

Hasenclever's Works
The Story of an Early Industrialist

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Hasenclever's Works
The Story of an Early Industrialist

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James Ryan

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Hasenclever's Works

The Story of an Early Industrialist

Preface

In July 1764, Peter ("Baron") Hasenclever bought a small ironworks on six hundred acres at Ringwood. Within five years, by the fall of 1769, when Hasenclever left America, he had transformed the area into one of the largest industrial operations in the Colonies at the time. After importing over five hundred people from Germany, he built new furnaces and forges at Long Pond and Charlottenburg, expanded the works and property at Ringwood, and built all the roads, dams and bridges necessary for transportation and power. In addition, he established an ironworks at Cortlandt, New York, and opened new mines throughout the Highlands. In the Mohawk Valley he had 24,000 acres planted in hemp and flax for rope and linseed oil and had full or partial title to other lands as far distant as Nova Scotia.

During those five years Hasenclever faced floods (all of the ten area dams were washed away and had to be rebuilt), fire, the first labor strike in America, the hostility of the local farmers due to his support of the Stamp Act, the threat of riots, the desertions and deaths of workers and the treachery of his partners in England.

I have rendered the historical facts (see "Bibliographic Note") and inferences from them in the form of fictional letters in order to suggest the personal story of a man who was, as he says, "sacrificed to artifice," the artifice of the partners who betrayed him.

Part I

The letters of Peter Hasenclever from America to his wife Katherine and his daughter Maria Elisabeth in England, Spring 1764--Fall 1766.

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Shipboard, April 27, 1764

My dear daughter Maria,

A week at sea with nothing but an occasional seabird and odd cloud on the horizon has given me time to realize that during these past months of frenetic activity I have justified my present enterprise to your mother, to my partners, to my backers, to the Lords of Trade, to King George's men and Queen Charlotte's ladies--to everyone, it seems, but to you, whose understanding and blessing are most important to me--indeed, for whom this adventure is ultimately undertaken. I now have more than enough time --five weeks, the captain estimates--to explain why, after returning with an easy fortune to England, I should again embark on another venture, this time to the wilderness of the American colonies.

I realize how difficult these long separations have become, for me as well as for you. We have been too much apart while you grew to become the young woman I was so surprised by at my return last year. But eighteen months is not such a long time. And by then, I am convinced, we will have the fine estate I have always wanted for you, a baronial estate such as even the English or German aristocracy do not enjoy. Every morning I stand on the bow of the ship and imagine my project already realized: a stately manor house with all the attendant buildings of the estate, rich with iron mines, with inexhaustible woods surrounding them, full of timber fit for charcoal; fine fertile valleys, planted in hemp, flax and madder, watered with broad streams to erect furnaces and forges upon, ponds and reservoirs, roads and meadows, cattle browsing tranquilly while the hammering trip sounds from the distant forge. And beyond the vast estate lands vaster than imagination.

Only America affords such a possibility. Opportunities there now far surpass anything in Europe. In the first place the demand for iron cannot be met by English manufacturers. The oak forests have all been cut, and the iron made using coal as fuel is too brittle for most uses. America has both iron ore and endless oak forests for charcoal. Furthermore, land is cheap. I have calculated the potential profits, and even a conservative estimate yields the kind of return that attracted the participation and backing of so many of your mother's friends and of people in such high places. Their judgment is surety enough of the practicality and potential of American enterprise.

The Crown is as anxious to make the new possessions profitable as our backers are. Ten thousand troops have been stationed in the Colonies to insure that America will remain secure and stable. The Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations have granted me special permission to manufacture iron products, a privilege not ordinarily granted in the colonies for fear the manufactories of the Mother Country would suffer. Their approbation of my plan, in writing, given under their seal, on the 10th of January, 1764, is evidence of the Crown's renewed interest in commerce generally, now that the French have been defeated, and of our project in particular. Andrew Seton, Charles Crofts and I envision a substantial contribution to British trade. If we can succeed in producing iron in the quantities and of the quality I calculate we can, a whole new industry will have opened up. We will be providing the very stuff of which modern civilization will be made, for there will come a time when not just tools and machine parts but bridges and great halls will be built of iron.

I shall never regret having become a British citizen.

The ties between England and my native Germany, grown ever stronger since the days of George I, have allowed me to be a part of the world-wide commerce of Britain and to shake hands in a common undertaking with men like General Greame and Deputy Secretary Jackson--men in the highest offices of His Majesty's government. It is amazing that, once our mercantile house was established and Crofts and Seton began to circulate news of it among their circle, investors should so readily have turned out. It demonstrates how numerous my partners' acquaintances and friends are.

I know that you have taken a kind of instinctive dislike of Andrew Seton. But I assure you he is a gentleman whose connections have been of enormous help in capitalizing the mercantile house and the present venture and whose influence in the highest circles of government were instrumental in obtaining the Lords Commissioners permission to manufacture iron goods in America. He is my friend, and you must, therefore, dismiss your suspicions of him and trust his candor no matter what you might think of his manner.

At dinner last night the ship's captain, a hearty gentleman who thinks nothing of dishing out the meal himself, told me that he knows of the Ringwood Ironworks, though not firsthand. He has done business with the present owners, Ogden and Gouvernour, and testifies to their honesty and character. He also confirms their contention that there is no available skilled labor in the American colonies. It is well that at this moment my nephew Franz is recruiting workers from Germany.

Instead of writing in my travel journal, I will write my observations of American people, customs and landscapes in my letters to you. They will educate you to a new world. Meantime, continue your studies and

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your practice on the clavichord. It will not be very long before we will again converse in French and you will play delightful music for

Your Loving Father
Peter

Ringwood, June 15, 1764

My dear daughter Maria,

I arrived in New York on June 4. Approaching the town, I first saw pockets of smoke and haze in soft green hills north of the settlement, which is crowded on the southern tip of an island. Then a wide, busy harbor with a great number of ships entering and leaving, loading and unloading. There were fishermen in the bay taking huge quantities of oysters of an unusual size, some of which, the captain tells me, are pickled and sent to Europe. The harbor is so ample that even with all this activity an enormous flock of ducks, called here by the name of bluebills, though very shy, circled and landed upon the water.

The city thrives and throbs with an energy that is itself exhilarating--shouts and noises along the docks as cargo is unloaded or brought on board, the hawkers crying and the gulls shrieking. It is like a little rural town compared to London--it has only about two thousand buildings along its crooked and cramped streets--but it has a great energy to it, and already a number of stately homes and estates.

I met Nicholas Gouvernour, the other partner in the Ringwood mines, a pleasant, affable man, who was to escort me to the property that had been advertised for sale. The trip from New York to the Ringwood ironworks took a whole day. I left the lodgings at four o'clock and walked through the dark crooked streets to

the ferry on the North River. We crossed with a fair wind in a quarter of an hour and landed at Paulus Hook.

It grew light as we passed through Bergen, only a few miles distant. Along the road were a few houses surrounded by fields and orchards, and a tavern called Black Sam's. When I looked back the way we had travelled, I had another view of the harbor and city in the first light of dawn--the buildings all tucked at the southern tip of the island which is hilly and forested to the north; the North River issuing into the large harbor, wide-mouthed, and the expanse of the sea shining in the rising sun beyond it. The ships were already making sail, the smoke already climbing from the chimneys of the houses.

Very soon after passing through Bergen we had to ferry the Hackensack River, about half a mile across, and almost immediately after that another river, the Passaic. Such an abundance of water--three sizable rivers in sixteen miles--bodes well for the water power available up stream. I am told that about fifteen miles farther north along the Passaic there is a huge falls.

The country to this point was extremely flat and now turned marshy. The road is made of logs in many places with ditches alongside to divert the water. In consequence of the wetness of the place it has many mosquitoes by which we were not a little annoyed.

Newark is a cheerful, lively-looking place built in a straggling manner which gives it the appearance of a large English village. Approaching it, you can see the spires of two churches peeping up above the woods that encircle them. Most of the houses are of wood but there are a few stone buildings. We stopped at the Rising Sun tavern for tea.

We next traveled along the Passaic River. From the

English village of Newark we appeared to have been suddenly transported to the Netherlands. The Dutch are settled throughout this fertile river valley. The roads are lined with the fields of prosperous-looking farms, in some cases of hundreds of acres; they are able to maintain such large properties by the use of slaves. I saw dozens of them hoeing in the furrows, men, women and children, often singing in a deep mournful-sounding way. The houses and sometimes even the barns are built of coursed stone, as neatly laid up as though it were brick, and all in the usual Dutch style, except that the newer houses have flared eaves, something I don't recall seeing the last time I was in Amsterdam. The Dutch doors are even more practical here, and every house we passed had the top half opened for the warm spring air and bright sunlight and the bottom half closed to the geese and chickens in the farmyard. The soil is rich and the lands of the long valley are level and well watered.

We then followed the Passaic River through a few widely separated villages, each consisting of a few well-spaced houses with their own orchards, meadows and woodlots. The villages are often called by Indian names-- Aquackanonk, Pompton. Gouverneur could not tell me what the names mean.

North of Pompton we entered the Ramapo Mountains. Though rugged and difficult of travel, they are not mountains in the European sense. They have none of the grandeur of the Alps or the Pyrenees. They are large hills, really, thickly forested and undulating in soft swells as far as you can see into the distance. We travelled deeper and higher into the hills, the roads getting worse, about six miles along the river until we arrived at what is called, after the original owner, "Board's Plantation."

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The works are pleasantly and practically situated in a valley above the confluence of two small rivers, the Longpond and the Ringwood. The property of six hundred or so acres stretches mainly along the Ringwood River. One forge with the usual nearby buildings--the coalhouse and some workers' houses--is about a half mile above the confluence on the Ringwood river. A second forge is further north on the river. Near this forge is the furnace. There is a sawmill and several other dwellings and coalhouses on the property.

The ironworks have been out of use for at least six months, but they were the first volume producers of iron in the colonies and could easily be again. The first blast furnace erected here was in 1742. (Pompton had a forge as early as 1726, I'm told, and there is another works north of here, in Tuxedo.) The present furnace however was more recently build--two cornerstones are marked with the date 1762 and one has the initials of the owner's son, David Board. I have seen the iron produced here, and it is of the finest quality, equal to the best Swedish iron.

The countryside is mountainous and wooded, with plentiful timber for logs and charcoal. There are a number of rivers and streams which will provide the waterpower necessary for the furnaces, forges and mills. Everything in this country is of an unimaginable abundance, and I am confident that, with intelligence and labor, the Ringwood Ironworks will succeed.

Extend my love to your mother, and remember with affection

Your loving father,
Peter

Ringwood, July 10, 1764

My dear Katherine,

Last week, on the 5th, I purchased the Ringwood works for five thousand pounds. As I am authorized by the trustees of the American Company to expend 40,000 pounds, I shall have ample funds to refurbish the existing works and to purchase additional land for the mining of ore. Parcels of upland are available here for hardly more than three pounds an acre, and the grey outcroppings on every ridge and mountainside indicate extensive deposits of ore. In fact, I will soon be purchasing another seventy or so acres, this with a pond on it called (inappropriately) Rotten Pond. Its water is blue and clear and the situation is perfect, near the summit of the highest mountain in the area. The stream from the pond runs west and drops steeply near the foot of the mountain. It should provide at least one good site for a mill.

Each of these purchases of land sounds as though it were merely measuring and cutting a piece of linen on the draperer's cutting table. But the process is enormously more complicated. There are usually no roads. If there is a road it goes only near or to the site, not around or through it. To find the surveyor's original mark one has to trek through the woods with only a very imperfect surveyor's map. After finding the original mark, one must follow the blazes around the periphery of the property through some of the the roughest and most overgrown terrain I have seen. Everything one goes to do in this unsettled country is similarly arduous.

Once it was surveyed, however, taking over the Ringwood property was a matter of no trouble since the works had been shut down. The house was quickly made habitable, though the fust of disuse was thick in

the nostrils when I first entered it. It is a decidedly modest house below the confluence of the two rivers. As soon as possible I plan to built a suitable residence on a site I have already picked, on a rise overlooking the Ringwood River.

I have now to wait for the arrival of the first workers to refurbish the existing forges and furnace. John Jacob Faesch, the ironmaster distantly related to Franz, will be among them. I have not yet met him because the sudden death of his wife on Whitsunday kept him from travelling to England. Instead he remained in Rotterdam and shipped at the same time as the workers. It required a high price to get him for a seven year contract--a frame house and land enough for four cows, beside a good salary; we also paid passage for his servants and whatever freight he cared to bring. Since he is not precluded from business of his own in America as long as it does not interfere or compete with company business, you can imagine the load of things that, according to the bill, he shipped to be sold here--a silver-trimmed saddle and bolts of cloth, for example. (One branch of his family is in the linen trade.) But his reputation is such that I expect he will be well worth having recruited.

Our project is well begun, though only just begun. In all I do, I think of you and Maria. Think affectionately of

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, September 10, 1764

My dear daughter Maria,

The first few workers have arrived. Faesch turns out to be all I could have wanted in an ironmaster. He is of a candid nature with no taint of false self-importance. He

is about ten years younger than I am, but he is steady beyond his years, (perhaps partly because he lost his wife and a child recently.) He has as much experience of men and more experience in ironworking than I do--a knowledgeable and capable ironmaster with a firm but genial rapport with his workers. And he is able to teach them what he knows so that many well-trained subordinates will stand ready to take over the other operations once we get them started.

With Faesch is Daniel Schmoltz, who will be one of the managers. He is an agreeable but, according to Faesch, shrewd man with more strength than is at first apparent. There is also a bandy-legged man named Joseph Lanweider, a surly type that I am suspicious of.

Among the first colonials to reply to my advertisements for workers was Daniel Wriesberg, or "Captain" Wriesburg, as he prefers to be called, as that is the rank he attained in the French and Indian War with the Royal American Regiment, the 60th on Foot. He retired at half pay and with a patent grant that he has since sold. His experience as an officer will make him a suitable manager, though he has no ironworking experience.

Faesch's crew has been working day and night to get the existing buildings in some kind of repair. I am especially anxious to put the furnace in blast for however short a time before winter sets in. In future I'll build the furnaces with roofs to extend the season. For now we have to make do with what we have. The sluiceways diverting the river water to both the furnace and the forge need repair, and the waterwheels themselves, having been unused and out in the weather, must be essentially rebuilt, as must the bellows, the furnace charging bridge, and all of the wooden

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structures. In fact the only structures that remain intact are the stone furnace, though the work of winter thaws and freezes has loosened some of the stonework, and the forge. In spite of the work to be done, I hope to inform you in my next letter that the works are operating.

I have enclosed an important letter for your mother. Please see that she is alone when you deliver it to her.

I remain, as always,

Your loving father,
Peter

Ringwood, September 10, 1764

My dear Katherine,

I hope you are well. Maria will share the latest news with you, but there is a matter of great concern which I must involve you in privately. Do not disclose the contents of this letter to anyone.

As you know, the whole success of mining and producing iron in America depends on skilled workers who are available only in other countries, particularly Germany, which has laws against encouraging or causing workers to emigrate. Because of my family ties in Germany and especially in the ironmaking industry, I was confident that such laws would not be an obstacle to securing workers. And, in fact, we now have--sooner than expected-- 535 Germans, workers and their families, under contract and on the way or already arrived in the colonies, lodged idly in Philadelphia. John Jacob Faesch, my ironmaster, and Daniel Schmoltz, a manager, have arrived here with the particulars of how the workers came to be there.

The details are not important. Basically, my hope that the workers would embark quietly, clandestinely, was

frustrated by an informer. In May, when their recruitment was all but finished, Daniel Schmoltz and another man were jailed. Fortunately my cousin Carl Caspar is influential enough, first, to have access to the jail to insure the welfare of the prisoners and, second, to have access to higher authorities to arrange for the prisoners' release (at considerable expense, of course). The authorities' intelligence required that the workers be transported without delay.

I am anxious that news of this situation not be known in England as it would compromise our reputation and our ability to raise capital should we need it in the future. Please let me know immediately if word of our legal complications has reached London. If it has, inform Crofts and Seton of the gist of this letter. Perhaps they can do something to silence the rumors before they become too damaging. Meanwhile I await word from you before taking any action.

I regret having to involve you in this matter, but I would prefer than not even my partners know of this unless it becomes necessary. You have my deep gratitude, dear wife, and, as always, my constant affection.

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, November 20, 1764

My dear wife and my dear daughter,

Faesch and his crew have refurbished the old furnace and forge in less than three months. We have made the first iron! Manufacturies have come to the New World!

After the long silence of the hills and the slow seasonal rhythms of the farmers here, the sounds and sight of the furnace in blast and the forge in operation

were like the symbol of civilization itself. To take rocks from the ground and through the application of intense planning and intense energies, both human and mechanical, to make iron, the very stuff of civilization.... We have accomplished in small what will be expanded until the Ringwood Ironworks will be known the world over for the quality and quantity of its iron.

I wish you could see the works in operation. The whole process is fascinating. For this run we brought only a few tons of ore from the mine. The men went back and forth across the charging bridge carrying the ore, the charcoal and the limestone a barrow at a time. And then the most impressive part of the operation--the furnace in blast. It never fails to remind me of the first time I saw my father's ironworks. I had been working my grandfather's textile mill, and I had been used to the steady muted rhythm of the machines powered by water. Approaching the ironworks, however, is an altogether different experience. While I was still a great distance away, I could see the smoke pouring into the blue sky and see sparks shooting out of the furnace stack. The sound of the blast was like nothing I had ever heard before, a loud roaring of bellows and fire. I never forgot it. And now I stand as my father stood. Here that same power, that same process, will transform the American colonies.

The cooled iron is brought to the forges where large water-powered triphammers pound the impurities from it. Between the blast of the furnace and the pounding of the hammers, the whole valley rings with sound.

Though the scale of the operation is small now, our first run demonstrates the quality of the iron and gives us hope for my plans to found other works in the area, especially at Long Pond where the water power is more

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plentiful than here at Ringwood.

It gives me great joy to share with you this first solid success, an earnest of what is to come.

Your loving husband and father,
Peter

Ringwood, December 15, 1764

My dear Katherine,

In the midst of this hard country I am happy to have the friends and the society recommended in England and to enjoy some English civility. I have visited the Royal Governor William Franklin at his farm some distance south of Ringwood, at Burlington. You may remember when he was in London, under the close eye of his father, Benjamin Franklin, for William had a wild youth in America. He is something of a dandy with a haughty air and a hot temper. It is easy to see that he might have loved a fling. And--like father, like son--he is rumored to have an illegitimate son who remains in England. Now, however, he is a changed man. His wife is extremely sickly and he devotes himself to her and to his work with the Anglican church. His official position as royal governor is impossible, requiring him to serve two masters, the King and the people of Jersey, a people, it should be remembered, not exclusively English, but including a contentious mix of nationalities and religions.

Franklin has speculated in lands in the Ohio and Indiana territories, which are at present mere wilderness, inhabited solely by Indians, and encourages my plan to make similar purchases of land both in my own name and in consort with others. He invites me to join with him as well in planning a college in New Jersey.

I have also visited William Johnson. He entertains in a

rather idiosyncratic manner, what with Indians living on the lawn and a decidedly casual air about the whole enormous estate. But his holdings are all that they were rumored to be. He has amassed thousand of acres from the Indians, who trust him as they do no other Englishman. He serves as the essential advisor to the Governor of New York and the indispensable mediator with the Indians. It is largely through his influence that the tribes of the Iroquois remained as friendly to us as they were during the war. Johnson himself is very like an Indian, taciturn, not easily given to sociable conversation, but once on a topic of concern exceedingly eloquent. He is so much like an Indian, in fact, that when his first wife died, he took an Indian woman into his house and had children by her. He has promising agricultural lands now being settled around the Mohawk, and I am looking into placing the potash, hemp and flax plantations there.

Sir William's son, John, will be going to England this year to broaden his education. He is a striking young man, devoted to his father, about five years older than Maria. I have suggested to Sir William that John pay you and Maria a visit.

Closer to Ringwood the country is still wild. There are other small ironworks, at Pompton and at Tuxedo, and a road to the North River for transport of iron. But beside the tiny hamlet of Boardstown there are otherwise just a few small farms scattered about the hilly landscape, laboriously cleared fields and small orchards. Governor Franklin tells me that it was not long ago that farmers of places like these were involved in the tenant uprisings against the proprietors. It is not only the land that is wild. In fact, on my journey to Ringwood it was not unusual to see one or two Indians idling in the

villages. Whatever civilization exists here is precarious.

The news has reached here in the latest packet that the Parliament is considering a Stamp Act. Franklin anticipates only mild resistance among the colonists, but I am less sanguine. The Sugar Act and the Quartering Act have aroused resentment, especially in the Boston area where most of the soldiers are stationed. A tax of the kind proposed may seem (as, indeed, I suspect in part it is) an arbitrary exercise of power as much as an attempt to raise revenue. Though I fully support the right, even the obligation of the Mother Country to impose taxes on the Colonies, I expect considerable resistance.

It is a consolation to me to know that you will be passing a productive winter in comfortable surroundings; it is my hope that I might soon duplicate those surroundings here that you and Maria might join me.

Your affectionate husband,
Peter

Ringwood, March 1, 1765

My dear daughter Maria,

The rest of the workers and families are arriving from Philadelphia. I watch them clamber off the wagons after their long rough ride, and I feel as though I am back in a German village, hearing my native tongue spoken with coarse energy, in a cacophony of mothers' calls, children's shouts and men's laughter. The single men lug their few belongings to the barracks, pushing and shoving each other playfully; the married couples, some with small children, seek out the log houses. The boys are especially exuberant, whooping and racing to the river as though they will dive in headlong and swim

fully clothed.

Such idyllic reminiscences do not detain me long, for it is sobering to think of all I shall have to provide for them--housing, food, clothing, tools, and, most importantly, work. A family of five hundred or so to take of. Yet the workers grumble already. They complain about the length of their indenture as though the cost of their passage could be made up in a week's time. When they were in Germany they were anxious enough to get here, willing to sign to five or seven years' labor. Now they have what they wanted and are again dissatisfied. Who knows what rumors have turned their heads while they idled away the winter in Philadelphia. It is not enough that the land itself must be redeemed from wilderness, but the workers too must now be restored to the industrious habits of their homeland. An idle worker is like land that has been allowed to grow wild; he must be returned to order and productivity.

For now I have put some of the workers and their families in temporary quarters wherever we could--in the barns, forges and mills when necessary--until cabins are built for them. Some of the men cut trees others transport to the mill or the site of the log cabins for the workers. Once the cabins are completed the workers can return to their proper jobs and the full-scale operation of the works can begin. The manor house and the other houses can be completed in an orderly way while the operations go on. We will need frame houses for Faesch and the other managers, a store and office once the timber has been milled. Pollman, my bookkeeper, is now working in a corner of one of the mills where he has set up his desk and files. In a matter of weeks we will have

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built a small town here.

Your affectionate father,
Peter

Ringwood, April 14, 1765

Dear Katherine,

I appreciate the packet you sent. I feel that I am able to keep up in some small measure with the England that seems more and more remote from me. But I do wonder if the work that goes on here is appreciated at home. I note, for example, Samuel Johnson saying, "The Europeans have scarcely visited any coast but to gratify avarice and extend corruption; to arrogate dominion without right and to practice cruelty without incentive." Such pronouncements only demonstrate his ignorance of this country. There is an air here, the proximity of wilderness, the knowledge even now of savages in the hills, the precariousness of law. Though we try to bring civilization to this vast unimaginable wilderness, even to the point of starting colleges, the people are of a refractory disposition. Therefore, I take Mr. Johnson with the kind of amused indifference that such slothful Grub street fellows deserve. Reclining as he does on a pension of 300 pounds, he proposes to dictate to active and energetic men; where would his pension come from were it not for those of us who extend the commerce of Britain? The corpulent and slovenly Mr. Johnson would quickly change his pompous moral superiority could he but see the manner in which the families of my workers live, and the great need of some paternal assistance not only in the physical circumstances of their lives but even more so in righting the disorder and moral squalor of their minds. As to the Indians whose savagery, ignorance and beastliness are some degrees worse than

the workers--should we have taken to bark huts and loincloths and squatting around open fires? Should we have given up writing and painting and architecture? Smashed our clavichords and violins to take up beating on stretched hides? Or should we have put to good purpose and civilizing effect the natural resources of the country and the advanced intelligence of our learning and culture?

My workers are fickle and undependable. It is often difficult to get a full day's work out of them, even with eight managers. Sometimes the workers--who get hard liquor from the natives--must be roused forcibly from their bunks. Though the managers do their best, the slackers and loafers and shoddy workers are often overlooked until the damage has been done, and the work has to be done over again. During their idle winter in Philadelphia the workers heard of the German settlements in Pennsylvania, and many of them desert, hoping to work as farm hands until they can buy a farm of their own. Though I advertise, offering rewards of five pounds to anyone who returns the deserters, the country is essentially lawless.

I suspect the country people are no good influence. Somehow even with the difference in language the local farmers and the laborers manage to communicate their complaints, their indignation over perceived injustices. The country people put many chimeras into their heads and make them believe they are not obligated to the contract made in Germany. I cannot treat the workers as I would in England where there are thousands of poor ready to take the place of any worker who is dismissed. The country is sparsely inhabited, mostly by independent farmers who cannot be induced to work. Furthermore, the country people, knowing my support of the Crown,

resist any advances I make and even redouble their attempts to ferment dissatisfaction among the workers. These colonists are an independent-minded group and fiercely antagonistic, as I predicted they would be, to the possibility of the Stamp Act.

The luxuries of life in London, I'm afraid, make such conditions as exist here hard to imagine. Perhaps it would be better that, in future, you not send Mr. Johnson's little essays.

Your devoted husband,
Peter

Ringwood, May 5, 1765

My dear daughter Maria,

It has been a period of intense activity. The workers' cabins are finished, as are the frame houses for the managers. Pollman is set up comfortably in a temporary office alongside the store. Most of the wooden structures have been repaired, and we are now building the roads and bridges. The roads are especially difficult. The terrain is hilly and rocky. There are many small streams that require bridges.

We are also actively seeking other mines. It is a tedious process making one's way through the unbroken forests and taking samples which are then brought back to be tested. In spite of promising samples, the mines often turn out to be too sulfurous or coppery, or they simply peter out; thus the roads and bridges which had been built are useless and wasted labor.

The hills are now dotted with charcoal burner's huts and cones of logs--the one much like the other. The men live in the mountains for months at a time tending the cones, allowing just the right amount of air over a week's burn to keep the flameless smoldering that makes

the charcoal. It is well that I brought experienced workers here from Germany. Though they are often recalcitrant and grumbling, at least when they do work they know the job. If ignorance were added to idleness and carelessness, I know not what quality of work I would get out of them.

One of the most promising prospects for a new furnace lies on the Long Pond River. Until I have a furnace of my own design in blast I shall not feel that I have established ironworks here. I plan a number of improvements over the old furnaces. The inwall will be of slate rather than sandstone, which does not hold up well under high temperatures. The bellow's cams will be of metal rather than of wood. And the furnace will be roofed, extending the season by many weeks. These innovations should increase our profits appreciably, since together they will increase both the life of the furnace and its productive period each year.

We have already set out the base, twenty-five feet on a side, against a convenient hill alongside the river. Some of the stone that will be necessary for the height we plan--about 28 feet--has been gathered. Faesch has assembled the best men available and works the crew from dawn to dark. I hope it will not be long before I see that truncated stone pyramid completed and a line of men with barrows of ore crossing the charging bridge to the open stack.

A furnace at Long Pond should also perform better than the Ringwood furnace because of the increased water supply. The Long Pond River is wider and deeper than the Ringwood, even in its natural state. Faesch and I made our laborious way downstream from the Pond when we were choosing a site for the furnace. In places the river runs roaring into deep gorges with a turbulence

and noise that sounds as though it could work a hundred pairs of bellows. There are sheer rock faces on both sides--the characteristic grey stone containing iron ore--topped with shadowy stands of pine. Saplings cling here and there to the rock face wherever a little earth has accumulated. In the cool moist shade back from the river, moss and lichen cover the rocks and the sound of the rapids is muffled. In other places the river runs quietly among hardwood or evergreen forests, gurgling and babbling in the sudden hush after the tumultuous white water.

We are constructing a 200 foot dam across the southern end of Long Pond. It should raise the water level five feet. As Long Pond is the largest of the ponds in the area--nearly five miles long but narrow, as the name implies, only a half mile or less--its capacity will insure plentiful water power year round.

Word has reached us that the Stamp Act has been passed by Parliament. The colonists have long known that it was being considered, of course, but with news of the actual passage all of their accumulated discontent--against the Sugar Act, against the Quartering Act--has been ignited. You cannot imagine the violent emotions and inflammatory, even treasonous language. Governor Franklin has had to leave the stamps on a warship in the Delaware for fear that their landing would incite violence.

The long period of benign neglect which the Crown has allowed the colonists has inculcated habits of independence and rebelliousness that must be quickly suppressed, for the country people are beyond listening to reason. How do they think the defense of the colonies is to be maintained? Who is to pay the debt incurred during the war with the French? About such matters the

colonists are as short-sighted as my workers.

Such, daughter, is the country in which labors
Your loving father,
Peter

Ringwood, June 1, 1765

My dear daughter Maria,

The other day Faesch came to the office to report that a group of miners and forgemen had stopped work. They refused to continue unless I would hear their demands myself. The bandy-legged Joseph Lanweider has become the spokesmen for the workers. Lanweider brought with him Carl Brunderlin, a tall, pock-pitted man with sandy hair. The two of them are inseparable except when they double their mischief among the other workers by fermenting insurrection separately.

Faesch kept up a fine stream of small talk and pleasantries with them, and they appeared affable enough when they first came in and sat down. Once we began talking however it was clear that they were stubborn. They complained not only about the wages but also about the treatment by the managers and the prices at the store. They pointed out the hardships of the work and the number of deaths.

"On the questions of wages," Faesch said, "there is a contract to be considered. I explained to you gentlemen the conditions of the work before you agreed to sign the contract. Once having done so, you are obligated, as Mr. Hasenclever is, to its terms."

They would have none of it. Once again they went through the litany. They complained that they saw a minister only two or three times a year. They suggested the prices at the store are inflated. They whine about the hardships of the work.

"I ask nothing of my workers that I have not done myself," I told him. "I have worked from five in the morning until nine at night, six days a week. I know the conditions of the work."

Such talk went on until I became impatient. "We have a contract, Sir, which I expect you to honor."

Lanweider looked at me boldly, having evidently prepared his line. "We will not, Sir. You may dismiss us if you like."

Of course there are no workers to replace them, especially no skilled workers, as they know very well. I do not want to raise their wages sufficiently to give them the kind of independence that the local farmers so arrogantly display, but I had no option except to grant some increase. At least the contracts are reinforced for the balance of the term, and I can calculate my expenses accurately now that this has been settled. Labor has been my most vexing problem, more frustrating even than the hardships of a wild country; perhaps now the workers will be more compliant and productive and less inclined to desert. If so, the additional wages will be well spent.

In general we have made great progress in the year since I have arrived, and I have hopes that the momentum of our progress will continue.

Your loving father,
Peter

Ringwood, October 1765

My dear Katherine,

It is wonderful news to hear that the first American Company products have arrived in London in our own ship. We now have the nucleus of the enterprise that I have planned. On board was the finest iron produced in the colonies, as well as timber and potash from our own

lands and a quantity of furs. By providing our own transportation we can control the entire operation and use the ships for other enterprises as well.

At the very moment, it seems, that our troubles with the workers have been resolved and our first shipments to England are well arrived, a new threat breaks out--violent opposition to the Stamp Act. A Boston mob attacked the house of the stamp agent for Massachusetts, destroyed his windows and furniture and frightened him into resigning. Ten days later the homes of two customs officials were attacked and the home of Thomas Hutchinson was gutted. Collectors have resigned in various colonies, including New Jersey in September. In New York there are similar outbreaks. General Gage has offered assistance to Royal governors everywhere, but the situation is precarious. He says that the forces at his disposal are not large and can not be moved quickly at any rate.

The spirit of resistance is universal, but is especially strong in New York. Representatives of most of the colonies are meeting there now in a "Stamp Act Congress." Merchants there have signed a resolution not to buy British goods. Though the stamps have arrived, no small boat owner will unload them. Naval officers have had to be called in to move the stamps into Fort George. Hearing that the stamps were at the fort, a mob formed, carrying an effigy of New York Lieutenant Governor Colden. They broke into his coach house and carried his coach and sleigh to the fort. In an act of outrageous defiance they built a bonfire and burned the coach, the sleigh and the effigy. Gage wisely remained at home; there was no response from the soldiers within the fort and the rioters dispersed out of sheer exhaustion.

On top of our difficulties here I have now to worry about riots and insurrection. For the local people do not take kindly to my open support of the Stamp Act and of the King. (In honor of the Queen, I have named the five thousand acres I bought this month "The Great Charlottenburg Furnace Tract.") They circulate pamphlets of opposition with the notation "Printed at Hasenclever's Works"; there have been acts of vandalism. It is a wild country on all sides and the imposition of law seems more than ever necessary.

In spite of these hardships I remain hopeful that you and Maria may join me here next year as planned. I am gratified to hear that John Johnson has visited and will certainly extend my congratulations to his father on the knighting of his son. I remain, as always,

Your affectionate and devoted
husband,
Peter

Ringwood, December 1765

My Dear Katherine,

It has been raining for weeks, and two days ago a storm rushed down on us that delivered torrents unrelentingly. Yesterday, during the storm, I stood on the dam at Long Pond. Of the fourteen dams we have built for ponds and reservoirs, this is the largest--200 feet long. The lake is five miles, and narrow, with mountains rising steeply in places on both side. The sky and the lake were both black with clouds, thick and low-hanging. The rain was slashing in on a sharp wind, a nor'easter that pounded choppy waves against the dam. The water was within a few inches of the top, and the men were strengthening the dam with shovels and stones. They worked furiously, soaked through to the

skin. As a trickle started or a crack showed, a crew would immediately attack it with shovels, stones and sandbags. Finally though, there was just too much weight of water against the dam and I ordered everyone off. We watched helplessly as the dam started to go. A trickle started coming through at the base of the dam, just off center. The trickle became a steady stream and in a matter of a few minutes a huge section of the dam blew out. The middle section just collapsed and disappeared as though it had never been there. A wall of water moved downriver sweeping everything in front of it with a tremendous rush and roar.

In the hours after the loss of the Long Pond dam, the drenched managers slogged in with reports one after the other of the destruction or serious damage to most of the other dams. Of the ten ponds and four reservoirs there are none that won't require work. The dam at Tuxedo Pond will be especially difficult to repair. It is over twenty feet high and diverts the water away from its natural channel into the Ramapo River, directing it instead into the Ringwood River.

It is fortunate the area is so sparsely settled. Boardstown, at the merge of the Long Pond and Ringwood rivers, suffered a little damage, and one or two small farms lost an outbuilding or a few furrows from a field. But except for the dams themselves there was no other damage to speak of. But when I think of the work and expense ahead, the time lost in replacing what we had already done...

I had no idea of the possibility of so much rain and snowmelt. Everything we do is thus--without precedent or history to guide us.

The hardships of the land take a ghastly toll. There are an alarming number of deaths not only among the

workers but among the managers, another one of whom has recently died. Even with a full compliment of managers the workers are hard to handle; with this shortage I have had to place Mr. Pollman in the field. Though he is a retiring man, not much given to the combination of cajoling and bullying that a manager is often called to, he has done admirably. As a consequence, however, my books have been neglected and my accounts are behind.

The disturbances over the Stamp Act continue. Since the Stamp Act Congress has taken place, all we hear is the cry of "No taxation without representation." When a ship bringing in another supply of stamps anchored in New York harbor, an armed mob boarded it, seized the papers and burned them in the middle of town. A Naval Officer who had asked a merchant for his stamped papers was forced by a mob to publicly apologize. I can almost feel the disintegration of authority, the emboldened attitudes of the colonists against the representatives of the King. And the spirit of rebellion or at least surly non-compliance somehow affects even my workers.

I look with great pleasure toward seeing you and Maria and to bringing you back with me. I still hope to sail by the March packet.

Your affectionate husband,
Peter

Ringwood, January, 1766

My dear Katherine,

Excellent news! I have had a visit from William Seton, Andrew Seton's nephew. William is now installed as the New York manager for the American Company. He is an affable young man, much like Andrew, well-dressed

and well-mannered. Though he seems a bit untested and given to enthusiasms, with some seasoning I have no doubt that he will perform admirably. He had a hard but truthful initiation into the country, travelling by horseback through the January cold. But you know enough of the hardships here--to the good news.

William brings a number of letters, all of which are cause for celebration. In the first place, the American Company now has additional backers as a result of the shipment I sent in July. They are men of prominence and influence: Major General David Greame has been joined by his friends George Jackson, Esq. and Deputy Secretary of the Admiralty John Elves as well as others. With investors of this caliber our access to the King, already assured, will now be that much more persuasive. They write that "they know not whether to applaud my zeal and perseverance more as acquisitions to my friends or to the nation in general." The works are already recognized as adding to the commercial strength of Britain. Our agent has reiterated that my iron is by far the best made in America. But even more agreeable to me is the letter from Andrew Seton on the progress in trade of Hasenclever, Seton and Crofts mercantile house. Our profits are anticipated to be from four to six thousand pounds a year, and, most encouraging, he writes: "Dear Friend, This year we shall double our capital." Both the American company and the house in London are succeeding beyond what I had hoped for.

Rejoice with me that in spite of difficulties our plans are moving ever closer to fulfillment.

The colonies remain tense, in no small degree due to the agitations of the Sons of Liberty. The extent of the violence has caused fears that order, especially in New York, might not be maintained, even fears that the city

might go up in flames. Gage is considering bringing in 1500 troops to ward off any further violence. He is hesitant, however, for fear that the very presence of the troops might anger more than intimidate the colonists and precipitate rather than forestall an insurrection.

I put the men to work cutting trees for charcoal and repairing buildings. But in the hardest weather there is really not much work I can have them do. They are idle and discontented. They pick up the country people's dissatisfaction with the Crown.

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, February 1766

Dear Katherine,

I have just received your December letter, and it is with great sorrow that I agree to your decision not to come to America yet. It is true, as you say, that there is no society for Maria, and that the conditions at the moment are not propitious for the creation of a suitable circle here at Ringwood. On my own account, furthermore, I am having some difficulties with the potash manufactory in the Mohawk valley which I must attend to, both for the protection of my own profits and in deference to Sir William who has been so critical to the projects in that area, and who is even now arranging a large purchase of Indian land for me.

In haste and disappointment, I remain,

Your devoted and hopeful
husband,
Peter

Ringwood, May 30, 1766

My dear Katherine,

News of the repeal of the Stamp Act has reached us. Though the colonists celebrate, there is continued discontent about the import duties imposed in the place of the direct tax. Some good may yet come from the repeal, but at this moment it appears that the Parliament has simply encouraged the colonists' bizarre notion of freedom from the laws of the mother country.

My workers seem to think themselves independent as well. Another seven workers deserted last night, all Germans who talk very little English. They walk off in their soldiers' jackets, carrying their miners' clothes turned up with red, their guns and hammers. They still have 3 years and 4 months on their contracts. I advertise for their return, offering a five pound reward and providing descriptions of the pock-pitted and bandy-legged bunch, but it is futile. They are probably off to Pennsylvania to hire on as farm hands.

Even Faesch seems to have caught this spirit of freedom. He will become a naturalized citizen this summer.

I am happy to hear of the visits of Sir John Johnson. My projects in consort with Sir William are progressing toward their completion.

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, July 1766

My dear Katherine,

I have today returned from the Mohawk valley where I have negotiated the purchase of 24,000 acres of Oneida land from Sir William Johnson. With the 11,000 acres of timber on Lake Champlain and the 40,000

fertile acres in Nova Scotia these lands will provide comfortable profits for the foreseeable future. I expect Crofts and Seton will demonstrate their pleasure to you. Though the immediate investment is more than the backers had anticipated, the rewards are well worth the initial overextension.

I returned to Ringwood with a great deal of satisfaction and tarried at the furnace, feeling the awe I felt as a boy at my father's works. As the flames rose and fell, a stream of sparks poured from the stack into the twilight. A molten glare was cast against the sky. The blast roared and quieted, roared and quieted, resounding through the whole valley. The men crossed the catwalk with their wheelbarrows full of charcoal, flux and ore and dumped their offerings into the mouth of the furnace. The great throat belched out sparks, like a volcano into the air, lighting the whole sky with an infernal glow. In the casting arch while the molten-red iron poured from the bottom the furnacemen stooped and bowed, drawing off the slag.

I overheard one man telling a boy a old tale. "The salamander lives in that fire," the man shouted in the boy's ear. "It's made of fire. You can't see him yet. But he lives in the fiery crucible. Keeps growing. The hotter the better. After seven years, we have to take the furnace out of blast. Every seven years. Otherwise the salamander gets too big for the crucible. Looks to get out. Flares out at the casting men. Burns its way through their bodies. Into their guts. Like a newt into the mud. But red-hot. Flickering with flames." I used to hear the same story in Germany at my father's works. Hearing the man conjure up the fiery salamander, the flaming lizard born in the womb of the furnace, I was fifteen years old again and so struck by the furnace in blast that I was

almost ready to believe the old superstition.

You know the large and small vexations here, yet I have conquered them all and in 18 months, as I promised you, I have brought the most extensive works nearly to completion. The estate which I have envisioned, the estate to which I will bring you and Maria, is almost created. As I look out to the river and see this prodigal land in its summer profusion, I feel I am at the gate of an earthly paradise.

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, September, 1766

My dear Katherine,

All is in turmoil here, and I have time only to write you a brief note. I have just received some very disturbing news about Andrew Seton. I am told--by friends in both London and Cadiz--that he is living at an amazing, expensive rate and carries on an immense circulation in bills and notes. These advices terrify me, and I have already given my plans and instructions to William Seton, Faesch and the other managers of the works on how to conduct affairs during my absence in order that all of the works will be more or less completed by the time I get back, that the intense labor of building, of hacking out of the wilderness, roads and bridges and dams, will be done, and the works will begin to show a sizable profit. I will be embarking on the next packet. I hope to be in England in time to prevent the misfortune I dread. Of course, Pollman will not be able to ready the books with so little notice; he will send them after me.

Though I will be glad to see you and Maria again, I am

anxious about the occasion of my return. I remain
Your loving husband,
Peter

Shipboard, Nov. 24, 1766

My dear Katherine,

My fiftieth birthday. It was just two years ago that our first iron flowed from the Ringwood Furnace. I hate to have to leave now, with so much done and the culmination of the enterprise within my grasp. My hope is that Seton's extravagances have not undermined the House. We have only our reputation finally, and it was just for that reason that I entered into agreement with men that I thought gentlemen.

Between the expanse of ocean and the fact that today is my fiftieth birthday I am feeling uncharacteristically self-reflective. I cannot believe that it is less than two and one half years since I made this voyage in the other direction, toward a land of enormous possibility and promise. There is a certain period on the transatlantic crossing when I feel suspended, when the land I have left is too far behind almost to remember and the land to which I am going is too distant to plan for. The ocean, featureless, without memory or future, without time or history, swells and subsides all around. Lifts and falls. And the unmarked sky is blank overhead. The days drift by with only the sparkle of the ocean and the occasional passing of a seabird or a strangely-shaped cloud. And at night I dream the empty day. I am anxious for the smell of land....

Part II

The letters of Mrs. Katherine Hasenclever from England to her father, Sea-captain Wilds, during the

period that Hasenclever is back in England, Dec. 1766 to June 1767.

London, January 22, 1767

Dear Father,

My adventurer is home. Rather--since he has merely visited the place occasionally in the last ten years--he is visiting my home. And unsettling it is to have a intimate stranger here. Maria and I have arranged ourselves comfortably after being so long alone. Our routines and social calls are soothingly regular. Our toilette and the very rustling of our gowns have come to be habitual and unconscious, as any pleasant way of life, long indulged, tends to become.

Peter's business affairs preoccupy him. Almost the minute he arrived in December, he met with Crofts, who confirmed Peter's worst fears. Andrew Seton is bankrupt. He has not paid the original 8,000 pounds he promised to capitalize the house of Hasenclever, Crofts and Seton. His friend, Commodore Arthur Forrest, who stood surety for Seton, has likewise reneged his debts. But it is worse. Seton has also sold shares in the mercantile house and took the money for himself. As the only partner with an independent fortune, Peter is being sued by the investors Seton deceived. As Peter says, he and Crofts have been "sacrificed to the artifices and treachery of Seton and his friends." The house is 17,000 pounds in debt.

As word of these troubles spreads, Peter's expenditures in America are coming under scrutiny. As soon as Peter found out the state of the company, he called a meeting of the trustees. He presented the problems and prospects to Greame and Jackson. But there is nothing that can be done until the accounts are

examined. Since Peter left the colonies on very brief notice, he gave orders for the books to be brought up to date and sent after him. It is three months since Peter embarked and he begins to be anxious.

The difficult situation Peter is in has put a strain on my relations with my many friends who have invested in the company. I seem to be forced into a choice between my husband, who may be financially ruined, and my friends and the country I have lived in, essentially alone, for years. I know that Peter feels he can always return to Germany, but it is an alien country to me.

I am coming to realize, Father, how foreign my husband is here in England--his accent, his travel-simplified way, his terrible earnestness and Teutonic rigidity. I was so young when we first met, and he seemed so glamorous, a world-traveler, a cosmopolitan man who had been through France and Russia, who spoke so many languages, who seemed so knowledgeable and self-assured. Now I realize that he was a cloth-and-needle salesman and remains, in some odd way, the man his first occupation made him. I had mistaken his simple, direct way, formed through long travel, for sophisticated manners.

I saw him so seldom in the six years after we returned to London while he remained in Cadiz. When he did have business that brought him here, it was as I used to feel upon your return from a long voyage. But even your longest voyage did not keep you away so long. Three years ago when he arrived, having made up his mind to become a citizen of Britain, Peter was a complete stranger. But we are getting re-acquainted a little at a time, and continue our mutual concern that Maria be

well married.

Your affectionate daughter
Katherine
London, May 11, 1767

Dear Father,

The trials continue, but the verdict is evidently not adverse. Since the books have not arrived, Peter has reconstructed as best he can the expenses of the entire enterprise. This account was presented to the trustees. Their confidence in Peter is undiminished, and they renewed their expression of faith in him as well as they could under the straitened finances of the Company. Peter is to return to America under a new contract. He will receive only commissions from goods sent to England, no expense money. And he has had to give up all claim for the commissions due him and the 11,000 acres on Lake Champlain which he is to sign over to the trustees immediately upon arriving in New York. Peter, however, is so confident of the potential of the American Company that he has not hesitated to accept these terms.

Thank God we will once again resume a normal round of visits. It is reassuring to again feel comfortable among my circle, for Maria's sake as well as my own. Peter leaves on the next ship to the colonies.

Your affectionate daughter,
Katherine

London, May 26, 1767

My dear Father,

I could almost spit at the insolence of Andrew Seton! He is a worm in his silks! Peter was finally able to meet with him today. Crofts opened the meeting with the devastating news that the house is not 17,000 but

21,000 pounds in debt.

"How is that possible?" Peter asked "that in four months we should have another 4,000 pounds of debt."

It turns out that Seton had not desisted from his earlier practices. Yet he sat there in insolence, Peter told me, in his silk scarf, with his legs crossed and with a trace of a sneer on his lips. The figure of 21,000 pounds provoked not a trace of a reaction. The honor of the house meant nothing to him. He had long ago abandoned any notion of honor or nobility. He would disgrace himself again if it would make him as rich as he has pretended to be. He knew what Peter would do. And he was amused by it. Duty and reputation meant nothing to him. His own selfish pleasure and comfort alone mattered. His eyes seemed to smile a little; he picked up his teacup, looking at Peter as one looks at a child, indulgently, even a little playfully.

"You have, of course," he said, "the option of declaring the house bankrupt."

"Bankruptcy is only an option to those who would violate the trust of their associates."

"It is often a question of necessity rather than treachery."

"There is no necessity greater than one's honor. The debt will be repaid. I will see to it." Peter said, and left without another word.

I can't say that I am not worried, Father, but Peter is confident that his arrangement with American Company will allow him to repay the debt. Though his original estimates of 20-30% profit were too high, of course, his hopes of augmenting trade and navigation were certainly realized. He is not a dreamer. Or at least, he dreams only insofar as he can render that dream a reality. His dream of a vast empire in America, ironworks and great fields

of hemp, flax and madder, seemed to me and to many others only the stuff of which enormous profits are made in the colonies. The men of his acquaintance in America--Sir William Johnson, for one--have all that Peter dreamed and more. It is absurd to call him a dreamer when so many others are scheming and scrambling for the Indian lands in America and buying those lands up in 200,000 acre parcels. Whatever delusions Peter labors under are collective delusions, shared by every investor in England.

I was so happy to see him himself again, vigorous, animated to return to America, a country--I am beginning to understand--he loves very much.

Your affectionate daughter,
Katherine

Part III

The letters of Hasenclever from America to his wife in England, Summer 1767 to Fall 1769

Ringwood, August 1767

Dear Katherine,

I arrived in New York on the 16th of this month. It was a difficult voyage. I passed 77 days on the open sea without society, since Sir John had a change in plans and instead of embarking with me from Falmouth was to leave directly from London. The ship was becalmed for days off Bermuda and then becalmed again after only two days of light wind. I was of course worried about progress at the works and anxious to resume the various projects so near completion when I left. Shipboard for so long, one feels like some kind of rodent, often confined to the cabin to get away from the sun, nibbling cheese and dried meat for weeks on end. I walked the

deck at night, when it was cooler, and tossed uncomfortably during the heat of the afternoon, trying to nap. Night or day, my mind was not quiet.

My anxiety was so great that when I disembarked I travelled to Ringwood immediately, not bothering to stop at the offices of the American Company. The roads had never seemed so rocky and rutted, so deeply shadowed and hemmed in by forest as they did that day as I spurred my horse, pressing him on in spite of the August heat. I arrived just before sunset. The first glimpse I had--of the lower forge--was appalling. It looked as sepulchral and ruinous as it did when I first bought the place. No smoke from the stack, no sound of the triphammers, no activity in the yard, which was a clutter of tools and scraps of lumber.

I found Pollman in the store. Ten months had aged him. His face was drawn and the usual sprightliness of his manner was dulled. He was not happy to see me, and it is no wonder considering the report he gave me. Production had fallen off at all of the forges and furnaces, so much so that only one of the Ringwood forges was even operating. The construction projects at the four furnaces, which had all been so close to completion, had not gone forward. Even the work which had been entrusted to Faesch at Charlottenburg had not been finished, though to his credit there was less deterioration there than elsewhere. Two new coal houses had burned. When I later saw the black skeletons of posts and beams and charred timbers tumbled together, I thought, absurdly, that the salamander had struck, had run its fiery tongue along the beams, licked the wood and, liking the taste, consumed it. One of the burned coal houses stored bellows planks for the furnace and forges at Charlottenburg, planks that must be cut

and dried eight months specifically for the purpose. They cannot be bought.

In June a fight broke out here--at least, that's what Pollman called it. It seems from the consequences it must have been more like a riot. One man was killed and a number badly wounded. Pollman could not explain the cause, could not name any ringleaders or culprits and took no action against anyone. The disorder and the violence that I have so often written to you about last year, during the riots in Boston and New York, have their delayed impact here as well. The land is wild, and the landscape influences the people in it.

Pollman also told me that William Seton had married, gone to London and abandoned his trust. The American Company's affairs I found neglected and in the greatest confusion. The books which I had ordered sent after me to London I found in the state I had left them at my departure. Furthermore, Seton had entered the company business transactions in his private books which he took with him, so that it was impossible to get my books in order. Seton is not expected to return in any great hurry, and the trustees are expecting the complete records. Bills have been returned, not honored because of the lapses in bookkeeping. My other orders have not been followed. My plans have been set back too much to calculate at this early point.

But I have resumed a tight management and a strict economy. I have been forced to lay off workers, some who have been with me from the beginning, and cut expenses by one third in the next month.

Your loving husband,
Peter

Ringwood, Sept. 1767

My dear Katherine,

While Pollman and I were discussing the inventory of the store today, cutting our orders to reflect the fewer workers, a rider approached along the road and pulled up to the house. He was a jaundiced-looking man, clearly not long since in England by the look his tailor gave him. I thought perhaps it was a new representative of the company in New York, but why would he come without writing me first? He stood looking the place over with a proprietary air and adjusting his clothes with a hint of annoyance, as though the inconvenience of travel over rough roads were somehow a personal insult to him. I went to the door, which was already open to the afternoon sunlight that had thickened in the dust the horse raised, and hailed him. The smile he gave me was compounded of practised courtesy and what seemed to me even then to be a secret sneer.

"Mr. Hasenclever," he said as he walked toward me. His voice was pleasant, low-toned and surprisingly rich coming as it did from the sickly-looking face. "It is a pleasure to meet you. I am Jeffrey Humfray, here at the request of General Greame and the other trustees of the company." He extended his hand, a plump, puddingish thing.

I invited him inside and settled him to some refreshment, he talking pleasantly the whole time of his journey here, his first trip to America. My impatience got the better of me very quickly however, and I pressed him to explain the reason for his visit.

"Visit," he said with flatness, neither a statement or a question. "Ah, yes, well, this letter from Mr. Greame as a representative of the trustees will explain my duties here."

I was uneasy at the letter he handed me, thinking about the bills that had recently been returned to me and wondering if there would be still more trouble on that score. But I had no idea of the enormity of the betrayal it contained. Forty-six days after my return to America, my associates of four years, who had just renewed their vote of confidence in me with a new contract, had sent this suit of clothes, this tailor's dummy, to replace me. "Mr. Jeffrey Humfray will assume full and sole management of the American Company's ironworks at Ringwood, Charlottenburg and Long Pond as of October 1, 1767."

As you might imagine, I was stunned. I had only recently received letters from Greame and others relieving me of any responsibility for the setbacks that had occurred during my absence. The expenses of the works had been cut by a third; the prospects for an enormously profitable operation had been put on a firm foundation. Yet barely a month after my resumption of the management here I am suddenly replaced. I await the trustees justification for their action even now, and I certainly will contest this suspicious, I would say conspiratorial, move. I wonder if it is possible that all of the trustees can be aware of what a change in management would do to the works, of how difficult is to master all of the vast operations here, from Cortlandt to Charlottenburg, and to capitalize on the prospects that I have started elsewhere, from Nova Scotia to the Mohawk Valley. By the time a new manager learns all there is to know, the momentum I am just regaining for the works would be lost.

After all my labor, all my knowledge and experience here, to have an unpracticed...politician run the works...it is unfathomable to me. There must be some

mistake or miscalculation.

Your devoted husband,
Peter

New York, Jan. 1768

Dear Katherine,

My assessment of this Humfray was entirely accurate. He has no experience and is completely ignorant of the business. They could hardly have found a more inept, obstinate manager had they inquired all over Europe. He neglected the most fertile swamp and bog meadows, which I had cleared at considerable expense and which we needed to feed the cattle, and let them grow wild again. In place of these fine fertile lands he cleared rocky and barren land for meadows. He discharged the most expert workmen and hired ignorant people who burnt both coal and iron. He burnt a new furnace by his ignorance. He digs up pipes buried to protect them from frost, converts overshot to undershot wheels. Two forges were burned from neglect. He keeps about a hundred superfluous laborers.

Furthermore he lives in splendor, keeping a coach for his wife and saddle horses for his sons who are on the payroll at 200 pounds a year. In short he has committed a thousand egregious mistakes already.

I now see a pattern in these clandestine maneuvers, and I trace them back to Seton, who connected me with Greame in the first place. I have learned from a New York Assemblyman, John Novelles, that Humpfray had been told that he had the job only a few days after I left for America. Andrew Seton had from the first concocted this scheme, not only of his own bankruptcy and the theft from the house which it effectively completed but also the continuing deceit of his friends, the Trustees of

the American Company. This was not an accidental but a premeditated deceit, a plot which they had formed before they signed the deed of partnership with me; they glory in it, in their petitions in Chancery and acknowledge that they made this deed of partnership that I might return to America and assign the lands and estates over to them.

I have been reproached for having had too great a confidence in these men. But could I imagine that an English Lieutenant General, an English Commodore and an English Secretary of the Admiralty could be guilty of so detestable, so treacherous an action? I might ask, had they no confidence in me? If not, why did they engage me to return to America? I have already assigned the reason--they persuaded me to it that they might have it in their power to deceive me; and I was deceived because I considered them honest men. But I confess my error.

How can commerce flourish or trade prosper if those in some of the highest offices in the land cannot be trusted? I would rather maintain my naivete than believe that the behavior of these men is the norm. Indeed, I must believe that even those of more sophistication than myself were duped, that the men in still higher offices who aided Greame and Forrest were taken in by them, particularly as they were probably old friends. Otherwise there can be no basis for law except coercive enforcement. There can be no communal ground for the morality on which law is ultimately based. The trust that ties the community together would be dissolved, and a ferocious selfishness would reign. Greed would go unchecked by any nobler impulse.

I am not insensible, Katherine, of the strong similarities between this betrayal by Seton and the betrayal by my

cousin immediately after our engagement, when he broke his promise to provide a position for me in his firm. I am stunned by the renewal of that earlier disappointment which we both suffered. The sense of *deja vu* is too strong for me to push away thoughts of that earlier time. I recall your face, the very posture which you held that morning in Lisbon when I had to tell you of the loss of my prospects, the uncertain footing of our marriage. I imagine you now suffering two sorrows, that of twenty years ago and that of the present. But as we overcame that setback, both financially and morally, so too will we emerge from this betrayal with a deeper sense of our love and purpose.

Your devoted husband,
Peter

New York, September 30, 1768

Dear Katherine,

Through the Secretary of State for the American Colonies, the Trustees have petitioned the Governors of New York and New Jersey "to protect the works from any attempt" which I "might make to destroy them." The governors are my friends, men with whom I have worked closely in founding Queens' College, in furthering law and education and commerce in the colonies. They are asked to treat me like some savage in need of physical restraint. Humfray's report to the American Company must have been very flattering indeed. I immediately asked Governor Franklin to have the mines inspected that a full and objective report might be made to the Trustees. Who knows what false charges Humfray is laying to my name and conduct. Do you, my dear, hear anything?

In five days--on July 2--the committee appointed by

Governor Franklin arrived. I have their report in hand. It completely exonerates me. The works are fully and accurately described. The new furnaces I have constructed on the Long Pond River and at Charlottenburg are described and their production justly estimated--twenty-five tons a week at Long Pond and the same at Charlottenburg.

The injustice of putting that inexperienced and incompetent Humfray in my place! I have shown by the handling of the Charlottenburg Furnace the difference between an amateur and an experienced ironmaster. We produce twenty-five to thirty tons a week to his seventeen. They must admit the injustice of what they have done!

But the trustees have delivered a further mortification to me. They have sent Andrew Seton to check the books. At first he declared the books unintelligible. There are a number of them kept by various clerks in the mountains and wildernesses at each of the works, not by trained bookkeepers; some of the clerks were German and made notations in their native language, a fact that particularly seemed to irk Seton. Though we are finally agreed that the company owes me 27,000 pounds, his manner throughout the audit was insufferable.

I remain hopeful, my dear, that I can yet extricate myself from the designs of these men.

Your determined husband,
Peter

New York, February 1769

My dear Katherine,

Seton's accounting has been presented and a decision rendered. Of the 27,000 pounds Seton and I agreed that

I am owed, I am to be paid 4,000--all of the other bills were discounted! Furthermore, to insure that their scheme will not be contested, the trustees have again exerted their influence here. The bill-holders in New York have obtained an injunction constraining me from leaving the city. Because of it I have lost the forty thousand acres of land in Nova Scotia which had been famous for their fertility and which I had intended to settle. I also lost the timber on Lake Champlain. But these private losses are as nothing to the public loss of a steel manufactory, which, had these unjust petitions not been brought against me, would have been established. Over and above all these however I fear for my reputation, without which no man of business can succeed. How will my name stand in England after this? As a consequence of these losses, the final disgrace, bankruptcy, appears to me now as a not unthinkable alternative.

Peter

August 25, 1769

My dear Katherine,

Forgive me for not having written. I have been on the roads for weeks, and I have had to come here to Charlotte, in the southern part of the colonies, by way of Philadelphia. Add to the loss of the lands in Nova Scotia and Lake Champlain and the loss of the better part of my fortune, the loss of the travel book I have been keeping for thirty years. Somewhere along the way during this infernal journey, I must have misplaced it. It was nearly as valuable to me as the other possessions I have lost. It contained observations of my first trip to Paris when I was nineteen years old and representing my father's company. It contained accounts of my trip to Russia and

my overland journeys to Spain, my observations on all the countries and cultures I have seen in a lifetime's travel.

I have travelled nearly 2000 miles to avoid New York, and I have seen much, perhaps too much, of the countryside. Is it only my own case that I see everywhere I go or is America changing? In only four years--can that be all?--there is a new anger here against the Mother Country. The colonists feel bled by the King, and, worse, they feel they are treated like dupes, as though they don't know any better.

Yesterday I witnessed a slave auction. The Negroes are very numerous here in the South, much more so than the few I saw among the Dutch when I first came to New Jersey. Planters sometimes come seventy miles to buy a slave, and the bidding is so intense for healthy young African men that they sometimes bring 40 pounds sterling. They are left penned until the auction when great crowds push and yell and vie with one another to buy. I saw one man drag another back by his collar to take his place closer to the auction block, and those bidding against one another seem almost to be at war. The Negroes meanwhile stand either dejected or defiant, powerless to do anything but hope their masters will be kind.

I dreamed last night of my grandfather showing me the textile mills, running his hand over a piece of linen. His kind eyes were a comfort even when I awakened, no longer a child.

Give my warmest affections to Maria.

Your husband,
Peter

My dearest Katherine,

I am sitting in a coffeehouse at wharveside, waiting for the ship's preparations to be completed that I might board for what will be, I'm sure, my last voyage between England and America. My travels have so exhausted me that I almost think I am in England already, sitting Bankside looking over the Thames--the ships, the bustle, the hawkers' cries and sailors' curses, the gullcry and cry of the rigging.

It is not so much that I am the poorer or that I wasn't able to complete the work I started. I can make more money, and the works are too valuable for the new managers to let them fall out of production. A century and more from now the works I started will still be producing iron. No, the loss of money and position are not the worst disappointments I suffer. I am most disappointed in myself for having disappointed you.

I thought for a moment that I was hallucinating, that the tribulations of the past months had unsettled my mind. But no, it's true, though I cannot believe it: Andrew Seton has just walked down the gangway of the H.M.S. Service--ruffled shirt, fine linens, the smile--unchanged! The sight of him has caused a stir, and word is going round the dock that he has bought a large estate and is unloading many exquisite furnishings. He has just been introduced to a Guinea captain. Seton smiles his careless smile and inclines in his charming way toward the captain, anxious to invest a new fortune, it appears, in a new venture--a slaver to the West Indies. If I have ever felt a momentary weakness, as though the very ground under me shook as it did in the Lisbon earthquake, the sight of Seton has restored me. Seeing him has confirmed my resolve to attack my enemies in open court and to fight until my fortune and reputation

are restored.

In all, I remain, as always, your loving husband,
Peter

Epilogue

In London Hasenclever contested the lawsuit against him, petitioning the King and Parliament in a published pamphlet, *The Remarkable Case of Peter Hasenclever, Merchant*. In 1773 the case was still unresolved; Hasenclever was bankrupt and disgraced, legally constrained from doing any business in England. He returned with his daughter to his native Germany. Katherine Hasenclever apparently came to America, for in the 1783 travel journal of a Mr. Robert Hunter "Mrs. Hasenclever, the widow of Baron Hasenclever" is a fellow traveler on a trip from Paulus Hook to Philadelphia where she lives.

In Germany Hasenclever initiated new enterprises. He established a trading company and made improvements in the manufacture of linen. He was joined in business by Johann Ruck, who married Maria Hasenclever in 1775.

Peter Hasenclever died in 1793. A few months after his death the Court of Chancery in England decided his case against the American Company. He was awarded a judgment of 72,000 pounds plus 5% interest for twenty-four years. By then the American Company was bankrupt.

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Bibliographic Note

My main source for *Hasenclever's Works* was *The Remarkable Case of Peter Hasenclever, Merchant* (London, 1773), a pamphlet Peter Hasenclever published in his own defense. In fact, I have used Hasenclever's own words wherever possible, most extensively in the description of the estate he imagines, in his appraisal of Humfray and in his conclusions about the treachery of his partners. In its two most important respects—the description of the furnaces, forges and mines and the reckoning of finances—Hasenclever's account is independently confirmed by the governors' report on the mines and the judgment of Chancery, and there is no reason to doubt the probity of his pamphlet. Nevertheless, the suggestion of objective history which a third-person narration inevitably connotes seemed to me, considering my primary sources of information, misleading. Furthermore, it scants the personal relationships behind the public achievements. For these reasons I have written *Hasenclever's Works* as a series of letters. The epistolary method seemed both closer to my sources and more likely to render a comprehensive picture of Hasenclever.

Hasenclever's pamphlet was supplemented by various other sources. Gerhard Spieler's "Peter Hasenclever, Industrialist" (*Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. 59, Oct. 1941) provided the facts about Hasenclever's family and personal life. The letters of John Jacob Faesch (compiled by Alex Fowler and translated by Ernest Krauss, available in the Morristown library) contain the terms of his contract and recount the recruitment of German ironworkers. The few remaining scraps of Hasenclever's letters to Sir William Johnson (*The Papers of Sir William Johnson*, The State University of the State of New York, Albany, 1921-1962) mention the visits of Johnson's son, John, to Katherine and Maria Hasenclever in London. James M. Ransom in *The Vanishing Ironworks of the Ramapos* (Rutgers University Press, 1966) describes the Ringwood ironworks at the time of Hasenclever's purchase and explains the process of ironmaking. Information on the larger historical context in colonial New Jersey and America was provided by any number of standard texts which need not be listed here.

