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EXAMINATION taken on the 4th March  
1800, before the LORDS of His MAJESTY'S Most  
Honourable PRIVY COUNCIL, respecting the In-  
stitution called "The Birmingham Flour and  
"Bread Company, or Union Mills."

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READ, a printed Paper, intituled, "Articles of the Birmingham  
Flour and Bread Company, 1796;"—of which the following is the  
Preamble:

"Whereas from various Causes and Circumstances, the Price of Flour  
and Bread is risen to an unexampled and exorbitant Height, and the diffe-  
rent Classes of Society have been most shamefully imposed upon by va-  
rious People, in grinding almost all kind of Grain and mixing thereof  
with Wheaten Flour; and the several Persons and Parties hereto, feeling  
with Indignation such Impositions, and fearing, that unless some proper  
and effectual Means are taken, the Evil attending the high Price of  
Grain, and the shameful Adulteration of Flour may continue; and being  
of Opinion, that nothing can tend more effectually to remedy the same,  
than forming themselves into a Society, Company, or Copartnership,  
for the Purpose of erecting a Mill or Mills, Store Rooms, Bake Houses,  
and other Buildings, and of buying Corn, grinding thereof, making Part  
of the same into Bread, and distributing of or dealing in Flour and  
Bread."

To remedy the Evils stated in this Preamble, the Parties thought fit to  
enter into the Articles of Agreement; of which the following is an  
Abstract:

ABSTRACT of ARTICLES of COPARTNERSHIP.

- "The Subscription, or Joint Stock, not to exceed £. 20,000.
- "This £. 20,000 to be divided into 20,000 Shares.
- "No Partner to hold more than 20 Shares.

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"Ground

“ Ground to be bought or rented. And a Mill or Mills, Store Rooms, Bake Houfes, and other Conveniencies, to be erected in fuch Manner as the Committee fhall direct.

“ Each Partner to purchafe from the Copartnerfhip in every Week, at the Prices fixed by the Committee, fuch Quantity of Flour and Bread, or Flour or Bread, not exceeding in value One Shilling in each Week for each Share, as the Committee fhall deem expedient.

“ The Committee to confift of Twenty-one of the Copartners, each holding not lefs than Five Shares, to be elected by a Majority of Votes Annually. Five of the Committee to be competent to act, with Power to appoint Clerks, &c.”

The Committee for the firft Year were named in the Articles.

“ A Meeting of the Copartnerfhip to be held every Year in the Month of May, in order that a State of their Affairs may be laid before them. The Votes to be taken by Shares, and not by Voices. Upon an Equality the Chairman to decide.

“ This General Meeting to appoint a Treasurer and Banker.

“ The Subscription to be paid by Inftalments: each Inftalment not exceeding Ten per Cent. on each Share; nor any Call to be at lefs than One Month from the preceding Call.

“ Shares may be fold or transferred, but to fuch only as will enter into Covenants for the performing thefe Articles.

“ The Majority in Value, at any General Meeting of the Copartnerfhip, may make Additions to, or Alterations in any of thefe Articles. And the Copartnerfhip may be diffolved, at any public Meeting, by the Votes of Three Fourths in Value of the Copartners.

“ The Copartners confent to certain Penalties and Forfeitures for enforcing the due Execution of the before-mentioned Articles.”

EXAMINATION.

EXAMINATION.

THOMAS CLIFFORD, Junr, of Birmingham,

Clerk to the before-mentioned Flour and Bread Company;

Attending, was called in; when their Lordfhips put feveral Questions to him, relating to that Inftitution, as follow:

Q. What was the Amount of the Sum that was firft fubfcribed to this Inftitution?

A. £. 6,279.

Q. What are at prefent the Number of Subfcribers who hold Shares in this Firft Subfcription?

A. One thoufand Three hundred and Sixty.

Q. Did the poorer Claffes of the Inhabitants of Birmingham fubfcribe at firft to this Inftitution?

A. A great Number of them did.

Q. Did they frequently fubfcribe for more than One Share?

A. Yes, from One Share to Five.

Q. Are the Subfcribers permitted to purchafe more Bread or Flour at thefe Mills, than the Quantity they are obliged to purchafe weekly, according to the Inftitution; that is, the Value of One Shilling?

A. They were not permitted to purchafe more till the 23d of September laft, when they were permitted to have a Half Peck Loaf, which is worth now 2s. 3d.; or to purchafe Flour to that Amount. The Committee were once authorized to fell as much as they could for ready Money to the Public at large: The Quantity fold was, from the 1ft of May to the 1ft Auguft 1799 (13 Weeks) 25 Sacks of Flour per Week, exclusive of the Charities. This additional Quantity was diftributed amongst the Inhabitants, becaufe many of the Proprietors held more Shares than they could confume; but the weekly Amount of what that Quantity was, cannot be afcertained. The Committee have ceafed felling in this Manner during feveral Months, hoping that when the People found they could not have the Benefit of the Inftitution without fubfcribing, more Perfons would be induced to become Subfcribers, and that the Funds of the Company would be thereby increafed.

Q. Have

Q. Have any additional Subscriptions been received at these Mills, subsequent to those received at the first Institution of them; at what Period, and to what Amount?

A. The Institution was opened for new Subscriptions in the Month of September last, for the Amount of £.3,000; £.2,100 of which is already subscribed. The Subscription still remains open; and there has lately been an Addition of 60 Shares in the course of a Fortnight.

Q. Do you sell the Bread and Flour at these Mills cheaper than these Articles are sold for at the same Time in the Market of Birmingham?

A. Always, I believe.

Q. Can you say, upon an Average, how much cheaper?

A. The Bread 20. per Cent. cheaper; the Flour 2d. per Peck cheaper generally, but now 6d. per Peck cheaper. We manufacture the Flour into Bread, which we sell to the Subscribers without reserving any Profit.

Q. Is the Bread you sell at these Mills as fine, and of the same Description, as that sold by the common Bakers of Birmingham?

A. Originally it was as nearly of the same Quality as possible; at present, we make Three or Four Pounds more of Flour from a Bushel of Wheat than before; of consequence our Bread is now less fine.

Q. Do you, in making your Bread, ever use any other Grain than Wheat?

A. None other.

Q. Do you conceive that the common Bakers of Birmingham ever use any other Grain than Wheat?

A. I believe they do; at the present Time some of them avowedly do so; they use Barley and Beans.

Q. Have the common Bakers of Birmingham made their Bread coarser since you have made your Bread coarser?

A. Not generally.

Q. Does the same Proportion in Price hold between the Bakers and your Bread, since you have made it coarser?

A. The Price of our Bread at this Time is 25 per Cent. less than that sold by the common Baker; but as our Bread is now generally coarser than that made by the common Baker, it should not be reckoned more than 20 per Cent. cheaper.

Q. Can you say whether the Sale of Bread by the common Baker is diminished since the Commencement of this Institution?

A. At the beginning it was considerably diminished; but since the present

present Scarcity of Grain, the Baker's Sale has very much increased, because private Persons do not bake for themselves so much now as they did before, on Account of the Scarcity of Yeast, owing to the brewing having been diminished by the present high Price of Malt: Another Reason of private Persons not baking so much as formerly is, that Flour is now much worse than usual, in consequence of the late wet Harvest, when a great deal of the Corn was damaged by growing.

Q. What Cloth did you use in dressing your Wheat at the Commencement of this Institution, and what Cloth have you used since you made your Bread coarser?

A. Our Machines, in the first Instance, were equal to a Patent Cloth, N<sup>o</sup> 15; they are now only equal to N<sup>o</sup> 8.

Q. Can you say how much finer or coarser the Bread made at the Mills at Birmingham is, than the White Bread sold commonly in London?

A. About Three Weeks ago, I sent some Loaves to Mr. Wyatt for the Inspection of the Committee of the House of Commons. Mr. Wyatt thought these as good, but not quite so fine coloured, as the Bread sold in London. I myself cannot easily distinguish the Quality; the London Bread is rather the whiter of the Two.

Q. Can you say, whether the Prices which you have paid for Wheat are in general higher, or lower, than in the County of Warwick, or at London?

A. The Prices paid for Wheat by the Union Mill Company, from the Commencement of the Institution to the 27th of February last, were as follow:

B PRICES

490.

[ 6 ]

PRICES of WHEAT at BIRMINGHAM.				Average of the Prices of Wheat per Quarter in the County of Warwick, as taken at the Markets of COVENTRY, WARWICK, and BIRMINGHAM.		Prices of Wheat in the LONDON Market per Quarter.	
PRICES taken QUARTERLY.							
1797. June 24	- - - - -	per Qu <sup>r</sup>	s. d.	1797. June 24	s. d.	s. d.	
Sept. 29	- - - - -		48 4	Sept. 30	51 1	51 2	
Dec. 25	- - - - -		60 11	Dec. 23	67 10	72 0	
1798. Mar. 25	- - - - -		50 4	1798. Mar. 24	53 11	47 8	
June 24	- - - - -		51 4	June 23	54 6	51 10	
Sept. 29	- - - - -		49 3	Sept. 29	50 7	49 9	
Dec. 25	- - - - -		47 1½	Dec. 22	51 4	48 0	
1799. Mar. 25	- - - - -		46 3	1799. Mar. 23	45 11	48 9	
June 24	- - - - -		47 5½	June 22	51 2	50 10	
			59 0		62 5	61 8	
PRICES taken WEEKLY.							
Sept. 29	201½	- 33 8	or, per Qu <sup>r</sup>	76 2½	1799. Sept. 28	87 4	72 2
Oct. 3	196	- 33 0½		76 10½	Oct. 5	90 3	75 2
10	168½	- 37 10		87 0½	12	97 4	84 5
16	201½	- 41 6½		94 0	19	99 1	92 8
24	201½	- 38 10½		87 10½	26	99 1	89 10
31	197	- 39 0½		90 4½	Nov. 2	99 6	91 1
Nov. 7	200½	- 42 7½		96 9½	9	101 4	91 1
14	199	- 41 10½		95 10½	16	104 8	94 5
21	199	- 43 10		100 5½	23	107 2	103 1
28	200	- 44 4½		101 2	30	107 7	105 7
Dec. 5	198½	- 44 5½		102 0½	Dec. 7	106 6	102 1
12	200½	- 43 4½		98 9½	14	100 8	98 1
19	207	- 39 11½		87 11½	21	98 10	97 7
26	199	- 37 6½		86 0½	28	100 0	97 6
1800. Jan. 2	195	- 38 4½		89 8½	1800. Jan. 4	98 8	98 4
9	202	- 40 4½		91 1	11	104 11	100 6
16	197	- 44 5		102 9½	18	107 5	108 9
23	198½	- 45 3½		104 2	25	104 11	108 3
30	198½	- 48 7½		111 9	Feb. 1	114 6	108 6
Feb. 6	194	- 48 7½		114 2½	8	110 10	110 11
13	198	- 49 0		112 10	15	111 7	112 9
20	197	- 51 5½		119 1½	22	111 0	119 7
27	195½	- 51 2½		119 5½	Mar. 1	115 8	119 5

Q. Do

491.

[ 7 ]

Q. Do you use any Alum in making your Bread?  
 A. Latterly we have, in some Instances, been forced to use Alum, because the Flour was too moist and clammy; so that the Bread, if we had not used it, would have come out of the Oven too moist.

Q. Can you say how much cheaper Bread is sold at the Mills at Birmingham, than an equal Quantity of Bread at London?—State the Difference of the Prices previous to your having made the Flour of a coarser Quality, and the Difference since.

A. At the Commencement, on the 18th of August 1797, the Quarter Loaf was sold for - - - 5½ London, on Monday  
 Aug. 21, 1797 - 8½ Wheaten.  
 Sept. 29 - - - 6½ Sept. 25 - - - 10½  
 Dec. 25 - - - 6½ Dec. 25 - - - 8½

1798. Mar. 25 - - - 6½ Mar. 26, 1798 - 8½  
 June 25 - - - 6½ June 25 - - - 8½  
 Sept. 29 - - - 6½ Sept. 24 - - - 8½  
 Dec. 25 - - - 5½ Dec. 24 - - - 8

1799. Mar. 25 - - - 5½ Mar. 25, 1799 - 8½  
 June 24 - - - 6½ June 24 - - - 9½  
 Sept. 29 - - - 9 Sept. 30 - - - 11  
 Oct. 7 - - - 9 Oct. 7 - - - 12  
 14 - - - 9 }  
 14 - - - 10 }  
 21 - - - 10½ }  
 28 - - - 10 }  
 Nov. 4 - - - 10 }  
 11 - - - 11 }  
 18 - - - 11 }  
 25 - - - 12 }  
 Dec. 1 - - - 12 }  
 8 - - - 12 }  
 15 - - - 11½ }  
 23 - - - 11 }  
 30 - - - 11 }

1800. Jan. 6 - - - 11½ Jan. 6, 1800 - 15½  
 13 - - - 11½ }  
 20 - - - 12 }  
 27 - - - 12½ }  
 Feb. 2 - - - 13½ }  
 9 - - - 13½ }  
 17 - - - 13½ }

From this Period, viz, 17th February, the Flour was made coarse, and Bread sold at the same Price to the End of the Month.

Q. Do

Q. Do the Subscribers to the Mills at Birmingham derive any Profit or Advantage from their Shares, except what arises from purchasing their Bread and Flour cheaper than it can be purchased at Birmingham?

A. We have retained a Profit of about Ten per Cent. upon the whole of our Capital, for the Purpose of keeping our Works in Repair; the Remainder of our Profits, which amounts to £.652. is now to be divided among the Old Subscribers, in order to put them on an equal Footing with the New Subscribers.

Q. Can you explain the Causes which have enabled the Managers of these Mills to sell their Bread 20 per Cent. cheaper than the common Baker at Birmingham, and their Flour cheaper in the Proportion before stated; and yet have enabled them to have added a Profit to their Capital? Is it owing to your purchasing your Wheat cheaper, or to the grinding of it, and making it into Bread at a less Charge; or to what other Cause?

A. I believe the Reason is, that we have an Advantage over the Baker by buying with ready Money, and by not giving Credit for what we sell; our Sale is also more extensive; and as we grind and dress our own Wheat, we can perform the whole Operation of converting Wheat into Bread, cheaper than others, for we have the whole Profit of the Miller and the Baker.

Q. What is the whole Charge at the Union Mill of converting Wheat into White Bread, that is, the Bread you first made, reckoning by a per Centage on the original Cost of the Wheat?

A. A Bag of Wheat, weighing 200 lbs. Nett, cost - - £.2 11 -  
Manufacturing - - - - - 3 10  
£.2 14 10

The Proportion therefore is a Thirteenth, and very nearly One Third of the original Cost, or £.7. 10s. 3½d. per Cent.

Q. What is the whole Charge at the Union Mill of converting Wheat into Brown Bread, that is, the Bread you now make, reckoning by a per Centage on the original Cost of the Wheat?

A. A Bag of Wheat, weighing 200 lbs. Nett, cost - - £.2 11 -  
Manufacturing - - - - - 3 8  
£.2 14 8

The Proportion therefore is nearly One Fourteenth of the original Cost, or £.7. 3s. 9½d. per Cent. It takes less Time to manufacture the Coarse than the Fine Flour.

Q. You

Q. You have said in a former Answer, that, for a short Period, Bread was sold at these Mills for ready Money to the Public at large; do you now sell Bread or Flour to any others except such as have Shares?

A. No, except to some Charities; that is, the Blue-Coat Charity, the Soup Shop, the Asylum, the General Hospital; and we have served the Troops in the Barracks since the present Regiment came there.

Q. Can you state what is the Quantity of Bread and Flour which you now sell weekly to those who have Shares; and what is the Quantity of these Articles you now sell weekly to the Charities and Barracks, as before-mentioned?

A. The Number of Shares to the Proprietors amounts to 209 Sacks per Week, 85 Sacks of which are baked; the Remainder is sold in Flour, and the Charities served as under:

			Quartern Loaves.
Asylum	1799. December	- - - - -	840
	1800. January	- - - - -	820
	February	- - - - -	880
Hospital	1799. December	- - - - -	380
	1800. January	- - - - -	360
	February	- - - - -	480
Soup Shop	1799. December	- - - - -	1,074
	1800. January	- - - - -	1,750
	February	- - - - -	1,620
Barracks	1799. December	- - - - -	2,135
	1800. January	- - - - -	3,571
	February	- - - - -	3,095
Blue Coat School always takes			
Flour.	1799. December	- - - - -	8 Sacks.
	1800. January	- - - - -	8 D°.
	February	- - - - -	8 D°.

Q. What has been the Charge which the Partnership has incurred in the Purchase of Land, and in erecting Buildings and Mills, Bake Houses, Warehouses, and every Sort of Apparatus for carrying on their Business?

A. The Ground, held by the Company for the Purposes before-mentioned, is Leasehold, at a Rent of £.50. 6s. 8d. per Annum; and they have Buildings, besides those employed in the Business of the Copartnership, which they let at £.50 per Annum: And there is still more Land remaining, which they have not yet disposed of.—The total Charge of erecting the Buildings, which consist of a Mill, Bake House, Warehouses, Stables, Piggies, and Cart Shed, Engine House, and Dwelling House,

House, was £. 2,753. 12s. 9½d. I cannot state the Expenses of erecting the separate Parts of the Buildings correctly, as the Materials were contracted for, and the Whole erected under the Inspection of One of the Committee, who was a Builder; and by that Means a considerable Saving was made to the Company.

	£.	s.	d.
Buildings - - - - -	2,753	12	9½
Mill-work, Stones, Dressing Machines, &c. - - - - -	622	12	11
Engine - - - - -	900	-	-
Putting-up - - - - -	243	1	5
Bags - - - - -	118	17	5
Live and Dead Stock - - - - -	124	10	2
Furniture - - - - -	32	12	3
Wharf and Buildings - - - - -	350	-	-
	5,145	5	11½
Working Capital - - - - -	1,133	14	¾
	£. 6,279	-	-

Q. Can you state what is the Charge of this Copartnership, in Salaries and Payments for daily Labour, per Annum?

A. The Charges under these Heads are as follow:

	£.	s.	d.
Clerks - - - - -	205	-	-
Millers - - - - -	119	12	-
Engineer - - - - -	36	8	-
Bakers - - - - -	124	16	-
Carters - - - - -	75	18	-
Flour-weigher - - - - -	41	12	-
	£. 603	6	-

To this will be added £. 150 more next Year, on Account of the Increase of Buiness.

Q. What is the Charge of this Copartnership in Repairs, per Annum?

	£.	s.	d.
Mill - - - - -	40	4	9½
Bake House - - - - -	17	14	10½
Engine House - - - - -	61	2	10½
Out Houses - - - - -	13	8	10½
Carts, &c. &c. - - - - -			
	£. 132	11	4½

This

This Account includes all Materials, as Oil, Tallow, &c. for Engine, Setters, &c. for Bake Houses, and an Improvement in the Mill, which cost £. 10.

Q. Are the Persons you employ as Millers, or as Bakers, constantly in the Service of the Copartnership?

A. They are Men who continue constantly with us, as Weekly Servants.

Q. What is the Rate of Wages paid to them respectively?

A.		Millers.	
Foreman - - - - -	-	18 s.	per Week.
Flour-dresser - - - - -	-	16 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
Assitant - - - - -	-	12 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
		Bakers.	
Foreman - - - - -	-	20 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
2 Assitants, each - - - - -	-	14 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
Engineer - - - - -	-	14 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
Carter - - - - -	-	15 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
D <sup>s</sup> - - - - -	-	14 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>
Flour-weigher - - - - -	-	16 s.	- D <sup>s</sup>

Q. Do you conceive that your Bread is made and baked as well as that of the common Baker?

A. Exactly.

Q. What Stock of Wheat, or Flour, have you generally in your Warehouses?

A. We have generally had about Three Weeks Consumption; that is, about 900 Bags of Three Bushels each, in Wheat and Flour: This Stock will now be increased to 1,200 Bags, in consequence of the additional Subscribers. If our Capital was sufficient, it would be better for us to have Four Weeks Consumption in our Warehouses; for, if the Flour was kept as long as Three Months, it would be the better for it.

Q. Does your Committee purchase Wheat in the Market of Birmingham or in the Country, or in both?

A. We send an Agent both to the Birmingham Market and to the different Markets near Twenty Miles round.

Q. Do you apprehend that you purchase Wheat cheaper than it is purchased by the Millers at the Birmingham Market?

A. There are Millers of large Property, who purchase Wheat as cheap as we do. There are others, who do not.

Q. Do

Q. Do you apprehend you purchase Wheat cheaper by sending for it to the Country Markets?

A. We could not get the Quantity of Wheat we want at the Birmingham Market; besides, by sending to the Country Markets, we keep the Prices at the Birmingham Market lower than they would otherwise be. If the Farmers found that we should make our Purchases only at the Birmingham Market, they would soon compel us to purchase at their Price.

Q. Does the Committee ever so far speculate as to lay up a larger Stock of Wheat than usual, when they apprehend that the Price may rise?

A. There was one Instance when the Company had a larger Stock than usual, which happened when Wheat was cheap. It was not the Intention of the Committee to speculate; neither have they had it in their Power, when it is considered, that with a Capital of £. 1,133 they have returned £. 23,000 per Annum.—It certainly is desirable to provide a large Stock of Wheat when Markets are low, to prevent the Dealers, when the Price begins to rise, from raising the Markets too rapidly, and to give the Farmer or Merchant Time to bring his Grain to Market.

Q. How many Pair of Mill Stones are worked at your Mill at a Time?

A. We generally work Three Pair at a Time. We have a Fourth Pair, but cannot work it, because one Pair is always repairing; and we have all the necessary Apparatus for dressing the Flour in Proportion.

Q. How many Ovens have you?

A. We have Five Ovens in the Bake House, but Four only in Use; these Four bake about 15 Sacks of Flour, of 280 lbs. each, in a Day.

Q. Are your present Buildings, Mills, Bake House, &c. sufficient to carry on the Business to a greater Extent than the present?

A. They are sufficient to carry on a Retail Business, according to our present Plan, to double its present Extent; but if the whole of the intended Capital of £. 20,000, as originally designed, was invested in the present Sort of Retail Trade, they would not be sufficient. They are, however, sufficient to carry on a wholesale Trade to the Extent of a Capital of £. 20,000, except that in such Case our Warehouses would be too small.

Q. What is the Quantity of Fuel annually consumed, and what is the Charge of it?

A. Three hundred and Ninety-three Tons of Coals	£. 204	4	7
Wood for Bake House	13	6	0
	£. 217	10	7

Q. Have

Q. Have any Bye-Laws been made, which tend to alter the Plan of the original Institution, or which have established Regulations for the Improvement of it?

A. The only Law of any Consequence is, the Change from One Shilling's Worth to a Half Peck of Flour or a Half Peck Loaf for each Share, which was occasioned by the very great Inconvenience the Proprietors and the Concern experienced in the Uncertainty of the Quantity; and the Advantage the People would derive from always receiving a regular Supply; besides which, the Mill has always a regular Consumption.

Q. What is computed to be in general the Number of Inhabitants of Birmingham?

A. There has been no Estimation of the Inhabitants of Birmingham for many Years; but I suppose they amount to about 70,000, including the Town Part of the Parish of Aston, which adjoins.

Q. What Proportion of this Number of Inhabitants is supposed to derive Benefit from this Institution?

A. Allowing a Quartern Loaf for each Individual per Week, the present Sales of this Mill per Week would supply upwards of 17,000 Persons; but allowing a Quartern Loaf and a Half per Week to each Person, which is here believed to be the usual Consumption, the Mill would only supply 12,800 Persons.

Q. Have you Reason to believe that this Institution has been of great Service to the poorer Classes of the People of Birmingham; and have they expressed any Satisfaction on that Account?

A. The Poor have certainly received great Benefit from it; for it has compelled the Bakers to make their Loaves larger. There is no Assize at Birmingham, and the Loaves sold there are Shilling Loaves, Ninepenny and Sixpenny Loaves. When the Flour and Bread were sold at the Union Mills to Non-subscribers, i. e. from 1st May to 1st August 1799, the poor Inhabitants generally bought them, and were very desirous of becoming Purchasers; which proves their Satisfaction.

498

EXAMINATION,

Taken on the 4th of March 1800.

BY

The Lords of His Majesty's Most Honourable  
Privy Council,

Respecting the Infraction called

"The Birmingham Flour and Bread  
Company, or Union Mills."

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Ordered to be printed 9th June 1800.