physician David Ramsay, who sought to “replace an imperial with an American cosmopolitanism without wholly rejecting British culture or withdrawing into a national shell.” Elite southerners certainly evidenced a heightened pride in their region during the antebellum decades. Only seldom, however, did this consciousness overwhelm their national and cosmopolitan vision. In visiting Philadelphia’s patriotic sites, privileged southerners neither subordinated regional pride nor endorsed a socially inclusive notion of national identity. Instead, they affirmed a far more limited notion of American nationhood based on the cosmopolitan and elitist principles of the American aristocracy. Historians of American nationalism have begun to question the notion that memory “must be completely shared and consensual in order to be truly national.” In visiting the historical sites around Philadelphia, elites constructed a relentlessly political conception of American nationalism that explicitly excluded groups they deemed of no account.²⁴

While leisure traveling did not by itself signify nationalism or cosmopolitanism, it usually implied at least benign curiosity about the world beyond Dixie. Travel aides and tourist guides not only reinforced and encouraged nationalist sentiments but also did so in a manner designed to appeal to their urbane, largely Whiggish readership. *A Traveler’s Tour through the United States*, a game designed to relieve the monotony of long-distance travel, was rife with patriotic themes. Players moved their game pieces around a board imprinted with a map of the United States by describing the characteristics and history of the site on which their die roll landed them. The game’s manual described the young nation as “by far the finest portion of the western continent . . . with respect to wealth, fertility, civilization and refinement.” Descriptions of local characteristics conformed to the vision of gradual, moderated improvement cherished by conservative Whigs. *A Traveler’s Tour* portrayed Philadelphia as a “noble city . . . situated between

the Delaware and the Schuylkill rivers. . . . It is the centre of a great trade, and has the most extensive manufactures of any city in the Union.” More than just pleasant diversions, games like *A Traveler’s Tour* promoted a conservative, nationalist sensibility in their players.²⁵

Like games, tourist guides fused information with patriotic commentary. Yet, they also provided travel advice that simultaneously warned elites about urban disorder while reinforcing their reactionary, complacent social vision. J. C. Myers’s *The Fashionable Tour* explained that Pennsylvanians were “distinguished for their habits of order, industry, and frugality.” The state’s vistas offered the pleasing contrast of “noble roads and public works, with the well cultivated fields,” images that could only affirm the Whiggish sentiments of many privileged travelers. But *The Fashionable Tour* warned tourists frankly of the hostility they could expect from ordinary folk, behavior that contradicted the vision of national harmony and prosperity tour guides so deliberately constructed. Much as they did with prisons, however, tour books discouraged readers from interpreting public disorder as a sign of unsettling social flaws. “It would be impossible,” Myers’s guide assured travelers, “to find a like number of cities . . . whose average moral, social, and intellectual condition stand so high.” Tour books encouraged travelers to have pride in their American heritage. But they defined that legacy in terms that excluded common folk while affirming the vision and importance of the conservative gentry. Roads, canals, and other aspects of social and intellectual “improvement” were signs of the wisdom and foresight of America’s privileged orders. Seen through the elitist lens of the aristocracy, they were powerful evidence that the nation embraced enlightenment values of conservative progress, not pell-mell individualism or rural malaise.²⁶

The southern gentry’s national feelings became refined and intensified by visiting the historical sites around Philadelphia. Personal contact with historical treasures—particularly those central to the nation’s founding—rendered planters’ sense of American identity far stronger than those of the ordinary people of the South. Common people of all regions imbued feelings of American purpose from abstract and impersonal sources such as national elections, Fourth of July orations, literature, and memories of the Revolutionary struggle. By contrast, leisure travel fostered personal contacts with distant people and allowed tourists to appreciate national relics firsthand, making the gentry’s sense of national identity personal and concrete. Tourist guides reinforced these feelings by emphasizing the national significance of Philadelphia’s history. One pointed out that “the city is noted for several events in our history, such as Penn’s treaty with the Indians, the assembling of the first Congress in 1774, and being occupied by the British in 1777, &c.” Guides also infused seemingly local attractions with national importance. For example, J. C. Myers’s travelogue gave equal emphasis to the American Philosophical Society’s scientific and historical significance, noting that many of the society’s presidents were heroes of the great Revolutionary struggle, including “Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse, [and] Thomas Jefferson.” The resonance of such messages was limited to men and women of means. Few ordinary people could afford the expense of leisure travel, so their feelings of national identity remained relatively weak and abstract. For most southerners, local affairs—always more pressing and immediate—matured into a strong regional attachment. It was precisely whites of middling or lower

rank who seemed most “southern” to discerning observers before the Civil War. Leisure travel both reflected and reinforced the southern gentry’s nationalist sensibility.²⁷

The appeal of Charles Wilson Peale’s museum illustrates planters’ peculiar and intense national sentiments. Besides his well-known assortment of natural history specimens, Peale possessed a collection of portraits of revolutionary leaders. Virginian John Strobria was “particularly struck [by] the gallery of Portraits of all the leading men concerned in the American Revolution,” including “Washington, Fayette, Baron Steuben, Green, Montgomery, Jay; and many other distinguished characters.” The portraits’ historic significance impressed the Virginia diarist more than Peale’s artistic mastery. Properly interpreted, the Revolutionary era would serve as the foundation for a growing, thriving American state. “This group, a century hence, will be a valuable collection in the eyes of posterity,” he predicted. In a striking illustration of what Eric Hobsbawm has called the “invention of tradition,” elites construed Peale’s figures to reify a reactionary vision of the Revolutionary era, an interpretation on which they based their aspirations for the young nation’s future. Effacing the disorder and contentiousness of the Revolutionary and constitutional struggles, elites developed a highly selective narrative of the founding era that insisted on the wisdom of the Federalist vision to which, as conservative Whigs, they stood as inheritors.²⁸

Strobria wrote early in the century, when sectional tension was at a low level. But many planters expressed comparable pride in American nationality at midcentury, when sectional feeling was well developed. Their core American nationalism remained fervent, however. Few sophisticated planters discerned any contradiction between regional pride and nationalism. As Mitchell Snay observes, national and sectional identity should “not be seen as mutually exclusive phenomena but as complementary processes of American self-definition.” Emma Shannon of Vicksburg was both a unionist and a proud southerner in 1858 when she attended a women’s academy in Burlington, New Jersey. While touring Philadelphia, she and her sister were introduced to a “privileged person” who offered to “take us around and show us some of the places of interest.” Carpenters’ Hall, whose “ancient . . . red and black bricks” they associated with the epic age of the struggle for independence, rekindled the sisters’ patriotism. Having “entered, [they] stood in the hall where the first congress was held, the spot where Patrick Henry poured forth his spirit-stirring elegance, &c.” The Shannons felt no contradiction between their southern heritage and their national loyalty. In fact, southerners’ veneration of the symbols of American nationhood often went well beyond that of their Philadelphia hosts, who seemed indifferent to their stewardship of national treasures like Independence Hall. Southern travelers interpreted this apathy as a moral failing on the part of their northern counterparts. A North Carolina visitor remarked indignantly that the State House “stands unnoticed and unhonored” when it “should be the boast of every Philadelphian.” Upper-class southerners saw Revolutionary relics as the “dearest proof of their freedoms,” the most potent symbol of the common American identity they prized.²⁹

At the same time, southerners expressed an ambivalence about the meanings they gleaned from the State House. These ambiguities reveal much about how elites blended class and nationalism in the first half of the nineteenth century, for Independence Hall evoked both pride and a vague sense of unease and decline. The Revolution was hardly a

distant memory in the early nineteenth century, and its legacy inspired considerable debate. As Waldstreicher observes, “conflict produced ‘the nation’ as contestants tried to claim true American nationality and the legacy of the Revolution.” After 1800, Federalists refused to participate in Fourth of July celebrations administered by their Republican opposition because they refused to grant their political foes the legitimacy to interpret the Revolution by their own lights. Both Federalists and southern travelers of the nineteenth century—who were often the same people or their ideological descendants—believed that the individualistic, democratic society of the antebellum period was the child of misinterpreted revolutionary republicanism. Defining themselves as the trustees of the nation, elites’ social memory of the Revolutionary era displaced the contributions of groups that contradicted their reactionary vision. The State House, for many privileged Americans, represented the “true” revolution, fought in the pursuit of conservative republicanism, that had degenerated into democratic dissipation.³⁰

Guidebooks reinforced this selective memory by describing the State House as the embodiment of an ideal, deferential past through emotional appeals to the epic events of American history. Patriotic rhetoric contrasted the allegedly crass, fragmented, and middle-class democracy of the Jacksonian period with the harmony and unity of Federalist America. One tour book suggested that visitors interpret the “bell used on th[e] memorable occasion” of independence as a knell “calling the people together.” The Liberty Bell was “a relic of the heroic age of American history” that united all Americans. Significantly, tourists’ reflections mirrored the guidebooks’ representations. Such feelings possessed Virginian Matilda Hamilton, who visited the Hall in 1857. She assumed the State House would be “the most interesting place in Phil[adelphia] to all true Americans.” It represented to her the “heroic age” of revolution, liberty, and nation building. Visiting the State House inspired Hugh Rose of Virginia to imagine “our father patriots s[itting] to deliberate on the fate of the nation . . . what reverence we should feel for those great men!” From wherever they hailed, privileged Americans interpreted the relics of Revolutionary history as justifying their vision of an integrated, cultivated, and aristo- cratic republic.³¹

Planters’ reverence for the patriotic sites of the founding era did not imply indifference or contempt for the idea of southern pride—on the contrary. Sectionalism and nationalism were parallel developments that emerged out of the impulse to define the identity of the republic. Staunch southern partisans were awed by Independence Hall, and the meanings they took from the site were not markedly different from those of more nationalist southern travelers. The State House hearkened back to a time when sectional differences were submerged under life-and-death national struggles. The edifice tapped into a submerged core of American patriotism even in those who publicly reviled the North, inspiring both regional extremists and nationalist planters to appreciate their place in the American nation. Clement Clay, a member of the fiercely pro-southern Knights of the Golden Circle, was profoundly moved by viewing Independence Hall. When he “struck the old cracked the old bell [and] sat in the chair occupied by John Hancock,” Clay “felt [his] patriotism grow warmer and pulse beat quicker.” Visiting the State House was a pilgrimage, a ritual through which visitors transcended differences of creed and section and confirmed their place in a national community.³²

Visiting patriotic attractions infused privileged southerners with a sense of common interest, sentiment, and destiny with their northern peers. A third aspect of travel—sociability—allowed southern men and women to cultivate a nationalist sensibility in a more personal way. Sociability did important cultural work for the privileged caste, helping them cultivate a distinctive, highly elitist brand of gentility. Moreover, social contacts maintained old bonds of kinship and friendship and helped to build new ones. Sociability allowed the elite class to maintain the personal bonds and common cultural traditions that bound the far-flung American aristocracy together. Travel guides did not dwell on the fashionable world, however, because entry was closed to all but the privileged few. Only travelers with personal contacts, letters of introduction, or national renown gained entry into Philadelphia's beau monde. Eliza Haywood of Raleigh profited from her father's friendship with Langdon Cheves, president of the Second Bank of the United States, when she visited Philadelphia in 1824. The Palmetto State planter "conducted us to his new and magnificent mansion, the splendour & comforts of which I could not have conceived with- out having seen them," she told her father. Unlike conventional tourist attractions, the social world was closed to men and women who lacked the contacts Haywood enjoyed. Such careful monitoring reflected more than elitism. The maintenance of "select companies," observes Richard Bushman, was itself a fundamental element of the Anglo-American "ideal of cultivation" in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³³

Socialites enforced a select company for several reasons. Elitism demanded the rejection of some aspirants, for exclusivity implied superiority. "There is no city in the Union in which a gentleman is better received," a southerner wrote of Philadelphia. "If he pass the ordeal, he is safe and happy in their society; if found unsuited and rejected, he will find it advisable not to attempt the purchase, as he will most certainly fail." But selectivity also served another purpose. By limiting access to their circle, aristocrats sought to preserve their anachronistic, reactionary code of behavior. Critics of the gentry railed against its exclusive practices because they understood that selectivity helped maintain a sensibility hostile to democracy. Observing the city's class distinctions led Harriet Martineau to characterize Philadelphia's elite as the republic's "perverse children, instead of its wise and useful friends and servants." For the gentry, exclusion served both as evidence of their superiority and as a means to preserve the aristocratic code against the corrosive influence of middle-class "respectability."³⁴

Philadelphia hostesses practiced exclusion on a class, not regional, basis, for they were committed to maintaining a national upper-class network. The Quaker City's gentlefolk looked on their southern peers as fellow aristocrats, not slaveowning pariahs. In fact, some observers noted a distinctly southern flair to Philadelphia society. William Chambers, an Englishman, ascribed Philadelphia's continental atmosphere to "their happy blending of the industrial habits of the north with the social usages of the South." Actually, Chambers missed the point. Planters did find Philadelphia congenial, but not because it reminded them of the South. In truth, sophisticated southerners appreciated Philadelphia because it was the antithesis of the rural torpidity that, they believed, sullied the rural South. On a grueling trip to the South Carolina backcountry early in the nineteenth century, Mary Huger Middleton mocked southern women for their vulgarity. "In *these parts* all that [is] necessary for a woman to know was the curing of bacon &

making soap,” she complained to a Philadelphia friend. “You will allow that those accomplishments are incompatible with studying Montaigne.” Mary Telfair of Savannah noted that she had “two characters—a northern and a southern one,” the former cultivated and sociable, the latter domestic and reserved. Northern society, she noted happily, turned her into a “dissipated creature, luxuriating on fine scenery and talk.” Sophisticated planters visited Philadelphia to participate in rituals of sociability that marked them as members of a national—not merely regional—elite community.³⁵

Although elites thought of their community in national, and even international, terms, it mainly embraced aristocrats from the Atlantic seaboard. Elite southerners shared with their Philadelphia friends a sensibility that was both urban and urbane. Extreme regional attachments, they believed, marked one as parochial and vulgar. Cultivated planters craved the culture and connections to be found in the great northeastern cities, especially Philadelphia. The strong local ties of many southerners disgusted Mary Telfair, the Savannah gentle- woman. “They have such strong prejudices and are so local in all their feelings,” she complained. By contrast, Telfair observed that “my habits, views, tastes, feelings have all been changed by Northern association.” Disdaining strong regional loyalties, American elites participated in an Atlantic elite culture. National and regional variations did not disrupt the cosmopolitan, reactionary sensibility that forged the elite into a community of privilege. Philadelphians opened their doors to southern gentlefolk like Telfair because they recognized them as members of the same aristocratic community.³⁶

As Stuart Blumin and Frederick Cople Jaher have shown, Philadelphia was distinct for the exacting, anachronistic standards demanded from those who sought access to its social life. Aspirants had to demonstrate established family name and conformity to the standards of reactionary gentility. Such criteria discouraged those without the appropriate connections from making the effort to gain access, and it gave Philadelphia society a reputation for sterility and aloofness, as Henry Massie, a Virginia traveler, observed. “The Philadelphians are very distant with strangers,” he noted from bitter experience, “but much the reverse, I’m told, with those they know.” Such discourtesy had nothing to do with regional origins. It was all about class. For those within the charmed circle, exclusivity fostered a spirit of community and entitlement. Philadelphians lavished hospitality on those they judged their peers. “It has been said that Philadelphians are cold and reserved in their intercourse with strangers,” a southern gentleman noted. But “strangers who bring letters of introduction, or persons whose family, education, and manners are such as to entitle them to move in their circles will, when acquainted, have the most marked attentions paid to them.” And sophisticated southerners craved such hospitality. “To mingle familiarly with the delightful society of your city, with the learned and the gay and the polite, is among the highest gratifications which my fancy can conceive,” William Gaston told his friend Joseph Hopkinson. The slave-owning gentry sought out such company because they shared the same cultural ideals as elite Philadelphians. As Bertram Wyatt-Brown has observed, southern standards of “status, taste, and good breeding were quite compatible with the criteria prevailing” elsewhere in the Atlantic world.³⁷

Common standards notwithstanding, the experiences of elite travelers were not

uniform. In particular, they differed over time and between women and men. When considered in the context of changing conceptions of manners and personal behavior, however, leisure-class sociability seems remarkably stable over the first half of the nineteenth century. The differences within elite society over the first half of the nineteenth century were far less significant than the differences between it and the emerging culture of bourgeois respectability. Middle-class etiquette advisors were appalled by the self-indulgence of upper-class social affairs, which were marked by mixed companies of men and women, heavy drinking, dancing, and other marks of “indolence and perpetually increasing incapacity,” as one advice manual charged. The “mental powers” of aristocrats, this writer declared, had been “annihilated by luxury.” Elite culture remained closer in some respects to hedonistic ethos of the old regime than to the emerging code of Victorian propriety. Privileged southern travelers felt more at home in Philadelphia than in other northern cities partly because that city’s gentry remained wedded to the older ethic than elites in Boston and New York, who accommodated more readily to middle-class ways.³⁸

Two well-known Philadelphia social institutions, the Wistar Party and the Philadelphia Club, illustrate both the seamless integration of southerners into the city’s social life and the exclusive, relatively hedonistic character that rendered it so attractive. Named for and inspired by Dr. Caspar Wistar, a former president of the American Philosophical Society, the parties embodied Wistar’s qualities of learning and sociability. The latter was maximized by encouraging members to escort prominent “strangers” to the parties, which were held on Saturday nights during the busy winter social season. Rules required that entertainments and refreshments be kept simple lest “mixed and crowded companies, late and inconvenient hours, [and] sumptuous and expensive banquets” overshadow conversation. Nevertheless, the parties’ fare—which almost always included Madeira, other fine wines, and various delicacies—certainly was decadent by middle-class standards.³⁹

The roll of members and guests demonstrates the exclusive yet national character of the Wistar Parties. Most of the members enjoyed close family connections with the South or had close friends there. By and large, they shared the planters’ code of honor, conservatism, and self-indulgence. The Wistar Party had several permanent southern members, including Langdon Cheves and Nathaniel Chapman, a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. And many visiting southerners, including William Gaston, Henry Middleton, and William Polk, were welcomed as guests. Wistar Parties often comprised part of the itinerary that John Vaughan, an officer of the American Philosophical Society from the 1790s until his death in 1841, drew up for visiting gentry before they even arrived. Vaughan was renowned in genteel circles for his nationalism and sociability. Joshua Francis Fisher, a Philadelphia gentleman, recalled that Vaughan “was on the watch for strangers at every arrival, and at once became the welcome cicerone for every person of note, or those who came in any way recommended.” Thomas Percy, an Alabama planter in town in 1821, submitted happily to Vaughan’s regimen. “Since my arrival here I have passed an evening at Mr. Vaughan’s in company with some pleasant men of learning & a few diplomatic characters,” he wrote a friend. Sociable and cultivated, Percy felt a crushing isolation in Alabama. He was well read, amiable, and very well connected, qualities that made him an appropriate “stranger” for the company.

The Wistar party was designed to integrate such men into the American aristocratic community.⁴⁰

While the Wistar Party illustrates the elitist and national character of Philadelphia sociability, the Philadelphia Club highlights the relatively self-indulgent nature of upper-class life. George Cadwalader and his card-playing friends—“haters of change,” as they were described by the club’s historian—organized the Adelphi Club in 1834, renaming themselves in 1850. A member once suggested the club be renamed the Philadelphia Literary and Social Institute in an ironic commentary on the club’s four floors of billiard rooms, card tables, dining halls, and bars. A 1847 proposal that called “for members to contribute books toward the formation of a library” failed miserably. That year was better known for the exploits of George Chapman, who entertained the members by “drinking a glass of madeira while standing on his head.” The club opened its doors to “guests from the North and South . . . so long as they were the leading social names.” According to the club’s guest books, 14 percent of the 287 visitors were southern in 1834 and 17 percent of 326 in 1850. Even in the secession year of 1861, 20 names on the ledger came from seceding states. Visitors needed a member to sponsor their visit, but this presented little difficulty for planters; the club roll included Pierce and John Butler, as well as Sidney George Fisher, George Mifflin Dallas, Henry Drayton, and Joseph Ingersoll—all men with close ties of kinship and friendships with planters. If such entertainments earned Philadelphia the disdain of middle-class moralists, it won them the accolades of southern gentlemen.⁴¹

In addition to its self-indulgent qualities, the prominence of women in elite social life directly flaunted conventional mores. As Cynthia Kierner has shown, colonial gentlewomen’s control over social affairs invested them with considerable authority in privileged circles. And gentry women retained this role into the antebellum era, particularly in more conservative cities like Philadelphia. Both the authority of hostesses and women’s “inappropriate” conduct in society—dancing, flirting, and conversing in mixed company—contradicted the middle-class concept of a masculinized public sphere. Indeed, elites regarded the “domestic” ideal of the antebellum era as both a cause and a sign of their fading prestige.

The times are long past, when a dashing widow could lead a cortege of beaux through Watering places, and Theatres, and all other places of fashionable amusement, riding with a body of gay fellows behind her, and keeping the whole party alive by wit or even practical jokes,

Joshua Francis Fisher recalled of the antebellum period. Such behavior was “proof of what women in those days dared do—while the great families of this country still retained their prestige.” Respectable middle-class folk were shocked by such behavior on the part of women. Fanny Fern, the popular columnist, claimed that such a spectacle could only have been countenanced by “the over-dressed, vain, vapid, brainless offshoot of upstart aristocracy.”⁴²

Southern women enjoyed traveling to Philadelphia because the prominence of gentlewomen remained a fundamental element of upper-class social life there. In the early national era, the women of the Manigault family—a prominent South Carolina

clan—established a salon on Spruce Street in which they sought to reinvigorate the spirits and political fortunes of the Federalist establishment. The Carolina colony also integrated southern women into Philadelphia society, establishing links between regional elites that persisted until—and even into—the Civil War. Sidney George Fisher, a Philadelphia diarist, frequently remarked on the prominence of southern women in his social circle in the 1840s and 1850s. Like most gentlemen, Fisher relished “the company of . . . well-bred accomplished women.” Elizabeth Middleton Fisher, the wife of his cousin Joshua Francis Fisher, epitomized aristocratic womanhood, combining an active mind with a pleasing countenance. Fisher judged the daughter of Henry Middleton, South Carolina governor and minister to Russia, to be “clever, cultivated, accomplished, and agreeable. Very well bred, & of soft winning manners.” As the resolution of numerous cultivated women to pursue “single blessedness” attests, some gentlemen certainly viewed women as ornaments. But their numbers should not be overstated. In fact, many men of the gentry class—North and South—disdained the middle-class ideal that defined women primarily as domestic beings. Gentlewomen played an essential part in elite social life, both as hostesses and as companions in conversation, dancing, and other genteel practices.⁴³

Although the experiences and perspectives of men and women travelers diverged significantly, they were tied together by a common class perspective that transcended the bonds of gender. Men and women of gentle birth shared values and aspirations more than the popular contemporary trope of the “spheres,” designating areas of culturally sanctioned gendered activity, might lead us to expect. Gentlewomen were not insensitive to their subordination. As Cynthia Kierner has observed of the colonial period, “genteel culture served the interests of patriarchy and elite dominance, but, as members of the ruling class, women also benefited from its ascendancy.” The same held true for elite women in the early nineteenth century. Historians have become increasingly sensitive to the limits that the “cult of true womanhood” actually imposed on the lives of middle-class women. But if middling women did not define themselves by reference to the domestic ideology, elite women felt its influence even less. Steven Stowe has suggested that planter women in the Old South constructed mental images of “city” and “country” life that increasingly became associated with, respectively, male and female, public and private. There can be no doubt that men and women experienced the fashionable tour differently. Sexual license, most obviously, was a male prerogative. As Stowe has observed elsewhere, “an idiom of ready, uncontrollable sexuality was for male satisfaction only.” And Jane Caroline North penned her reflections of the sublime beauty of the water works in the conventionalized style of women’s “sentimental” writing. But, compared to the chasm that separated aristocratic from middle-class culture, the differences between men and women of gentle birth seem small indeed.⁴⁴

Although anachronistic practices like the prominence of women in social affairs helped the national elite maintain its cohesion by forcing it to insulate itself from popular culture, the aristocracy was not immune from social trends that touched all Americans. Sectionalism was no exception, although it broke apart the elite only on the very eve of Civil War, when fistfights broke out in the Philadelphia Club over the sectional sympathies of the members. But it can be argued that of all the national institutions that bound the far-flung American republic together in the first half of the nineteenth century,

the leisure class was the last to break. The Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists had split apart in the 1830s and 1840s. The Whigs disintegrated in the early 1850s, the Democrats in 1860. Even northern business organizations, among the most conservative institutions in the nation, urged Lincoln to act decisively in the Sumter crisis because the unpredictable situation threatened to damage their commercial prospects. Connections between Philadelphia and the southern elite, hardened by the personal bonds forged by travel, withered only under the crucible of war itself. The Wistar Association suspended meetings during the Civil War because, according to George Sharswood, a southern sympathizer, the “discussion of political questions could not be prevented, and disagreeable scenes of words if not other kinds of collisions might occur.” Only when sectional tensions threatened sociability did bluebloods capitulate to political and military imperatives.⁴⁵

Even so, the bonds between southerners and their Philadelphia peers were only weakened, not broken, by the Civil War. In 1865, the Savannah physician and Confederate supporter Richard D. Arnold “stopped four days in Philadelphia & was most kindly & warmly treated by my old friends.” A multitude of relationships—business, friendship, marriage, intellectual interest, and education—helped maintain the reactionary sensibility that bound northern and southern bluebloods together into an privileged class in the decades between the Revolution and the Civil War. But, as Arnold understood, it was travel—face-to-face contact—that forged regional elites into a national community that could withstand four years of bloody sectional warfare.⁴⁶

1. [Ralph] Izard Middleton to Nathaniel Russell Middleton, June 8, 1834, Nathaniel Russell Middleton Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill (hereafter UNC). On the Middletons, George Winston Lane, Jr., “The Middletons of Eighteenth Century South Carolina: A Colonial Dynasty, 1678-1787” (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1990).
2. William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (1961; New York: Anchor, 1963), chap. 1; Michael O’Brien, “On the Mind of the Old South and Its Accessibility,” in Michael O’Brien, ed., *Rethinking the South: Essays in Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 19.
3. Eliza Haywood to John Haywood, June 11, 1824, Haywood Family Papers, UNC. On cosmopolitanism and class, see Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 221-2; Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought: Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694-1790* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977); and Alan D. McKillop, “Local Attachment and Cosmopolitanism—The Eighteenth-Century Pattern,” in Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom, eds., *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965), 193-215.
4. Jacquelyn C. Miller, “An ‘Uncommon Tranquility of Mind;’ Emotional Self-Control and the Construction of Middle-Class Identity in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia,” *Journal of Social History* 30 (Fall 1996): 129-48; C. Dallett Hemphill, “Middle Class Rising in Revolutionary America: The Evidence from Manners,” *Journal of Social History* 30 (Winter 1996), 317-44; Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1992). The definition of class and status used here relies more on cultural values and self-perception than wealth. I prefer the approach of Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1790-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 234-8, to the wealth-centered definition of Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class, and Power before the Civil War* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1973).
5. Lollie Belle Wylie, ed., *Memoirs of Judge Richard H. Clark* (Atlanta, GA: Franklin Printing, 1898), 94. I thank Charles J. Johnson for bringing this source to my attention. On the sophistication and urbanity of the planter class, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The House of Percy: Honor, Melancholy, and Imagination in a Southern Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Charlene Marie Lewis, “Ladies and Gentlemen on Display: Planter Society at the Virginia Springs, 1790-1860” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1997); Gregg Kimball, “Place and Perception: Richmond in Late Antebellum America” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1997); and Tom Chambers’s dissertation in progress at William and Mary, “Fashionable Disease: Promoting Health and Leisure at the Virginia Springs and Saratoga Springs, New York, 1790-1860,” (Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1999).

6. Hugh Merritt Rose to Henry Rose, October 16, 1825, Hugh Merritt Rose Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond (hereafter VHS); John Williams Walker to Samuel Brown, April 19, 1819, Samuel Brown Papers, Filson Club Historical Library, Louisville, Kentucky; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 397; Richard H. Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold, M.D., 1808-1876, Mayor of Savannah, Georgia, First Secretary of the American Medical Association* (New York: AMS, 1929), 9. Steven Stowe, "City, Country, and the Feminine Voice," in Michael O'Brien and David Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 295-304. On urban life in the South, see especially David R. Goldfield, "Pursuing the American Dream: Cities in the Old South," in Blaine E. Brownell and Goldfield, eds., *The City in Southern History: The Growth of Urban Civilization in the South* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977), 52-91; Harriet B. Amos, *Cotton City: Urban Development in Antebellum Mobile* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1985); on urban cultural life, the essays in O'Brien and Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*; and D. Clayton James, *Ante-bellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968).
7. Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 235; Webster quoted in Thomas E. V. Smith, *The City of New York in the Year of Washington's Inauguration, 1789* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1889), 119; Frances Anne Kemble, *Journal of a Residence in America*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1835), 2:255.
8. Charles Godfrey Leland, *Memoirs* (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), 136; Marmaduke Kimbaugh to Nathaniel Hunt, December 17, 1858, Nathaniel Hunt Papers; Carrie Fries to Francis Fries [March-April 1860], Fries-Schaffner Family Papers, both UNC.
9. David Hamilton to Sarah Hamilton, December 31, 1837, May 23, 1838, Benjamin C. Yancey Papers, UNC. On the destruction of Pennsylvania Hall, see Samuel Webb, ed., *History of Pennsylvania Hall, Which Was Destroyed by a Mob on the 17th of May, 1838* (Philadelphia: Merrihew and Gunn, 1838); and Margaret Hope Bacon, "Lucretia Mott: Pioneer for Peace," *Quaker History* 82 (1993): 68-78. On anti-abolition mobs generally, see Leonard L. Richards, "Gentlemen of Property and Standing": *Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). See John Hope Franklin, *A Southern Odyssey: Travelers in the Antebellum North* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976), 129-66, for observations of race relations in the North.
10. Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 24-5; Steven E. Siry, *DeWitt Clinton and the American Political Economy: Sectionalism, Politics, and Republican Ideology, 1787-1828* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 5. See also Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 48.
11. J. C. Myers, *Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, the Canadas, and Nova Scotia* (Harrisonburg: J. H. Wartmann, 1849), 442-3. On prison reform, see Blake McKelvey, *American Prisons: A Study in American Social History prior to 1915* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936); W. David Lewis, *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of the Penitentiary in New York, 1796-1848* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965); David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 196-200; and Adam J. Hirsch, *The Rise of the Penitentiary: Prisons and Punishment in Early America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).
12. Matilda Hamilton Diary, February 26, 1857; John Strobria Diary, September 17, 1817, both VHS. On the jail itself, see Negley K. Teeters, "The Early Days of the Eastern State Penitentiary at Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 16 (October 1949): 261-302; Leroy B. De Puy, "The Triumph of the 'Pennsylvania System' at the State's Penitentiaries," *Pennsylvania History* 21 (April 1954): 128-44. On the contrasting aspirations of middle-class and patrician reform movements, see Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 334-5.
13. J.Q.P. of N.C., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," *Southern Literary Messenger* 4 (April 1838): 250; Peter Atall [Robert Waln, Jr.], *The Hermit in Philadelphia, Second Series. Containing Some Account of Young Belles and Coquettes; Elegantes and Spoiled Children; Dandies and Ruffians; Old Maids and Old Bachelors; Dandy-Slang and Lady-Slang; Morning Visits and Evening Parties; Dress and Ornaments; Female Slanderers and Male Exquisites; Long Branch Letters and Prices Current; Lotteries and Quacks; Billiards and Pharo; Gambling and Sporting; Elections and Amusements; Theatricals and Horse Racing; Wife Selling and Betting; Boxing and Cocking; Dog Fighting and Bull Baiting, &c., &c., &c.* (Philadelphia: J. Maxwell and Moses Thomas, 1821), 78-9. On deference, consent, and public performance, see E. P. Thompson's critique of Harold Perkin in Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture," *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974): 382-405. Michael Zuckerman's recent critique of deference in the early republic defines deference too narrowly as consent. Zuckerman, "Tocqueville, Turner, and Turds: Four Stories of Manners in Early America," *Journal of American History* 85 (June 1998): 13-42.
14. Waln, *Hermit in Philadelphia*, 78; Anne J. Willing to Mary Byrd, March 19, 1808, in Everard Kidder Meade, "The Papers of Richard Evelyn Byrd, I, of Frederick County, Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 54 (1946): 117; Harriet Manigault Diary, July 31, 1814, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (hereafter HSP). See John F. Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Noonday, 1990): 127-30, for the recommendations of middle-class etiquette experts; and Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 61-2, for rudeness against gentlemen by working-class women.
15. My treatment here follows that of Richard Bushman's *Refinement of America*, wherein Bushman describes these urban spaces as "a geography of refinement . . . divid[ing] greater from lesser areas of gentility and regions of

civilization from areas of barbarism” (p. 353).

16. Dr. Adam Alexander travel diary, October 6, 1801, Alexander-Hillhouse Papers, UNC (quotation). Fritz Redlich, “The Philadelphia Waterworks in Relation to the Industrial Revolution of the United States.” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 69 (April 1945): 236-54; J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia, 1609-1884* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1884), 530; and John Seelye, *Beautiful Machine: Rivers and the Republican Plan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7-8.

17. Myers, *Sketches on a Tour*, 446; Jane Caroline North Diary, August 20, 1850, in Michael O’Brien, *An Evening When Alone: Four Journals of Single Women in the South, 1827-1867* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Southern Texts Society, 1993), 95.

18. Fanny Fern [Sara Payson Willis Parton, pseud.], *Fresh Leaves* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1857), 240; C.G.P., *A Traveler’s Sketch* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, 1861), 13; Strobria Diary, September 11, 1817, VHS.

19. Dr. Adam Alexander Travel Diary, October 6, 1801, Alexander-Hillhouse Papers, UNC. Peale opened his museum in 1786 and administered it for his remaining forty-one years in a variety of locations, including the upper floor of the State House. Charles S. Sellers, *Mr. Peale’s Museum: Charles Wilson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: Norton, 1980). See also Elizabeth Ruffin’s Diary, July 31, 1827, in O’Brien, ed., *An Evening When Alone*, 74-5, for another account of Peale’s museum.

20. Preachy R. Grattan to “My Dear Wife,” September 27, 1837, Grattan Papers, UNC; G. M. Davison, *The Traveler’s Guide through the Middle and Northern States and the Provinces of Canada*, 7th ed. (Saratoga Springs: G. M. Davison and S. S. & W. Wood, 1837), 68; *A Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia; Comprising a Description of the Places of Amusement, Exhibitions, Public Buildings, Public Squares, &c. in the City; and of the Places of Public Resort and Objects of Interest and Curiosity in the Environs. Designed as a Pocket Cicerone for Strangers* (Philadelphia: Thomas T. Ash, 1837), 43.

21. David Moltke-Hansen, “The Expansion of Intellectual Life: A Prospectus,” in Moltke-Hansen and O’Brien, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*, 32; Josiah Nott to James Gage, March [1837], Folder 3, James McKibbin Gage Papers; Josiah Nott to Nathaniel McClelland, February 26, 1830, McClelland Family Papers, both UNC. See also Daniel Walker Howe, ed., *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976).

22. *A Guide to the Stranger, or Pocket Companion for the Fancy, Containing a List of the Gay Houses and Ladies of Pleasure in the City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection* (Philadelphia: n.p. [1849?]), 9, 12, 14, in Library Company of Philadelphia. On the sensual lifestyle of the gentry, see Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York: Norton, 1982), 35-42; 74-9; 118-20; Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 24-43, 341. On prostitution in New York, see Timothy J. Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790-1920* (New York: Norton, 1992); on Hammond, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *James Henry Hammond and the Old South: A Design for Mastery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); and Carol Bleser, ed., *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

23. Moltke-Hansen, “The Expansion of Intellectual Life,” 8. On the development of southern distinctiveness in the colonial period, see especially David Hackett Fischer, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 207-418; Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); and for the antebellum period, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Nineteenth-Century American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), chap. 1; Charles S. Sydnor, *The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1948); Avery O. Craven, *The Growth of Southern Nationalism, 1848-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953); John McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation: Southern Nationalists and Southern Nationalism, 1860-1860* (New York: Norton, 1979). For a useful corrective, see Edward Pessen, “How Different from Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South?” *American Historical Review* 85 (1980): 1111-28. Jeffrey R. Young, “Ideology and Death on a Savannah River Plantation: Paternalism amidst ‘a Good Supply of Disease and Pain,’” *Journal of Southern History* 59 (November 1993): 675-706, argues that slave owning accentuated the paternalism already at the heart of upper-class identity.

24. Arthur H. Shaffer, “David Ramsay and the Limits of Revolutionary Nationalism,” in O’Brien and Moltke-Hansen, eds., *Intellectual Life in Antebellum Charleston*; 54. David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 9.

25. *A Traveler’s Tour through the United States: A Pleasing and Instructive Pastime, Performed with a Teetotum and Travelers. All the Principal Cities Are Visited and Described* (Philadelphia: Thomas T. Ash, 1835), 5, 6, 45.

26. Myers, *Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States*, 436, 449-50.

27. Myers, *Sketches on a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States*, 68; Davison, *The Fashionable Tour*, 438-9. Contemporary works that stress the distinctiveness of poor southern whites include Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller’s Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based upon Three Former Volumes of Journeys and Investigations* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1861); and Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. Donald Smalley (1832; New York: Knopf, 1949). Recent studies of southern whites that emphasize their egalitarianism and independence include J. Mills Thornton III, *Politics and Power in a Slave Society:*

- Alabama, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); and J. William Harris, *Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985).
28. Strobria Diary, September 6, 1817, VHS. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
29. Mitchell Snay, *The Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South* (1993; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 11; Emma Shannon to "Mother," April 8, 1858, Box 4, Folder 40, Crutcher-Shannon Papers, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson; J.Q.P. of N.C., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," 250. Basil Hall also expressed dismay at the appearance of Independence Hall, although he ascribed its poor condition to Americans' failure to respect anything on account of its age, or, indeed, on any other account. Neither historical associations, nor high public services, nor talents, nor knowledge, claim any particular reverence from the busy generations of the present hour. . . . The Turks who pounded the Frieze of the Parthenon into mortar, had an object in view; but I never could hear that the Americans had an equally good excuse for dismembering their Hall of Independence.
- Hall, *Travels in North America in the Years 1827 and 1828*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: Cadell, 1829), 2:375-6. 30.
- Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, 9. See also Albrecht Koschnik, "Political Conflict and Public Contest: Rituals of National Celebration in Philadelphia, 1788-1915," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 118 (1994): 209-48; Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); and Daniel Kilbride, "Cultivation, Conservatism, and the Early National Gentry: The Manigault Family and Their Circle," *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, no. 2 (Summer 1999) 221-56. 31. *Guide to the Lions of Philadelphia*, 20; Matilda Hamilton Diary, February 24, 1857, Hamilton Family Papers; Hugh Merritt Rose to Henry Rose, October 16, 1825, Rose Papers (both VHS). 32. Clement Comer Clay to Hugh Lawson Clay, July 22, 1850, Clement Comer Clay Papers, Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham. On Clay's southern nationalism, see McCardell, *The Idea of a Southern Nation*, 114-5, 275. 33. Eliza E. Haywood to John Haywood (father), June 11, 1824, Haywood Family Papers, UNC; Richard L. Bushman, "American High-Style and Vernacular Cultures," in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 358.
34. J.Q.P. of N.C., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," 251; Harriet Martineau, *Society in America*, 2 vols. (New York, Saunders & Otley, 1837), 1:172-3. Thomas Hamilton observed that "there is no American city in which the system of exclusion is so rigidly observed as in Philadelphia. The ascent of a parvenu into the aristocratic circle is slow and difficult. There is a sort of holy alliance between its members to forbid all unauthorized approach." Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1833), 1:388.
35. William Chambers, *Things as They Are in America* (Philadelphia, Lippincott, Gambo, 1854), 317; Mary Huger Middleton to Margaret Manigault, n.d., Cadwalader Collection, J. Francis Fisher Section, Box 5, HSP; Mary Telfair to Mary Few, July 14, n.d., Item 223, William Few Collection, Georgia Department of History and Archives, Atlanta (hereafter GDHA). I am indebted to Charles J. Johnson for this last citation and the next in note 36.
36. Mary Telfair to Mary Few, November 12, n.d., Few Collection, GDHA. Although I follow Richard Shryock in characterizing this community as an urban, East Coast culture (Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold*, 9), in reality the boundaries were less geographic than cultural. Gentry on the frontier might participate in this community through correspondence, literature, and occasional visits. Consider the example of William Dunbar, the Natchez planter-scientist who maintained close ties with this world through John Vaughan of the American Philosophical Society. Through such connections, planters could maintain an urban sensibility in a rural, even frontier, setting. On Dunbar, see Mrs. Dunbar Rowland [Eron Rowland], ed., *Life, Letters, and Papers of William Dunbar of Elgin, Morayshire, Scotland, and Natchez, Mississippi: Pioneer Scientist of the Southern United States* (Jackson: Press of the Mississippi Historical Society, 1930).
37. Henry Massie Travel Journal, 1808, VHS; J.Q.P. of N.C., "Extracts from Gleanings on the Way," 251; William Gaston to Joseph Hopkinson, June 4, 1823, Joseph Hopkinson Papers (photostats), UNC; Wyatt-Brown, *House of Percy*, 9. Blumin, *Emergence of the Middle Class*, 235-7; Frederick Cople Jaher, *The Urban Establishment: Upper Strata in Boston, New York, Charleston, Chicago, and Los Angeles* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).
38. *Ladies' Vase: or, Polite Manual for Young Ladies. Original and Selected. By an American Lady* (Lowell: N. L. Dayton, 1843), 22. On the middle-class critique of aristocratic manners, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*, and Hemphill, "Middle Class Rising."
39. [Job R. Tyson] (1846), [Henry C. Lea] (1897), and [?] *Sketch of the Wistar Party of Philadelphia* (Orig. pub. Philadelphia, 1846; rpt. with additions, 1897, rpt. with additions, 1976), 9.
40. Members listed by year in [Tyson] et al., *Sketch of the Wistar Party of Philadelphia*; guest information can be found in the Wistar Association Manuscripts and the MS Archives of the Wistar Association, both in the American Philosophical Library, Philadelphia (hereafter APS). "Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," Box 10, J. Francis Fisher Section, Cadwalader Collection, HSP; Thomas Percy to John William Walker, June 12, 1821, John William Walker Papers, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery. On Wistar, see William Tilghman, *An*

Eulogium, in Commemoration of Doctor Caspar Wistar, Late President of the American Philosophical Society Held at Philadelphia for Promoting Useful Knowledge (Philadelphia: E. Earle, 1818); and David Hosack, M.D., *Tribute to the Memory of the Late Caspar Wistar, M.D.* (New York, C. S. Van Winkle, 1818). On the itinerary imposed by Vaughan on unsuspecting but grateful travelers, see the accounts of Hall, *Travels in North America*, 2:337-9, and Herbert Baxter Adams, ed., *Life and Writings of Jared Sparks, Comprising Selections from His Journals and Correspondence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), 133-4.

41. Owen Wister, *The Philadelphia Club, Being a Brief History of the Club for the First Hundred Years of Its Existence, Together with a Roll of Its Officers and Members to 1934* (Philadelphia: privately printed, 1934), 21, 32, 38-9; members on 81-143.

42. "Recollections of Joshua Francis Fisher," HSP; Fern, *Fresh Leaves*, 58-9. Cynthia Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender in the Southern Colonies," *Journal of Southern History* 62 (August 1996): 449-80. The literature on middle-class women's sphere, particularly its limitations, is quite extensive. For a summary of the scholarship and a critique of the concept of the "spheres," see Linda Kerber "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988): 9-39. On the masculine public sphere, see Paula Baker, *The Moral Frameworks of Public Life: Gender, Politics, and the State in Rural New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). For theoretical reviews of the thorny issue of gender and the public/private distinction, see Kathy Peiss, "Going Public: Women in Nineteenth-Century Cultural History," *American Literary History* 3 (Winter 1991): 817-28; and Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," in *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism, and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

43. Sidney George Fisher Diary, September 12, 1838, HSP. Studies that stress southern gentlemen's pursuit of "ornamental" wives include Anne Frior Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930); Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon, 1982); and Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). On single women, see Alice Lee Chambers-Schiller, *Liberty, A Better Husband: Single Women in America: The Generations of 1780-1840* (New Haven, CT, 1984); Anya Jabour, "'It Will Never Do for Me to Be Married': The Life of Laura Wirt Randall, 1803-1833," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (Summer 1997): 193-236; and O'Brien, ed., *An Evening When Alone*, esp. 1-46.

44. Kierner, "Hospitality, Sociability, and Gender," 450; Stowe, "City, Country, and Feminine Voice"; and Steven Stowe, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of the Planters* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 82. Patricia Cline Cohen, "Women at Large: Travel in Antebellum America," *History Today* 44 (1994): 44-50, emphasizes the distinct aspects of women traveling in this period.

45. George Sharswood to Henry Lea, April 24, 1863, in MS Archives of Wistar Association, APS. On the religious schisms, see Snay, *The Gospel of Disunion*, 113-50. On the business community, see Kenneth Stampp, *The Imperiled Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

46. Arnold to Dr. George T. Elliot Jr., September 28, 1865, in Shryock, ed., *Letters of Richard D. Arnold*.