absence of the long *s* prevalent in manuscripts of this period, but they believe that the clerk was one of the "stylistic radicals" who had dropped that usage. They do not mention that Wilson sometimes used a long *s* in his drafts of the Constitution, apparently more conservative in his writing practices than his hired hand. Arguing for the American origins of the manuscript, they compare it with contemporary deeds and indentures, some reproduced in the *PBSA* article, some in the Declaration Resources Project website. They detect stylistic features more likely to be local than to come from England, but to my mind the sample is too small to be convincing. Their morphological analysis of the document has been more useful for their purposes than the script itself, which is difficult to date.

Allen and Sneff assert that the clerk made several drafts before completing the "final fair copy" of this manuscript (*PBSA,* p. 367). They perceive a certain amount of effort expended to produce a symmetrical composition, uniform line endings, no word breaks, and other artistic touches worthy of a document intended for display. Nonetheless the clerk botched the job at the beginning and made it worse while trying to correct it. He began to write a date in the same size and style of the black letter "In Congress" on the first line of the title but then thought better of it and began to rub out his mistake. His erasure merely smudged his work leaving remnants of that date easily apparent at first sight. For Allen and Sneff this was an opportunity for further scientific investigation, the results of which are posted on the Declaration Resources Project website and summarized in the *PBSA* article. They commissioned various tests using imaging techniques and other digital technologies to scrutinize the erasure. In the documentation they received they see evidence that the erased date referred to when the clerk was working on the manuscript: either "July 4, 178" or "July 4, 179," the last digit indecipherable. Starting on the fair copy, forgetting the momentous date of Independence, the clerk made an absent-minded slip of the pen as if he was thinking about his present circumstances instead of his assignment to reinterpret the Declaration.

The technical reports on the website are inconclusive and are mostly about methodology. A Library of Congress conservator considered the possibility that the third digit in the erased date might be an 8 or 9 but was not willing to commit to that reading. I believe there is an easier explanation. Yes, the clerk made a mistake but when and why did he try to fix it? It is more likely that the clerk forgot the July 4, 1776, date while copying out the text, and then went back to write it on the first line next to "In Congress." Then he realized that this stopgap measure would spoil the symmetrical composition and erased his work, deciding instead to insert the missing date between the first and second lines, obviously an afterthought. He had to break it up at either end of the title and cut it down to a size that would fit between the lines. He used a similarly compressed cursive to mend a mistake in the fifth line of text, correcting the word "when" to "whenever." This sequence of events explains the smudged title, the inserted date, and the amateurish script. Other mistakes provide opportunities for Allen and Sneff to devise an elaborate argument for the early origins and historical significance of the Sussex Declaration. These too can be explained by viewing them in a bibliographical context, a means of understanding the copying process in manuscript and print.