

attention after they had sent me a preliminary draft of their article. No great amount of scrutiny was required to see that it was the source of the Sussex Declaration. The similarities in style and structure are obvious. In my view they are not dealing with a clerk who rearranged the signatures to fulfill Wilson's political agenda but rather an amateur who transcribed the facsimile in an exercise of penmanship. But they submit that hypothesis only to dismiss it. Their rebuttal touches on several topics, mainly textual inconsistencies and a question of quality: the facsimile was a mass-produced keepsake measuring no more than 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  by 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches. Why, they ask, would the clerk use such a paltry print to copy out a Declaration on this scale? They defend their position by pointing out anomalies in the layout of the facsimile not repeated in the manuscript, a transcription problem posed by the sequence of signatures. If the clerk had been copying the facsimile, they say, surely those anomalies would be present in the manuscript.

So, what is the source of the Sussex Declaration: the parchment engrossed for the Continental Congress, signed by most of its members on 2 August 1776, the iconic document in the National Archives—or a cheap facsimile printed in Boston some sixty years later? What is the source of the Boston facsimile? In the following I will propose answers to those questions less glamorous than the hypotheses of Allen and Sneff but more consistent with the writing practices and design considerations involved in making a copy of the Declaration. Here, as in other bibliographical endeavors, the pure and simple physical evidence should prevail over less substantial arguments, no matter how many of them may be mustered against a few overriding objections. I will address the main arguments of the *PBSA* article, which is intended to establish the date of the Sussex Declaration. I will not be concerned with the *GJLPP* article, for it is entirely predicated on its predecessor and assumes that the alternative hypothesis has been refuted. If the dates they propose are not valid, then they cannot attribute it to James Wilson and cannot claim that Wilson used it during the Constitutional Convention.

## I

Allen and Sneff begin by recounting the provenance of the Sussex Declaration. They note that it was deposited in the WSRO by a local solicitor whose firm had done business with the Richmond family. A WSRO archivist told them that the solicitor once had his pick of the family papers that had been entrusted to the firm since the eighteenth century, but were discarded in bulk sometime before 1956. Indeed, the finding list of the deposit mentions two or three items relating to the family but they are so scattered and insignificant that it is hard to believe that they came from a trove dating back to the eighteenth century. The deposit is clearly the gleanings of a local history collector who found a few curiosities in his office and kept anything else that caught his eye. The finding list relegates the Sussex Declaration to a miscellaneous section at the end where it is accompanied by an 1828 legal opinion about a conveyance to the duke of Richmond's trustees, checks drawn on a London bank in the 1840s and 1850s, an advertisement of a London dyer active ca. 1844, a list of the kings and queens of England, and a