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FEATURING ANTIQUE MINIATURE PORTRAITS  
OF THE TORMEY-HOLDER COLLECTION

## FEATURED ARTIST: PETER (“PIERRE”) HENRI (1752-1822)

by Michael I. Tormey

March 19, 2018

Two centuries after his death, Peter (“Pierre”) Henri is considered by art historians to be an important early American miniature portrait painter. Active in the United States from 1788 to about 1818, he painted likenesses with a unique charm that reflected his French roots but exuded nonetheless a distinctly American look – a look that is today much admired by art collectors and fans of early Americana alike.

Art historians Carrie Rebora Barratt and Lori Zabar refer to Henri as being “among the most highly skilled of French émigré miniaturists in America.”<sup>2</sup> Such praise aside, however, it appears Henri was not universally admired during his own lifetime. A contemporary of Henri, the well published William Dunlap, said of the artist, for example, that “his skill does not entitle him to notice.”<sup>3</sup> Examining the totality of Henri’s work, however, it is Dunlap’s criticism that appears meritless, as many fine examples of Henri’s paintings have survived to the twenty-first century and the painter is represented in several American museums and important private collections. While the legacy of his art is well preserved, however, the body of scholarship about Henri’s life and career has remained limited, thus prompting the research effort that led to this article.

### PETER VERSUS PIERRE

Most interestingly, although the subject of this article is today ubiquitously known as and referred to as *Pierre* Henri, he himself preferred the name of *Peter*. Virtually every mention of him in advertisements, public documents and vital statistics during his



Figure 1:

#### **Self-Portrait of the Artist**

by Peter Henri

circa 1795

*Offering a rare glimpse of the artist himself, this black and white image of Henri’s self-portrait was published in 1900, in “Salons Colonial and Republican”.<sup>1</sup>*

*It was said at the time to be in the possession of Henri’s granddaughter, Mrs. Edward Y. Townsend (Henrietta M. Troth Townsend) of Philadelphia. It is assumed that the miniature has passed down to successive generations of Henri’s descendants, but its current ownership and whereabouts is unknown.*

lifetime in the United States refer to him by the Anglicized name of Peter. Considering that the artist himself appears to have never used the name Pierre during the three decades he lived in America, one cannot help but think that modern historians do him a disservice by continuing to refer to him as Pierre.

With this in mind, readers will note that, within this article and within the context of the Tormey-Holder Collection, Henri is referred to by the name of Peter.

## FRENCH ORIGINS

Like many important early American artists, Peter Henri was not born in the United States. Rather, he was born in Paris, France, in the year 1752.<sup>4</sup> Most art history resources mistakenly state his year of birth as 1760; but newspaper announcements of Henri's death report that the artist died on August 1, 1822, at the age of 70, by which one can deduce that he was instead born in 1752.<sup>5</sup>

A family history written by Peter Henri's great grandson, John W. Townsend, claims that Henri's parents were Pierre and Henriette Henri of Paris.<sup>6</sup> This is corroborated by mention in *Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania* that Henri was the "son of Pierre Henri, native of France, by his wife Henrietta".<sup>7</sup> No further background of the Paris Henris is revealed by either source, however.

Townsend also reports that his great grandfather left France in 1776, in the company of an uncle. The two were reportedly headed to the American colonies but suffered a shipwreck and became stranded for several years on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (on the eastern portion of the island that is today known as the Dominican Republic). Family tradition has it that Henri remained on Hispaniola until the death of his uncle in 1787 or 1788, after which he migrated to New York City.

Of course, it is difficult to prove (or, for that matter, to disprove) family tradition that dates back nearly 250 years, but clues have surfaced that indicate Henri may have maintained regular communication with contacts on Hispaniola (which would support the belief that he himself had once been there) and that he was sympathetic to their plight during hard times. Years later, for example, when Henri lived in Charleston, South Carolina, there are two known occasions when he took in former residents of Hispaniola who had suffered financial hardship.

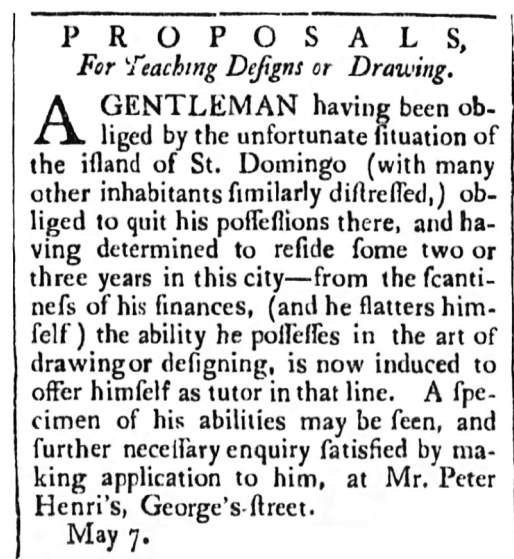


Figure 2:

Newspaper advertisement by Peter Henri, soliciting business for an unnamed gentleman who was trying to reestablish himself in Charleston after having fled Hispaniola.

("State Gazette of South-Carolina", Charleston, South Carolina, June 11, 1792 edition, Vol. LIV, Issue 4087, page 3.)

To wit, in May and June of 1792, Henri published newspaper advertisements in which he solicited business for an unnamed gentleman of Santo Domingo (i.e., Saint-Domingue, one of two European colonies on Hispaniola at the time) who had fled his home and abandoned his property to reside in Charleston due to “the unfortunate situation of the island... with many other inhabitants similarly distressed.”<sup>8</sup> (See fig. 2.) No doubt, the distressing situation Henri referred to was the slave uprising of 1791. That summer, marauding bands of slaves rose up against French colonists and plantation owners, killing many of their former masters and their masters’ families, and burning or otherwise destroying hundreds of sugar and coffee plantations.

A year later, in November 1793, Henri similarly offered assistance to a former plantation owner of Hispaniola who, in addition to sustaining heavy losses on the island, suffered the death of his wife and a child while on their journey to Charleston.<sup>9</sup> (See fig. 3.)

## ARRIVAL TO AMERICA

To date, no records have surfaced to indicate exactly when Henri left Hispaniola or when he arrived to the United States. He is known to have been in New York City as early as April 1788, however. At that time, in the *New York Morning Post*, he advertised his services as a miniature painter “lately arrived from France.”<sup>10</sup> (See fig. 4.)

It is interesting, of course, that Henri referred to himself as having recently arrived from France. In numerous advertisements over a period of decades, Henri often referred to himself alternatively as being from France or being from Paris. He never once made reference to his supposed stay on Hispaniola – which is perhaps understandable if he didn’t look upon that period of his life with fondness.

It is interesting, too, that Henri never made reference to having lived in or studied in London. This stands in contrast to claims by some that he had studied at the Royal Academy.

**TO THE PUBLIC.**  
**A** GENTLEMAN Planter in Hispaniola, who is lately arrived in this city, after having encountered a new series of misfortunes in his passage, as the loss of his lady and one of his children, together with the pillaging of the scattered remains of his property by the privateers; is advised, as he possesses some musical abilities upon the violin, to undertake teaching a small number of pupils in that line, and thinks that he can enable them in a short time to improve themselves into rapid progress towards the perfection in such an agreeable accomplishment. For further particulars apply to Mr. P. Henri miniature painter in George-street.  
 November 5. tc.

Figure 3:

*Newspaper advertisement by Peter Henri, soliciting business for an unnamed gentleman planter of Hispaniola who was trying to reestablish himself in Charleston.*

*(“State Gazette of South-Carolina”, Charleston, South Carolina, November 23, 1793 edition, Vol. LV, Issue 4286, page 3.)*

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**A Miniature Painter,**  
 Lately arrived from FRANCE,  
**P**RESENTS his respects to his friends, and the public in general, and informs them that he draws LIKENESSES of Ladies and Gentlemen at the lowest price, and engages the painting to be equal to any in Europe. Should the Likenesses not be approved of after drawing, they will be taken back. Those Ladies and Gentlemen who will please to honour him with their commands, will be so kind as to enquire at Mr. Brooks’s, Painter, No. 51, Crown Street, for  
**PETER HENRI.**  
 N. B. He will wait on the Ladies.  
 New-York, April 10, 1788. tf.

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Figure 4:

*The first of Peter Henri’s known advertisements in the United States, were published in New York City, in April 1788.*

*(“New York Morning Post”, New York, New York, April 10, 1788 edition, Issue 1270, page 2.)*

It was J. Thomas Scharf and Thomas Westcott who, in 1884, first claimed that Henri “came from England with a certificate from the Royal Academy in London.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 1900, Anne Hollingsworth Wharton wrote that “Henri brought with him credentials from the Royal Academy of London.”<sup>12</sup> In 1921, in his *Early American Portrait Painters in Miniature*, Theodore Bolton was less definitive when he stated that “Henri probably studied at the Royal Academy in London.”<sup>13</sup> To date, however, no evidence has surfaced, in the United States or in London, to support such claims. Additionally, close examination of Henri’s painting style does not suggest any English influence. Rather, it is distinctly French in nature, albeit in a non-academic way that leads one to wonder if he might have been self-taught. One imagines, too, that had Henri indeed studied in London, especially at the Royal Academy, he would have promoted this fact to his prospective customers in America, many of whom themselves had come from London or other parts of Great Britain.

## A ROUGH START IN AMERICA

Upon his arrival to New York City, Henri was initially located in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. This is evidenced by his newspaper ads in April 1788, in which he informed patrons that he could be reached at the home of a Mr. Brooks (himself also a painter), at No. 51 Crown Street.<sup>14</sup>

One month later, the artist relocated to Lower Manhattan, to the boarding home of a Mrs. Davis, located two blocks from Wall Street, at No. 42 Hanover Square.<sup>15</sup> Henri’s ads during this period (see fig. 5) indicate that his Hanover Square residence was “opposite Mr. Peter Goelet’s”<sup>16</sup> This Peter Goelet, himself of French descent, was a wealthy merchant, real estate mogul and proprietor of the *Golden Key*, a hardware and luxury goods store.<sup>17 18</sup>

One could easily expect that, living in the company of such prestigious neighbors in Lower Manhattan, Henri would have achieved a fair degree of success in New York. Such appears not to have been the case,

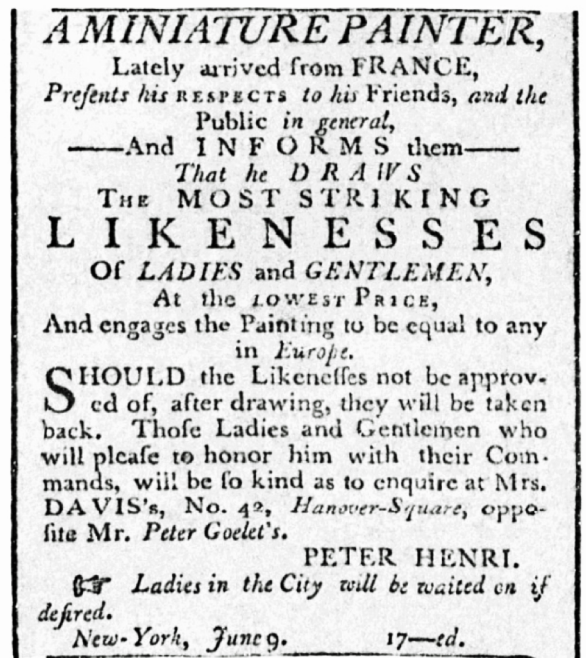


Figure 5:

From May 1788, one month after Henri’s Newspaper advertisements first appeared in New York City, his updated ads indicated that he had ended his association with the painter Mr. Brooks and was now conducting business out of the home of a Mrs. Davis at No. 42 Hanover-Square. Located in Lower Manhattan, two blocks from Wall Street, Mrs. Davis’ boarding home was across the street from Peter Goelet’s “Golden Key” hardware and luxury goods store.

Versions of this ad appeared in both the “New York Morning Post” and the “New-York Journal and Patriotic Register”.

(“New-York Journal and Patriotic Register”, New York, New York, June 21, 1788 edition, Vol. XLII Issue 149, page 3.)



however. Indeed, by January 1789, a mere nine months after his ads first appeared in New York, Henri had vacated the city and migrated 100 miles south to Philadelphia. There, he advertised that he was available for sittings at Mrs. Linn's, located at the corner of Front and Arch Streets.<sup>19</sup> (See fig. 6.) Hinting that negative circumstances led to his departure from New York City, Henri offered Philadelphians a steep discount, writing, "the price of each likeness will be four pounds, which is about the sixth part of the price that I was generally paid before an extraordinary misfortune I experienced a few months ago."<sup>20</sup>

Dale T. Johnson, in her iconic work, *American Portrait Miniatures in the Manney Collection*, speculated that the "extraordinary misfortune" Henri referred to was the shipwreck he experienced upon leaving France.<sup>21</sup> Given that it had been thirteen years prior when Henri is said to have left France and been shipwrecked, however, this seems highly unlikely. Rather, it would appear that Henri encountered some kind of personal or financial trouble in 1788, in New York City – trouble meaningful enough to have compelled him to leave the city and aggressively discount his work in an effort to quickly recoup some cash.

Despite such discounts, it would appear that Henri's attempts to reestablish himself in Philadelphia were not met with immediate success, however. In February 1789, mere weeks after advertising that he was located at Mrs. Linn's, he published new ads informing potential customers that he had moved to a Mrs. Clinton's, on Chestnut Street, between Third and Fourth Streets.<sup>22</sup> (One imagines that Mrs. Clinton offered cheaper accommodations than Mrs. Linn.) Offering further indication that Henri was experiencing difficulty, by June of that year, his newspaper advertisements had been reduced to one third the size of his prior ads, surely out of an attempt to cut costs. Additionally, we learn from these ads that Henri had further reduced the price of his miniatures to three pounds, by then one eighth of the price he had previously charged customers in New York.<sup>23</sup> (See fig. 7.)

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*  
I have the honor to present you my respects, hereby  
offering my best Services as a  
**Miniature Painter:**  
A confidence, from my long practice in this Art, has  
induced me to propose giving good and striking Like-  
nesses, leaving you to judge of the Execution. The  
Price of each Likeness will be *Four Pounds*, which is  
about the sixth part of the price that I was generally  
paid before an extraordinary misfortune I experienced  
a few months ago, which compels me to reduce it to  
the above reasonable terms.—Should a Likeness not  
fully satisfy, it will be taken back.  
I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Your most obedient humble Servant,  
*Peter Henri,*  
At Mrs. Linn's, Corner of Front and Arch Streets,  
Philadelphia.  
P. S. Ladies will be attended on, if desired. d

Figure 6:

Henri published his advertisements in Philadelphia in January 1789, a mere nine months after his ads first appeared in New York.

("Pennsylvania Packet", Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 27, 1789 edition, Issue 3116, page 1.)

**Miniature Painting.**  
THE subscriber takes the liberty of informing the  
public, that he will draw *Miniatures* on the  
shortest notice. (Three Pounds each)  
**PETER HENRI,**  
At Mrs. Clinton's, Chestnut Street, eleven doors  
above the Bank. June 1.

Figure 7:

Indicating that Henri had fallen on difficult times, by June 1789, his ads were much smaller and his advertised prices had declined to one eighth of the price he previously charged to paint miniatures in New York.

("Pennsylvania Packet", Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 2, 1789 edition, Issue 3225, page 3.)

Not meeting with success in Philadelphia, and perhaps having given up on what he saw as a fickle Philadelphia public, from the summer of 1789, Henri ventured out to the nearby cities of Baltimore, Richmond and Alexandria. Several of Henri's paintings from this period have survived, including a miniature in the Tormey-Holder Collection that is believed to have been painted in Baltimore in late 1789 or early 1790: a portrait of John Clapham (1735-1815). (See fig. 8.) There are, nonetheless, few written records documenting Henri's life during this period of travel. Newspaper advertisements by the artist, for example, can only be found in Alexandria where, in October 1789, he published an ad that read, "he intends to stay a few weeks in this place, and will be happy if the humble offers of his services, as a miniature painter, shall be acceptable."<sup>24</sup>

Despite his working trips to Baltimore, Richmond and Alexandria during this period, however, Henri continued to return to Philadelphia, which remained his primary residence until the spring of 1790.

## MARRIAGE AND MOVE TO CHARLESTON

On December 18, 1789, at the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Peter Henri married a young Philadelphian by the name of Elizabeth Osborne (1733-1833).<sup>25 26</sup> By twenty-first century standards, the couple's relationship might be considered tabloid fodder – the young Elizabeth having been just 16 years old when she married the much older Henry who, at 37, was more than double her age. By all accounts, however, the couple was happy; and the two remained together for the remainder of their lives.

Age aside, one might naturally wonder why Miss Osborne agreed to partner with a struggling artist. Evidence shows, however, that the young Elizabeth had already long been accustomed to a life of struggle. When she was barely three years old, her sea captain father, Peter Osborne, died at sea when his ship, *Philadelphia Packet*, floundered in a violent storm off Cape Hatteras.<sup>27 28</sup> Her widowed mother raised six daughters on her own, frequently having to



*Clapham*

Figure 8:

**John Clapham (1735-1815),  
British Loyalist and Colonial Era Official  
of the Province of Maryland During the  
Pre-Revolutionary War Era**

by Peter Henri

circa 1789-1790

watercolor on ivory; housed in a gold brooch  
with a beveled glass lens

1 1/2 x 2 inches

Tormey-Holder Collection

*John Clapham's signature above is copied from a Maryland one dollar bill (serial number 11101, dated March 1, 1770), which Clapham signed during the period when he served as Comptroller of the Currency for the Province of Maryland.*

rely on charitable aid from the Society for the Relief of Poor and Distressed Masters of Ships, Widows and Children.<sup>29</sup>

After his marriage to Elizabeth Osborne, Henri continued to make jaunts from Philadelphia as an itinerant painter. By late spring 1790, he made his way south to Charleston, South Carolina (at the time, the fourth largest city in America), where he appears to have met with a fair degree of success – so much so that, by June, he decided to remain in Charleston and sent to Philadelphia for his young bride to join him. That month, he published newspaper ads stating, “having met with flattering encouragement from some of the most respectable inhabitants in this city, [I have] determined to reside here during this season.”<sup>30</sup> (See fig. 9)

Interestingly, Henri’s plan to reside in Charleston for one season evolved into a much longer stay of four years. No doubt, contributing to his comfort with the southern city was Charleston’s large contingency of French protestants and, in particular, French planters who had fled uprisings on Hispaniola.

In Charleston, the Henris initially lived at 90 Church Street (July 1790 – February 1791).<sup>31</sup> They then moved briefly to 98 Church Street (March 1791 – December 1792),<sup>32</sup> and lastly to 8 George Street (January 1792 – June 1794).<sup>33</sup> All three homes were located in French neighborhoods that are very close to what is considered modern Charleston’s French Quarter.

Similar to his prior working trips to Baltimore, Arlington and Richmond when he lived in Philadelphia, Henri also ventured out from Charleston to other southern cities. Just months after his arrival to Charleston, in fact, he is known to have travelled 125 miles south to Savannah, Georgia. This is evidenced by an ad he published in Charleston, in October 1790, in which he announced his return from Savannah.<sup>34</sup> (See fig. 10.) Reborra and Barratt’s research also reveals that Henri travelled at some point to New Orleans<sup>35</sup> (a natural destination for a French artist).



Figure 9:

*The first of Henri’s advertisements in Charleston, in which he announced he would remain in the city through the season (summer).*

*(“City Gazette”, Charleston, South Carolina, July 31, 1790 edition, Volume VIII, Issue 1534, page 3.)*

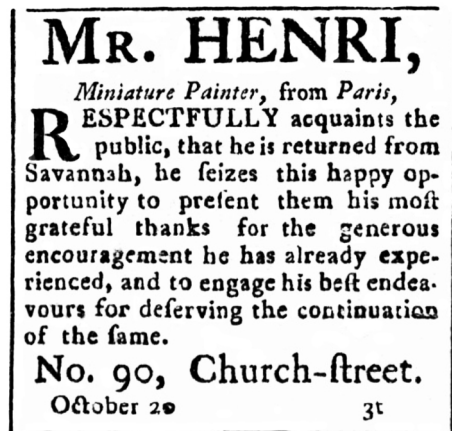


Figure 10:

*In late summer or early fall 1790, Henri traveled to Savannah, Georgia, evidenced by this ad published in Charleston upon his return.*

*(“City Gazette”, Charleston, South Carolina, October 22, 1790 edition, Volume VIII, Issue 1606, page 4.)*



In December 1790 and January 1791, Henri published large ads in Charleston's *City Gazette* that offer interesting insight into his practice at the time. He noted, for example, that in addition to standard portraits in miniature (standard being a typical bust view), he painted full length portraits in miniature (full length in this context meaning a full-body, head-to-toe view) and groups in miniature. He made mention, too, of being able to paint miniatures in various sizes – “from the size of a small ring to that of the largest locket.” He additionally described his process of taking likenesses, saying, “he generally takes but three sittings of half an hour each, and seldom keeps any body longer.” Most interestingly, he also expressed willingness to accept payment in goods (barter) rather than cash.<sup>36</sup> (See fig. 11.)

Shortly thereafter, in March 1791, Henri announced that he had moved to a new location, renting a home at 98 Church Street. As he had a few months prior, he also mentioned his willingness to paint for bartered goods, noting that “goods at cash price will be received in payment.”<sup>37</sup> (See fig. 12.)

Mr. H E N R I,  
MINIATURE PAINTER,  
From P A R I S,  
**R**ESPECTFULLY informs the  
public, that in order to exer-  
cise his profession in a manner more  
commodious and agreeable to those  
who are inclined to favor him with  
employment. he has taken a house  
convenient for that purpose, No. 98,  
Church-street, corner of Elliot street;  
where ladies and gentlemen will  
find their respective satisfaction in  
sitting as shortly and privately as they  
wish. Ladies who prefer it will be  
waited on at their house. Every  
likeness will be warranted, whether  
in bust, full length, or groupes.  
N. B. Goods at cash price will be  
received in payment.  
March 23                      wf tc

Figure 12:

(“City Gazette”, Charleston, South Carolina, May 25, 1791  
edition, Volume IX, Issue 1786, page 4.)

**Mr. HENRI,**  
MINIATURE PAINTER,  
FROM PARIS,  
No. 90, Church-street,  
**C**ONTINUES to draw likenesses  
in miniature, from the size of  
a small ring, to that of the largest  
locket; and in order to deserve the  
confidence of those who choose to  
favor him with employment, he  
engages from this date, to take back  
any likenesses not bearing a pleasing  
resemblance to its original. He thinks  
proper also to inform them, that he  
generally takes but three sittings of  
half an hour each, and seldom keeps  
any body longer. As for his painting  
he supposes that it is easy for any  
person to judge of it; having drawn  
many pictures in this city. Some  
specimens of his ability may be seen  
at Mr J Jacks's, corner of Broad  
street, on the Bay.  
He wishes to inform the public  
that he draws also miniature likenesses  
in full length, groupes, &c.  
He attends at his house from nine  
o'clock in the morning, till two  
in the afternoon. Ladies will be  
waited on if desired.  
Goods at cash price will be received  
in payment.  
December 23                      tuthf tc

Figure 11:

This large advertisement, published by Henri in December 1790 and January 1791, offers great insight into his painting practice, outlining the types and sizes of portraits he would paint, the typical duration of sittings, payment terms, etc.

(“City Gazette”, Charleston, South Carolina, January 29, 1791 edition, Volume IX, Issue 1688, page 4.)



Later that spring, in May 1791, Henri had the distinction of meeting then President George Washington, when the president visited Charleston while on his “southern tour”.<sup>38</sup> This is evidenced by a letter Henri wrote to the President three and a half years later, on November 26, 1794 (when Henri was in Philadelphia), in which he wrote the following:<sup>39</sup>

Philadelphia nov. 26<sup>th</sup> 1794

Sir!

*I beg leave to remind you of the promise you have honored me with while in charleston So. Carolina, that you would be So indulgent as to Suffer me to draw your likeness in miniature, when you Should happen to be in Philadelphia.*

*As I am Soon to go to france, I came her in purpose to enjoy the benefit of your promise in waiting for your Command. I am With Respect, sir, Your very humble and most obedient Servant*

Peter Henri

Further evidence of Henri’s success in Charleston can be seen in newspaper ads he published in March 1792, in which he announced the opening of a school where students could learn from him the art of miniature portraiture.<sup>40</sup> (See fig. 13.) Importantly, these ads also shed light on Henri’s artistic beginnings, as he stated that he had by then been practicing miniature painting for fifteen years, which would indicate that he might have begun painting in 1777, when he was on Hispaniola.<sup>41</sup>

Four months later, Henri published a most interesting advertisement in which he announced that he would accept payment for his work on credit: “As he finds the habits of business in this country are rather different from the plan he has heretofore adopted with respect to payments, he proposes to those whom it may better suit than cash payments, to paint miniatures, &c. on a credit of six months from the time of effecting them, asks instead of cash, a good note payable as above.”<sup>42</sup> (See fig. 14.) Surely, the painter must have been frustrated to have to wait as long as six months to be paid for his work. That such an accommodation was even necessary, however, sheds light on how expensive it was at the time to obtain a hand painted personal likeness.

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A S C H O O L

**For Miniature Painting,**

**W**ILL be opened at the subscriber's house on the first day of April next; he will himself attend with the most mild and scrupulous attention, and advance his pupils with as much rapidity as his knowledge of the principles of that art (which he has practiced almost constantly for fifteen years together) and their happy turn for it will allow. He has only to observe that his address to the public for the above purpose has been deferred until this time, merely because he was apprehensive that the public would not have had before, a sufficiently fair opportunity for judging of his capacity in that line. Particulars may be known by applying to

PETER HENRI,

*In George-street the third house from the south-west corner of Meeting-street.*

March 6. tuf td

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Figure 13:

*In March 1793, Henri announced the opening of his school for miniature painting in Charleston.*

*(“City Gazette”, Charleston, South Carolina, March 26, 1792 edition, Volume X, Issue 1846, page 3.)*

Expense aside, there was no shortage of demand for Henri's paintings in Charleston – a stark contrast to the rough start he experienced in New York and Philadelphia. Offering yet another indication of how well liked his work was in Charleston was an advertisement Henri published from October 1792 through January 1793, in which he announced that he would paint full sized portraits in addition to miniatures, having been “induced by the advice of his friends, who have honored him with their approbation of some specimens he has lately exhibited.”<sup>43</sup> (See Fig. 15.)

While it is clear that Henri flourished during his time in Charleston, he also experienced a healthy dose of heartache and frustration there. Most notably, the Henris' first born child died in Charleston, on June 11, 1792.<sup>44</sup> Unbenounst to his parents, the 18-month-old boy had swallowed a piece of glass that broke off a toy. He died of complications stemming from a perforated gall bladder. Surely contributing to the Henri's grief, the attending physician, Dr. Charles F. Bartlett, used the circumstances of the boy's death to advance his own fame, publishing detailed articles about the cause of death in both newspapers and medical journals (an example of which can be seen herein in fig. 16).

A year later, Henri experienced frustration of another kind when someone exhibited fake miniatures said to have been painted by him. In July and August of 1793, he lamented in the *Columbian Herald* that “some malevolent persons have undertaken to deprecate [my] likeness by a malignant exhibition of some bad paintings.”<sup>45</sup> It is not clear whether someone was simply copying (albeit poorly) Henri's work for financial gain or whether they were trying to diminish his reputation by suggesting that the quality of his work had declined. Addressing the problem, Henri announced that he would thereafter add his initials and date to every miniature portrait painted by him. This would be the last of Henri's newspaper ads published in Charleston.

**M**R. HENRI, returns his grateful acknowledgements to the public, and his friends particularly, for their former encouragement, and solicits their future. As he finds the habits of business in this country are rather different from the plan he has heretofore adopted with respect to payments, he proposes to those whom it may better suit than cash payments, to paint miniatures, &c. on a credit of six months from the time of effecting them, and asks instead of cash, a good note payable as above.  
July 5.

Figure 14:

*In August 1792, Henri announced that he would extend credit over six months for the painting of miniature portraits.*

*(“State Gazette of South-Carolina”, Charleston, South Carolina, August 20, 1792 edition, Volume LV, Issue 4107, page 2.)*

**M**R. Henri, in addition to his miniature painting, being induced by the advice of his friends, who have honored him with their approbation of some specimens he has lately exhibited in portrait and miniature painting, begs leave to make a tender of his services to the public, in that line also; and he flatters himself, that his earnest and unremitted endeavors to please, by the striking conspicuity of his likenesses, and by carefully finishing his pieces, will merit him the same encouragement which he continues to experience in his miniature painting.  
October 13. c

Figure 15:

*From October 1792 through January 1793, Henri advertised that he painted full sized portraits (presumably in oil) in addition to miniature portraits.*

*(“State Gazette of South-Carolina”, Charleston, South Carolina, December 15, 1792 edition, Volume LV, Issue 4149, page 4.)*



On Monday the 11th of June died the infant son of Mr. Peter Henri, the celebrated miniature painter. His death, or the cause of the disease of which he died, was a perforation of the gall bladder. To the medical world a brief statement of the case may not be unacceptable; and the subscriber, who dissected the body, takes this method of conveying it.

After having opened the subject by a crucial incision, immediately on discovering the intestines they were found much discolored with recently emitted bile: and on examining the *cystis fellea*, or gall bladder, it was found perforated the size of a small knitting needle (and rather larger than the *ductus cysticus*, where it commences in the gall bladder) by an angular piece of glass, extremely small, and which is supposed to have been a part of a toy with which the deceased was accustomed to play.

The dissector accounts for the effect of this accident in the following manner. The use of the bile is to assist in digesting the aliment taken into the stomach and bowels, and the want or absence of it occasions a depravity of the digestive faculties, and consequently a numerous train of symptoms and diseases—one of which, the *lientery*, of which the patient died, is the most considerable. The continual drain of acrid bile falling on the extremely sensible nervous coat of the *mesentery*, conveying by sympathy a great degree of excitability to the nervous coat of the intestines, occasioned an amazing degree of rapidity of the *peristaltic* motion, and thereby doubtless accelerated the fatal effect of the disease before mentioned. For if bile is necessary to digestion in the human machine, its absence consequently occasions a want of it; and crudities must necessarily stimulate the inner coat of the guts, and accelerate the peristaltic motion.—Add to this, a constant drain of acrid stimulating liquor falling on the nerves of the mesentery, so intimately connected with the intestines, the event is obvious.

CHARLES F. BARTLETT.

Figure 16:

An article by Dr. Charles F. Bartlett describing the circumstances of the death of Peter and Elizabeth Henri's 18-month-old son.

("City Gazette & Daily Advertiser", Charleston, South Carolina, June 14, 1792 edition, Volume X, Issue 1911, page 2.)

## To the Public.

MR. PETER HENRI, *Miniature Painter*, in Charleston, No. 8, George-street, begs leave to inform the public, that as some malevolent persons have undertaken to depreciate his likenesses by a malignant exhibition of some bad paintings\* (as done by him) he will, for the future, work under the pricking of the diaphanous part of the ground of each miniature, the two initials of his name (P. H.) with the year, in a manner conspicuous enough to be noticed, so that from this date he will not deliver a picture without that proof of its being done by him.

\* *Qui capit ille facit.*

July 20.

12 t

Figure 17:

In this ad, published in July and August 1793, Henri lamented what he described as "some malevolent persons" for diminishing his reputation by exhibiting sub-par works said to be painted by him. Included in the ad is the Latin phrase, "*qui capit ille facit*", which is best translated into colloquial English as, "if the shoe fits, wear it."

("Columbian Herald", Charleston, South Carolina, August 13, 1793 edition, Issue 1170, page 1.)

## RETURN NORTH

It is not known what prompted Henri to leave Charleston, but in 1794 he returned north to New York City. There, in July 1794, he advertised his intention to remain in the city for a few months, residing at 71 Nassau Street. He made mention, too, that a specimen of his work could be viewed at the store of Messrs. Berry, Rogers and Berry.<sup>46</sup> (Edward Berry, James Berry and John Rogers were well-known booksellers in New York, their store having been located at 25 Hanover Square.)

A month later, in both August and September 1794, he published ads to “inform his friends and the public” that he had moved from 71 Nassau Street to 59 Pearl Street, “where he continues to paint likenesses in miniature.”<sup>47</sup> At that time, he also noted to patrons that, having employed a skilled Parisian painter (in his words, “procured a skillful hand from Paris”), he would be able to furnish full sized portraits in addition to his miniatures.<sup>48</sup> (One wonders if his own prior attempts at painting full sized portraits in Charleston were unsuccessful or if, instead, the demand for his miniature portraits in New York was so great that he couldn’t afford to divide his time between the two mediums.)

Henri is known to have stayed in New York through early November, evidenced by an ad he published in *American Minerva* on November 4, 1794. Curiously, this ad was written in French (interesting, given that the *Minerva* was not a French language publication) and Henri referred to himself as “Citoyen Henri” (Citizen Henri).<sup>49</sup> (See fig. 18.)

By his letter to George Washington (mentioned previously on page 8), we know that Henri was in Philadelphia by late November 1794. (His letter to Washington was dated November 26, 1794.) Henri noted to Washington that he intended to leave soon to France and had traveled to Philadelphia with the specific hope of being able to paint the President’s likeness before departing. Philadelphia was then the capital of the United States (Washington, D.C. did not become the nation’s capital until May 1800), so it is logical that Henri would have solicited the President in that city.

As noted earlier, there is no record of how President Washington may have replied to Henri’s letter. We know that the painter remained in Philadelphia for at least six additional months, however, as he exhibited a miniature portrait, *Portrait of a Lady of the New Theatre*, at the Columbianum in May 1795.<sup>50</sup> Founded in 1795, the Columbianum, also known as the American Academy of Painting Sculpture and Architecture, was an artists’ association modeled after the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Its first exhibition opened on May 22, 1795.

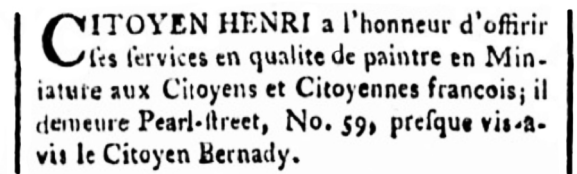


Figure 18:

*This interesting advertisement by Henri was written in French. While Henri surely published other ads in French, this is the only one by him known to have published in an English language newspaper.*

*Translation: “Citizen Henri has the honor to offer his services as a quality miniature painter to French ladies and gentlemen. He lives on Pearl Street, No. 59, almost opposite Citizen Bernady.”*

*(“American Minerva”, New York, New York, November 4, 1794 edition, Volume I, Issue 282, page 4.)*



After his exhibition at the Columbianum, no record of Henri appears in the United States until 1799 (a break of four years), leading one to believe that he did indeed travel to France (perhaps for an extended period), as he indicated he would do in his letter to Washington.

For the three years of 1799, 1800 and 1801, Henri was recorded in Philadelphia city directories, listed as Peter Henry [sic.], miniature painter, residing at 118 Race Street.<sup>51</sup> In the Philadelphia directory for 1802, he was similarly listed as Peter Henry [sic.], miniature painter, but was noted at that time to have been living at 112 Sassafras Street.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, there is no record of Henri having published newspaper advertisements during this four-year period in Philadelphia. Perhaps his reputation was well enough established that he didn't need to advertise. More likely, however, he simply chose to use alternative forms of promotion, such as posting bills on public boards, which was a common practice at the time.

Henri is next found living in Baltimore, where he was recorded in city directories of 1803 and 1804 as a miniature painter residing on North Charles Street, at the intersection of Chatham Street.<sup>53</sup> Similar to the prior four years he spent in Philadelphia, there is no evidence of him having published newspaper ads in Baltimore during these two years, however.

It is reported that Henri also visited Richmond, Virginia in 1804.<sup>54</sup> His whereabouts goes dark for three years thereafter, however, until March 1807, when he is again seen in New York. From March through July of that year, he published newspaper ads in which he expressed his desire to establish a French language school<sup>55</sup> (See fig. 19.) In these ads, he noted his address as being the corner of Broadway and Dey Street; and he stated that "the apartment for the school is cool and airy."<sup>56</sup> Of great value from a research perspective, Henri also stated in these ads that he was born in Paris, that he "received a liberal education" in that city, and that by 1807, he had been in America for 20 years.<sup>57</sup> This would place the time of Henri's arrival to America at 1787, slightly before he published his first known newspaper ads in New York, in April 1878 (fig. 4).

If Henri was successful in establishing a French school in New York, his venture didn't last long, as city directories record him as being back in Philadelphia by 1808. In that year, and also in 1809, he was recorded as a miniature painter residing at 158 Pine Street.<sup>58</sup> He also appeared in the Philadelphia city directory for 1811, listed as a miniature painter residing at 20 Prune Street.

#### FRENCH TUITION.

MR. HENRI, desirous of being useful in more than one line, proposes to establish a school in this city for the purpose of teaching the French language: which, however, will in no way interfere with his professional avocation; as he intends to devote two hours of the day to the present undertaking, viz. from 9 till 11 every morning, and in the warm season from 8 to 10. The school will begin on the 1st of April next, three alternate days in the week will be for the attendance of the young ladies, and the three others for that of the young gentlemen. Mr. H. having received a liberal education in the capital of France, where he was born, and having acquired the practical habit of speaking English during twenty years residence in America, he flatters himself to be sufficiently qualified for the task he wishes to undertake. Please to apply to Mr. HENRI, north west corner of Broadway, in Dey St.

N. B. The apartment for the school is cool and airy. March 5

Figure 19:

*In 1807, Henri advertised his intention to open a French school in New York City. Copies of this ad appeared regularly from March through July of that year, in both the "Public Advertiser" and the "Mercantile Advertiser".*

*("Public Advertiser", New York, New York, June 24, 1807 edition, Volume 1, Issue 147, page 2.)*

Sometime later that decade, Henri again moved to New York City, where he lived for the remainder of his life. His last known newspaper advertisement appeared in that city in October 1818, at which time he lived at 21 Wall Street, two doors below Union Bank. In this ad, he described himself as a "Parisian Artist", painting "likenesses in miniature". He further invited patrons to view specimens of his work at Messrs. Rockwells's Jewelry Store, located on Broadway, opposite Dey Street.<sup>59</sup> (See fig. 20.)

Two years later, Henri appeared in the New York city directory of 1820, listed as a miniature painter residing at 34 Nassau Street.<sup>60</sup> This would be the last known record of the painter's life until his death was announced two years later in New York newspapers on August 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1822. Announcements appeared in both the *New-York Spectator* and the - *New-York American*, both of which read simply, "Died, yesterday, Mr. Peter Henri, aged 70 years, a native of France."<sup>61</sup>

After the death of her husband, the widowed Elizabeth Henri returned to Philadelphia, where her three adult children lived. She outlived Peter by eleven years (not surprising, given how much younger than him she was) and died on September 4, 1833, at the age of 60.<sup>62</sup>



**MINIATURE PAINTING.**  
**H**ENRI, a Parisian Artist, has the honour to offer his services to the public of this city in the line of Likenesses in Miniature. Besides what he may have on hand at his room, No. 21, 2 doors below the Union Bank, in Wall-street, some specimens of his Likenesses may be seen at Messrs. Rockwell's Jewellery store, Broadway, opposite Dey-street. He warrants his Likenesses on the rational condition of steadiness on the part of his models at their sittings, which will not exceed one hour in length, and four times in number. o 3 1w

Figure 20:

*The last known newspaper advertisement by Henri appeared in New York City in the fall of 1818. This ad was published regularly throughout the season, in both the "Mercantile Advertiser" and the "National Advocate".*

*("Mercantile Advertiser", New York, New York, October 5, 1818 edition, Issue 8550, page 3.)*

## ADDENDUM 1: A SAMPLING OF MINIATURE PORTRAITS BY PETER HENRI



**John Clapham (1735-1815),**

*circa 1789-1790*

*Tormey-Holder Collection  
Saint Petersburg, Florida*



**Unknown Early American Gentleman**

*circa 1790*

*The Gibbes Museum of Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina*



**Elizabeth Mary McPherson**

*circa 1794*

*The Gibbes Museum of Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina*



**The Artist's Family: Elizabeth Osborne Henri (presumably wearing a miniature portrait of her husband), Elizabeth Henri (in blue), Henrietta Henri (in pink), and Peter Henri (in brown)**

*circa 1800*

*The Metropolitan Museum of Art  
New York, New York*

**ADDENDUM 2: FAMILY GROUP SHEET**  
**FAMILY OF PETER HENRI AND ELIZABETH OSBORNE**

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Husband: **PETER HENRI**

Born: 1752

Location: Paris, France

Married: December 18, 1789

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died: August 1, 1822

Location: New York, New York

Father: Pierre Henri

Birthplace: France

Mother: Henrietta

Birthplace: France

Wife: **ELIZABETH OSBORNE**

Born: 1773

Location: Wilmington, New Castle, Delaware

Died: September 4, 1833

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Father: Capt. Peter Osborne

Birthplace: unknown

Mother: Elizabeth Stevens

Birthplace: unknown

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Child 1: **INFANT SON (NAME UNKNOWN)**

(Male)

Born: 1790

Location: Charleston, South Carolina

Married: n/a

Location: n/a

Died: June 11, 1792

Location: Charleston, South Carolina

Child 2: **ELIZABETH HENRI**

(Female)

Born: 1792

Location: Charleston, South Carolina

Married: date unknown

Location: unknown

Died: date unknown

Location: unknown

Spouse: Charles Evans

Child 3: **HENRIETTA HENRI**

(Female)

Born: October 14, 1793

Location: Charleston, South Carolina

Married: November 29, 1816

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Died: October 31, 1874

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Spouse: Henry Troth

Child 4: **PETER HENRI**

(Male)

Born: 1798

Location: unknown

Married: unknown

Location: unknown

Died: November 8, 1835

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Spouse: unknown



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<sup>35</sup> Barratt and Zabar, page 60.

<sup>36</sup> *Mr. Henri, Miniature Painter* (newspaper advertisement). *City Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, January 29, 1791 edition, Volume IX, Issue 1688, page 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Mr. Henri, Miniature Painter* (newspaper advertisement). *City Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, May 25, 1791 edition, Volume IX, Issue 1786, page 4.

<sup>38</sup> President George Washington and his entourage traveled throughout the southern states, on what was called the President's "Southern Tour", from March 21, 1791 to June 4, 1791. Washington was in Charleston (then the fourth largest city in the United States) from May 2nd through May 9<sup>th</sup>. [Bingham, Warren L. (2016). *George Washington's 1791 Southern Tour*, The History Press, Charleston, South Carolina.]

<sup>39</sup> *To George Washington from Peter Henri, 26 November 1794*, as found in *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-17-02-0141>. [Original source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, Vol. 17, October 1, 1794 –

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March 1795, David R. Hoth and Carol S. Ebel, editors, 2013, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, Virginia, page 214.]

<sup>40</sup> *A School for Miniature Painting* (newspaper advertisement), *City Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, March 26, 1792 edition, Volume X, Issue 1846, page 3.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Mr. Henri* (newspaper advertisement), *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 20, 1792 edition, Volume LV, Issue 4107, page 2.

<sup>43</sup> *Mr. Henri, in addition to his miniature painting* (newspaper advertisement), *State Gazette of South-Carolina*, December 15, 1792 edition, Volume LV, Issue 4149, page 4.

<sup>44</sup> *On Monday the 11<sup>th</sup> of June died the infant son of Mr. Peter Henri, the celebrated miniature painter* (newspaper article), *City Gazette & Daily Advertiser*, Charleston, South Carolina, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1792 edition, Volume X, Issue 1911, page 2.

<sup>45</sup> *To the Public* (newspaper advertisement), *Columbian Herald*, Charleston, South Carolina, August 13, 1793 edition, Issue 1170, page 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Mr. P. Henri, wishes to inform the public of New-York* (newspaper advertisement), *Daily Advertiser*, New York, New York, July 23, 1794 edition, Volume X, Issue 2944, page 3

<sup>47</sup> *Miniature Painting* (newspaper advertisement), *The Daily Advertiser*, New York, New York, September 12, 1794 edition, Volume X, Issue 2988, page 2.

<sup>48</sup> *A Card* (newspaper advertisement), *New-York Daily Gazette*, New York, New York, August 27, 1794 edition, Issue 1771, page 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Citoyen Henri* (newspaper advertisement), *American Minerva*, New York, New York, November 4, 1794 edition, Volume I, Issue 282, page 4.

<sup>50</sup> Johnson, page 135.

Also, *The Exhibition of the Columbianum or American Academy of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, &c.*, published by the Columbianum in 1795, printed by Francis & Robert Bailey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>51</sup> *The Philadelphia Directory, for 1799; Containing the Names, Occupations, and Places of Abode of the Citizens, Arranged in Alphabetical Order*, Dr. Cornelius William Stafford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, page 68.

Also, *The Philadelphia Directory, for 1800; Containing the Names, Occupations, and Places of Abode of the Citizens, Arranged in Alphabetical Order*, Dr. Cornelius William Stafford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, page 61.



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Also, *The Philadelphia Directory, for 1801; Containing the Names, Occupations, and Places of Abode of the Citizens, Arranged in Alphabetical Order*, Dr. Cornelius William Stafford, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, page 80.

<sup>52</sup> *The Philadelphia Directory, City and County Register, for 1802*, James Robinson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, page 116.

<sup>53</sup> *The Baltimore Directory, for 1803; Containing the Names, Occupations, and Places of Abode of the Inhabitants, Arranged in Alphabetical Order*, Dr. Cornelius William Stafford, Baltimore, Maryland.

Also, *The Baltimore Directory for 1804; Containing the Names, Trades & Residence of the Inhabitants of the City & Precincts*, James Robinson, Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>54</sup> Stevens, Martha R. (1984). *The Miniature Portrait Collection of the Carolina Art Association*, published by the Carolina Art Association, Charleston, South Carolina, page 80.

Also, Croce George and Wallace, David (1957). *The New York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America*, published by the New York Historical Society, New Haven, Connecticut, page 308.

<sup>55</sup> *French Tuition* (newspaper advertisement), *Public Advertiser*, New York, New York, June 24, 1807 edition, Volume I, Issue 147, page 2.)

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> *The Philadelphia Directory for 1808; Containing the Names, Trades, and Residence of the Inhabitants of the City, Southwark, and Northern Liberties*, James Robinson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1808, [pages not numbered].

Also, *The Philadelphia Directory for 1809; Containing the Names, Trades, and Residence of the Inhabitants of the City, Southwark, and Northern Liberties*, James Robinson, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1809, [pages not numbered].

<sup>59</sup> *Miniature Painting* (newspaper advertisement), *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, New York, October 5, 1818 edition, Issue 8550, page 3.

<sup>60</sup> *Mercein's City Directory, New-York Register, and Almanac*, William A. Mercein, New York, New York, 1820, page 244.

<sup>61</sup> *Died in this city* (newspaper death announcement), *New-York Spectator*, New York, New York, August 2, 1822 edition, Volume XXV, page 2.

Also, *Died in this city* (newspaper death announcement), *New-York American*, New York, New York, August 3, 1822 edition, Volume III, Issue 251, page 5.

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<sup>62</sup> *Record of Births and Deaths or Burials for the Monthly Meeting of Friends of Philadelphia [Quaker], 1820-1835*, page 16, as found in a collection of *Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Minutes*, Haverford College, Haverford, Pennsylvania.



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