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A Carey and Patterson Exchange

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A letter recently donated to the library contains autographs of two noted Americans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: Mathew Carey (1760-1839), publisher and writer of Philadelphia; and William Patterson (1752-1835), shipping merchant of Baltimore. Both were Irishmen who had emigrated as young men and were enthusiastic supporters of the new United States.

Carey, born in Dublin, was a printer who had worked with Benjamin Franklin at Passy and was an ardent Irish nationalist. In his two Dublin publications, the *Freeman’s Journal* (1780) and the *Volunteer’s Journal* (1783) he had challenged British government policy toward Ireland and had been imprisoned for his audacity. In 1784 he was condemned for a second time, but escaped to America. His arrival in Philadelphia was announced to Lafayette, who was there at the time, as that of a persecuted publisher, and the Frenchman gave him $400 to start a newspaper. This was the *Pennsylvania Herald* (1785), and the next year Carey tried the *Columbian Magazine*, but soon abandoned it to publish the *American Museum*, which lasted until 1792. After that he published and sold books. He was a director of the Bank of Pennsylvania from 1802 to 1805 and was an inveterate pamphleteer, turning out numbers of tracts on his favorite causes—Irish rights, popular education, and protection for American manufactures.

William Patterson, born in Donegal, had come to the colonies at the age of fourteen, and had by 1775 acquired enough money to buy and send to France two ships to procure munitions for the American Revolutionary army. He then went to the West Indies.
and grew rich in shipping. In 1778 he settled in Baltimore, where he engaged in the clipper ship trade. He helped Lafayette to supply the American army before Yorktown in 1781 and joined the battle. He also helped with the strengthening and defense of Fort McHenry in 1814 and would welcome Lafayette there in 1824. He became the first president of the Bank of Maryland in 1790 and would be a founder and director of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1827.

These two civic leaders were undoubtedly well acquainted, and they appear to have had similar views on the economic questions that were agitating the country after the War of 1812. During the war some factories had sprung up in the United States because maritime trade was disrupted; but after the peace treaty a flood of British and European goods competed with the products of the infant American firms and caused "mercantile distress." Carey also deplored the concomitant drain of specie, or capital, which was needed at home, and he thought there were too many merchants in the country. He had published, in 1820, a thick pamphlet entitled *The New Olive Branch: Or, An Attempt to Establish an Identity of Interest between Agriculture, Manufactures, and Commerce; and to Prove, that a large Portion of the Manufacturing Industry of this Nation has been Sacrificed to Commerce; and that Commerce has Suffered by this Policy nearly as much as Manufactures.* He was anxious to influence the voters of the mostly rural and agricultural Southern states, who regarded tariffs as a threat to their cotton trade and could imagine no benefits to their economy from the establishment of a domestic cotton manufacturing industry. Carey feared an eventuality which actually came to pass in 1832, when the Nullification Crisis brought tariffs into the states' rights quarrel.

New England at this time also favored free trade, and the *North American Review*, a Boston quarterly, had published several essay-reviews on economic questions. One of these, in the issue for July, 1823 (Art. X, pp. 186-228) reviewed a pamphlet of Carey's which he had distributed in the previous autumn and winter in an attempt to influence Congressional action on a tariff bill. He had produced four editions of the work, and this was the fourth edition, "improved," of *The Prospect Before us, or Facts and Observations Illustrative of the Past and Present Situation and Future Prospects of the United States, Embracing a View of the Causes of the late Bankruptcies in Boston; to which is added a*
Sketch of the Restrictive Systems of the Principal Nations of Christendom. By a Pennsylvanian. It was published in Philadelphia by H.C. Carey and I. Lea in 1822. H.C. Carey was Mathew's son, Henry Charles (1793-1879), who was to become famous for his books on political science.

The reviewer of the pamphlet was the editor, Edward Everett (1794-1865), then a professor at Harvard, and son of the proprietor of the North American Review, the Rev. Oliver Everett. He took up in order the main points of Carey's argument, and refuted each of them at length, praising commerce as "noble," while doubting the morality of manufacturing. The latter was also a poor investment, for the cotton factories so far built in New England were ill-designed, and several of them had burned up. They were also insufficiently underwritten, which posed a hazard to banks. Adam Smith, whose theories Carey opposed, had predicted this outcome and had urged gradual change. Everett admitted that there were, indeed, too many merchants in the country, and that their excessive importing of goods had been a contributing factor to the ninety-odd recent bankruptcies in the Boston area. He conceded that this situation could also be said to have added to a severe drain in bank deposits; yet he denied that the imposition of such a "violent" measure as a heightened tariff would remedy the matter, and deplored government interference in the marketplace.

Carey determined to re-state his case in the face of such strong criticism, and he wrote to Patterson on 3 October 1823:

Dear Sir,

I hoped to have heard from you in reply to my letter of the 25th ult.

I send you 50 copies of No. 1 & 2, of my reply to the Editor of the North American Review, which I request you will distribute to proper persons in Virginia & North Carolina, if you find it convenient. If otherwise, let me know, & I shall cease sending.

Your ob't hble Serv't
Mathew Carey

On the back of the address-fold he added: "The numbers not sent. Shall go by private hand."

Patterson wrote his answer on 7 October, beginning at the
A letter from Mathew Carey to William Patterson

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bottom of Carey's one-page letter, and continuing overleaf:

Dear Sir

I have rec'd in course your two favors of 26 Ult. & 3d current & duly note their contents. It is not likely that any number could be induced here to take up & act on the Subject you have so much at heart, the few who are concerned in Manufacturing Establishments are so engaged that they will not take time to attend to anything else, and others who are not immediately interested will not give themselves the trouble to even read anything on the Subject, much less to take an active part or be at any Expense on that account. Your publications Nums 1 & 2 are not yet come to hand[..] I will distribute the 50 copies you mention being on the way but you need not send me any more—It appears to me that publishing in Pamphlet form will not answer the purpose intended, they go into few hands & those mostly who are already well disposed & acquainted with the Subject. Would it not therefore be practicable to have your pieces published in the best & most widely circulating newspapers in the different States, & if the proprietors of papers will not do it gratis, they may perhaps for a moderate consideration, & in the latter case perhaps a fund could be made up to meet the Expense & answer the purpose—This seems to me to be the most likely mode of disseminating useful knowledge, for people generally are more likely to see & read newspaper publications than any others—

The message is unsigned, but the address and the notation on the original address fold: "Ans'd 7 Oct" make it clear that Patterson wrote his reply to be copied for posting to Carey.

No pamphlet of 1823 by Carey that could be a "reply to the Editor of the North American Review" is to be found in Poole's Index to Periodicals or in Sabin's Dictionary of Books Relating to America. However, both Sabin and Carey's biographer, Earl L. Bradsher, state that Carey published so many pamphlets that no list of them is complete. The fifty copies of this one that Carey mentions may never have been distributed. Patterson's advice may have been heeded and Southern newspapers approached. Patterson may even have donated to a fund to persuade the proprietors of the papers to print Carey's message. It seems more likely that
Carey simply abandoned his attempt to answer Everett and took another path toward his goal.

On 24 November 1823, Carey & Lea issued another pamphlet by Mathew Carey called *The Crisis: A Solemn Appeal to the President, the Senate, and House of Representatives . . . on the Destructive Tendency of the Present Policy of this Country.* . . .

On 18 December Congress met and Henry Clay, who had been promoting the tariff, was re-elected Speaker of the House of Representatives. In January of 1824 he introduced a protective tariff bill, and on 22 May it passed by narrow majorities in both houses of Congress. Whether Carey’s pamphleteering had any influence on this outcome is impossible to tell. At least, he got his wish for aid to the development of manufacturing in the United States, and his views have been dominant in the subsequent history of our economy.