The opening of the world’s greatest market in the North American colonies played an all important role in the early industrialization of England. The district of Staffordshire was no exception to this influence. “At the time of the American revolution, the British colonists numbered 2,000,000 and the population of Great Britain was still under 10,000,000. It is easy to see what a valuable market this population, with the wants and tastes of Englishmen, would provide for British industries.” Its value was obvious not only then, but from as early as 1700 until as late as the mid-nineteenth century. Thus for a century and a half the destiny of Staffordshire hung upon the destiny of the new world.

Source materials covering this early period in the industrial history of Staffordshire are rather rare. The Museum Library is fortunate, however, in having secured several particularly interesting items. One of them, written by Josiah Wedgwood, was published at Hanley in 1783 and is titled An address to the workmen in the pottery on the subject of entering into the service of foreign manufacturers. The occasion for this small pamphlet was a dramatic one.

When the American Revolution broke out, Staffordshire had succeeded in procuring for herself a generous slice of the huge overseas market. New roads and a canal had put her in touch with the ports of the world. Josiah Wedgwood could write as early as 1765: “The bulk of our particular manufactures are, you know, exported to foreign markets, for our home consumption is very trifling in comparison to what is sent abroad & the principal of these markets are the Continent & Islands of North America.” But war put an end to this pleasant and profitable trade and to the prosperity arising from it. By November, 1783, starvation was rife in the district and had brought on food riots which were difficult to control. What was worse, many of the workmen were emigrating to the new world, where a native pottery industry had been set up. The very existence of the English pottery manufacture and trade was threatened.

Wedgwood, who, as the leading citizen of the district, had always exercised great influence over its conduct, found himself baffled. He could do nothing about the starvation and the riots, but, regarding the emigration as the greatest danger to the entire district, he published his Address to the workmen in the pot-
tery. If, he says in effect, you are criminal enough to leave the country which has given you birth and ungrateful enough to forsake the manufactory which has nourished you, then, if you do succeed in getting aboard a ship, you will probably go down with her or you will be shipwrecked and will perish from hunger and exposure on some rocky isle. Or, if you do manage to arrive in the colonies and do not find things as rosy as you have been made to believe, then you will never be allowed to return no matter how much you should desire.

But why, Wedgwood continues, should anyone wish to emigrate from a country which has such superior advantages for the workingman? In *The Clayhanger*, Arnold Bennett has described some of the "advantages" provided for Darius Clayhanger, aged seven, who rose at four o'clock in the morning to run down to start the fire in his master's kiln, after first stealing the firewood, and to work half-naked in the torrid heat of the kiln until eight o'clock in the evening. Nor does a description of the towns themselves sound any more inviting. "The architecture of the Five Towns [Burslem, Tunstall, Hanley, Stoke, and Longton]." Bennett writes, "is an architecture of ovens and chimneys. . . . Its atmosphere is as black as its mud . . . it burns and smokes all night so that Longshaw (Longton) has been compared to hell. . . ."

An experiment with laws designed to prevent emigration and the solicitation of workingmen for purposes of emigration did not operate long, for the war ended and the trade with the former American colonies was resumed, bringing prosperity back to Staffordshire. Wedgwood and the pottery industry were saved; the Darius Clayhangers of 1783 were privileged to take up their terrible burdens once again. Just what this prosperity meant to the district may be seen from the first Staffordshire directory, published in Hanley in 1802. About six hundred manufacturers are listed, with a table of distances on the Trent and Mersey and other canals and a map of the entire district. In a sketch of the county we are told that the population had increased four times in the previous thirty years.

However, the prosperity that came after the peace did not last. As the potteries dumped their stored-up goods onto the new states, the ensuing ruin of the infant American trade created a great hatred of anything British. Americans used Canton china and refused to allow English pottery to appear on their tables. Then someone in Staffordshire thought of a clever thing to do. By use of the transfer printing process, reproductions of buildings and scenes in the United States were placed on the dishes for the American trade. The potters did not engage artists to go to America to sketch but used engravings and drawings already available, mostly by American artists—among them Thomas Cole, Alexander Jackson Davis, Charles W. Burton, William Goodacre, Jr., John James Barralet, H. Brown, Alvin Fisher, and Jacques Gérard Milbert.

Historical events in American history were represented on the ware as well as views of familiar buildings and landscapes. Almshouses, hospitals, and insane asylums were shown in...
Throwing or shaping pots by hand, turning them in a lathe, and shaping dishes on molds

abundance, for the nineteenth century was proud of its newly awakened social conscience. Examples of this quaint pottery may be seen in the American Wing and reproductions in color plates are numerous in two books: Pictures of Early New York on Dark Blue Staffordshire Pottery by R. T. Haines Halsey, and American Historical Views on Staffordshire China by Ellouise Baker Larsen.

When the printed ware was sent to America it immediately became very popular, turning the situation back to the commercial advantage of the Staffordshire potters. At that time the citizens of the United States had very little idea of what their country looked like, since travel remained slow and expensive and photography was yet to come. Eating dinner from a set of the new picture dishes was like going to a newsreel at the movies.

By the year 1829 Staffordshire's importance had earned it a printed history, Simeon Shaw's History of the Staffordshire Potteries, now a rather rare bibliographical item. The district was already one of the "most populous and industrious . . . in the nation." Its trade was world-wide and it could claim the distinction of being the pottery center of the United Kingdom if not indeed of the entire world.

Of this prosperity Bennett observes: "The Five Towns seem to cling together for safety. Yet the idea of clinging together for safety would make them laugh. They are unique and indispensable. From the north of the county right down to the south they alone stand for civilization, applied science, organized manufacture, and the century until you come to Wolverhampton. They are unique and indispensable because you cannot drink tea out of a teacup without the aid of the Five Towns; because you cannot eat a meal in decency without the aid of the Five Towns. . . . For this it gets up in the mass at six a.m., winter and summer, and goes to bed when the public-houses close; for this it exists—that you may drink tea out of a teacup and toy with a chop on a plate."

Grinding the colors for painting, glazing the ware, and setting it near the oven for firing