



Quaker Hill Quill

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
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Wilmington DE 19801

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An Earlier Quill in Quaker Hill

by Terence J. Maguire

This publication is called *The Quill*, an apt name for a journal that deals with the past as much as the present. It is, however, only the second publication of that name deriving from Quaker Hill. As early as 1932, Friends School, then located opposite the Meeting House on West Street, had a twice-yearly issue of the thoughts, artwork, and literary efforts of young people who represented some of the distinguished families of northern Delaware, as well as people who became rather distinguished in their own right in science, business, banking, law, and civic affairs. The contributors of the earlier *Quill* were between from six to twelve years old.

Many of these mimeograph publications were found crammed in a vertical file folder at Wilmington Friends School. The last number of *The Quill* was issued in May, 1937. A similar publication, named *Alapocas Album*, continued from 1937-1952. For this archivist, it was fascinating to read the early creative or journalistic efforts of many distinguished alumni—Tim Bayard, John and David Boyer, Art Connelly, Jr, Coleman Dorsey, Peter Duus, George Elliott III, J. Seymour Flinn, Harriet Frorer, Dick Haedrich, Art Hill, Tom and cousin Eleanor Marshall, John Mendinhal III and his sister Dolly, Peter Morrow, Bill and Richard Poole, John Salzberg, Chuck Shoemaker, Howard and sister Mary Starkweather, Margaret Milliken Tyson, and many others.

The May, '37 issue was significant because the children knew they were leaving the site of their school for the broad fields and state-of-the-art facilities in Alapocas. Yet there was a sense of sadness, too, at the passing of what was familiar, the school site that had endured and grown for 189 years.

How thrilled everyone was when the first shovelful of dirt was dug for the new school. Ever since that day the workmen have been busy. The roof is on and the school is nearing completion. We are sorry to see the old school go to waste for it has served its purpose faithfully for many years. But we have a beautiful school to look forward to, with plenty of room for sports.

In the May, 1937 issue, each student contributor wrote of the transition of the old school to the new one. Below is a sampling:

♦ Jimmie Adams, of Grade V, actually interviews a white-bearded Friends School, who looks forward to "Friends School, Jr." carrying on in his place.

♦ Classmate Jimmy Collins created a dialogue between "OFS" and "NFS," who snippily points out, among other disparaging remarks, "Look at your playground, nothing but gravel." OFS in reply says, "True enough, but many children have had many good times on my gravel."

♦ The third grade listed "Things We Want to Remember about Old Friends School," including "the old clocks that fool us by being out of order."

♦ A group of sixth graders remind us that Washington was only 16 years old when it "was born," and that in 1777 he stayed nearby before the Battle of Brandywine."

♦ Dolly Mendinhal, Sally Hackett, and Lois Naylor interviewed former Headmaster Charles Bush about his life as a third grader, in the 1890s.

♦ Henry Marsh interviewed Arthur Harmon, the much-loved driver of first the horse-and-wagon school bus, and later the motorized version.

♦ Fifth grader David Chambers wrote a two-page poem, complete with illustration, about "Our Friends School."

♦ Third grader Edith Martin, whose father William was the architect of the Alapocas campus, writes of the creation of the new building; and Bill Gawthrop, son of the Head of the Board of Managers in 1936, writes of the date-stone, which

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will be opened in 2037.

♦ Howard Starkweather, a fifth grader at the time, wrote of version of "Auld Lang Syne" dedicated to the old school.

This final issue also contained reminiscences by adults who graduated earlier:

♦ **News-Journal** editor Charles Lee Reese ('20), recalls the great snowball fights they used to have and other rough-and-tumble games much enjoyed until someone would break a limb or head, and the teachers discontinued it.

♦ Long-time history and Latin teacher Frances Baird ('13), inadvertently played hookey when she was a girl to see the circus parade of Market Street — that didn't happen.

♦ Distinguished jurist John Biggs, Jr., wrote of crawling through the "secret passages which run through the school across West Street to the old meeting house." (Apparently they did exist!) He recalled with shuddering relish "the skeletons of very large rats" and the live ones that were "chittering behind or before you."

♦ FS administrator and archivist Caroline Phillips ('17) remembered both serious and festive occasions: when she spoke "extemporaneously for five minutes on the subject of women's suffrage," which only became the law of the land in 1920; and another time when she and others decorated the race track with "thousands of bright red cherry blossoms on real branches...to produce the effect of cherry blossom time."

♦ Hester Richardson recalled ruefully that the girls used to hopscotch over the tombstones of the Fourth and West graveyard.

In that last issue of this publication before the move to Alapocas, sixth grader Lenore Biesterfeld waxed nostalgic and prophetic:

How we wish the Friends School pupils in 1748 had left some records telling about their school life. Maybe 200 years from now the children of Friends School will wish we had written some records. So we have gathered together our recollections...so we could give them a faint idea of Friends School as we knew it. So we dedicate this to you, who may be coming to school in airplanes...

After Friends School's 265th year, we may still wonder what the children of 1748 thought and cared about, but we have a good idea of the thoughts and concerns of those youngsters of 76 years ago.

Terence Maguire is a retired Wilmington Friends School teacher, local historian and QHHPF Board member



Upcoming Quaker Hill Events

Three Underground Railroad Workshops for Children

The Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation offers three, free Underground Railroad workshops for children at 10:00 a.m. on certain Saturdays in January and February, 2014 at the Wilmington Friends Meeting at 401 North West Street, Wilmington, Delaware.

The first workshop, presented by Patricia Lewis and Mia Muratori on January 25, 2014, the anniversary of his death, features a story about a real-life Underground Railroad Stationmaster Thomas Garrett; artwork concerning the period; and refreshments.

The second workshop, presented by Darleen Amobi on February 2, 2013, will feature the story of Henry Box Brown, both read aloud and on video; a re-enactment by Willis Phelps of the life and times of a Civil War veteran; a visit to the grave of Thomas Garrett; and refreshments.

The third workshop, presented by Darlene Bonney on February 23, 2014, will feature a story about Harriet Beecher Stowe; an arts-and-crafts project; and refreshments.

The programs are free and open to the public.

5/10/14 Tour of Quaker Hill

On May 10, 2014 take a tour of Quaker Hill peopled by historical interpreters in period costume offering the story of some of the historic buildings in the neighborhood. The tour will be followed by refreshments at the Wilmington Friends Meeting House at 401 West Street.

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Consider Becoming A Member—As a Member you will receive many benefits, including invitations to lectures, workshops, and social events, and the satisfaction of knowing you are helping QHHPF be a strong voice for preservation as a means to enhance the economic and cultural health of the city. For more information, go to www.quakerhillhistoric.org & click on "become a member."

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Jim Bierbaum, Editor

from the Editor

A View From the Hill

While the leaves begin to turn and the mercury begins to recede, welcome to another issue of *The Quill*, as we at QHHPF refer to it. It's formal name is, of course, *The Quaker Hill Quill*, but around here we can shorten the name and yet we all know exactly what we're talking about. After all, it's the only Quill in these parts, right?

Well, not exactly, it turns out. Terence Maguire returns to these pages with an article that describes an earlier publication entitled *The Quill*. That *Quill* was a literary and artistic journal composed by the students of the Wilmington Friends School back in the 1930s, while the school was still located in Quaker Hill. Terry gives us a vivid picture of what that other *Quill* was like.

Also in this issue, Peter Dalleo recounts the story of Elizabeth Shadd Williams, an ardent abolitionist who struggled alongside Thomas Garrett against the depraved institution of slavery. Elizabeth was the sister of Abraham Doras Shadd, who was profiled by Robert Seeley in our February, 2013 issue. The Shadds are a fascinating family with connections to Quaker Hill, and Peter gives us an excellent study of one of its most-prominent members.

We also have in this issue the story of Father Patrick Kenny, Wilmington's first resident Catholic priest, as told by George Callahan, gleaned from records found in the catacombs of the Cathedral Church of St. Peter here in Quaker Hill, Wilmington's first Catholic church.

When Executive Editor Mary Starkweather-White noticed that all of our contributors this time were men, she was struck with the idea of restoring some balance by following this issue with one in which all of the contributors are women. I thought the notion a capital idea. We are very pleased to announce in our February issue we will be bringing you articles from Jane Calvert, Patricia Lewis, Lisa Samson —all of whom have appeared in our pages before — plus QHHPF Board member Carol Clapham, who will be appearing here for the first time.

On behalf of Mary, as well as Bayard Marin and all the Board, I hope you enjoy this issue of *The Quill*. Let us know what you think. It is our pleasure to bring this publication to you four times a year, and our hope that, in some small way, it helps to promote preservation as a means to enhance the cultural health and quality of life of the city.

“Because They Were Oppressed”: **Elizabeth Shadd Williams & Thomas Garrett, Delaware Abolitionists**

by Peter Dalleo

Free blacks and whites partnered to end enslavement in Delaware. The collaborative effort between Elizabeth Shadd Williams and Thomas Garrett during the antebellum years serves as an example of shared interracial interests and cooperation. Both the free black Shadds and the white Garretts had much in common: entrepreneurship, religious devotion, a belief in human equality and rights and the abolition of slavery. This essay will focus on Elizabeth’s anti-slavery activities, some of which she carried out with Garrett’s assistance.

The Shadd family’s diverse ethnic background explains somewhat its interest in abolishing slavery. The Shadds were descended from a Hessian soldier who fought in the French and Indian War and a free black woman who had a restaurant in Wilmington, Delaware. Another ancestor came from the Caribbean.

The Shadds aggressively promoted the abolition of slavery and equal rights for free blacks. Elizabeth was the sister of Abraham Doras Shadd and aunt of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, his daughter. All three were thorough abolitionists and very active Underground Railroad operatives. Both A. D. Shadd and Mary Ann had strong connections to members of the Garrett family, especially Thomas. Elizabeth (c. 1798-1876) and her husband Abraham may have been the parents of Peter Spencer Williams, who had a significant role in the arrangements for the Garrett’s funeral in 1871.

Elizabeth had married Abraham J. Williams from New Jersey and helped him run a grocery store on French Street in Wilmington, Delaware. In the late 1830s, the Williams opened their house to celebrants of Emancipation Day in the British West Indies. A.D. Shadd by then a shoemaker in West Chester, Pennsylvania was the featured speaker. Other free blacks from Wilmington who attended the celebration included Daniel B. Anderson, a brick maker, Joseph G. Walker, a laborer and future Underground Railroad agent and Peter Huber, a caterer. Also present was J. W. Adams, a teacher sent by abolitionist Gerritt Smith of New York.

Adams and Elizabeth Williams also co-sponsored a juvenile temperance society. By the 1850s Elizabeth was a waitress at the Wilmington train station and taught at the Quaker African School for girls, an institution which received strong support from Thomas and Rachel Garrett. Elizabeth embraced Quaker education, which stressed not only basic educational skills, but emphasized lessons in religion and moral responsibility. The importance of and reasons for abolishing slavery in a non-violent way were fundamental in Quaker education. Further evidence of the Williams’ commitment to end slavery was their willingness to sell their niece Mary Ann’s *Canada West* in their grocery store. That pamphlet promoted the British colony’s advantages to freedom seekers and free blacks who sought liberty and equality outside of the U.S. Not surprisingly, a number of the Shadds left the U.S. for Canada.

About the time of Abraham J. Williams death at mid-century, Elizabeth, with assistance from Thomas Garrett, expanded her Underground Railroad contacts and gained national attention for her abolitionist thinking. For example, in 1853 she attended the American Anti-Slavery Association annual meeting with her Quaker comrade. Her thoughts about abolitionists and their hypocritical opponents were recorded in the meeting minutes:

I have been told that these men (pointing to Messrs Garrison, Burleigh and others on the platform) are my enemies of the colored people. Now I have seen and heard these men myself, and I say freely I have heard more truth this morning, I have had my intellect more enlightened as to the character of God, than by all the preaching and all the ministers I ever listened to in my life.... I believe that all good and honest men would be affected by the truth spoken here.

Elizabeth added a personal note: “I couldn’t help speaking: I should have burst if I hadn’t.” Garrett verified Elizabeth’s description of Delaware’s harsh laws such as the recently passed travel legislation that discriminated against free blacks.

In 1854 Elizabeth and Garrett attended the Progressive Friends Annual Meeting at Longwood,

FROM THE CATACOMBS OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. PETER

by George Callahan

It was August of 1804, the year Lewis and Clark set out on their famous expedition, Aaron Burr mortally wounded Alexander Hamilton in a duel, and Napoleon was crowned emperor of France. Outbreaks of Yellow Fever were a constant fear in Wilmington, before it was recognized that the stagnant waters of the marshes to the south of town were perfect for breeding the mosquitoes who carried of the disease.

On that August day, a priest, newly arrived from Dublin, Ireland limped off the ship docked at the bottom of Market Street on the Christiana River. He stood on the dock in the overwhelming humidity of the area. The excessive heat drove him to apply for passage back to Ireland, but the passenger list was already filled

This was Patrick Kenny. He was born on June 6, 1763 in Ireland, and educated for the priesthood at Saint Sulpice, outside of Paris, France

He was already 41 years old, middle aged for the times, but when he stepped onto the soil of Wilmington he began a journey of faith and determination that lasted for another 36 years.

He was a short, stocky man, dressed in wide trousers as an adjustment to a severely ulcerated leg, the result of a spotted fever suffered five years earlier. The pain kept him awake at night, and he was frequently unable to stand to say Mass.

Father Kenny journeyed to Goshen Township and first lived in the household of Anthony Hearn at Rocky Hill. In 1805, he then took up residence and supervision of the Jesuit farm at Hockessin, Coffee Run, named because of the coffee colored waters in the area. This was a way station for priests traveling between Philadelphia and Warwick, Maryland. He accepted a request from Bishop John Carroll, the only Catholic Bishop in the United States, to minister to Catholics in the White Clay Creek and Wilmington area.

Over the next 25 years, his journey on horseback or in his Dearborn carriage over rocky muddy roads reconnected him with scattered groups of Catholics in Concord, West Chester, Londonderry, Hagley Yards and Wilmington

Pennsylvania where she interacted with ardent reformers and non-resistants such as Robert Purvis, Lucretia Mott and James Miller McKim. Other evidence, which bolstered Elizabeth's abolitionist credentials include free black abolitionist H. Ford Douglass' remarks in the *Provincial Freeman* about his 1857 visit to Wilmington. He claimed that there were "only two avowed abolitionists in the place ... Thomas Garrett and Aunt Betsy Williams." Furthermore in 1858 Elizabeth corresponded with Mary Ann Shadd Cary in Canada about a fugitive from Baltimore who sought liberty and employment outside of the U.S. Soon after sending that letter, Elizabeth joined her relatives in Canada West. It is not yet known exactly what she did in Chatham, which was near Toronto. It is likely that she knew about her relatives' continued fight to abolish slavery and assist freedom seekers. For example, Mary Ann during the Civil War recruited volunteers for the U.S Colored Troops. Elizabeth must also have known about her nephew Isaac's association with Martin Delaney who wanted to explore West Africa as a place of possible commercial or settlement opportunities. In any case she remained in Canada until her death in 1876 at the age of eighty.

In 1871, five years before her demise, Elizabeth wrote to Henry Garrett on behalf of the Shadds to commemorate Thomas Garrett's death and legacy. A copy of the correspondence appeared in William Still's classic, *The Underground Railroad*. Its appearance once again gave Elizabeth national exposure. Still introduced Elizabeth Williams as a long time, intimate friend of Thomas who "appreciated his devotion to freedom, who shared with him some of the perils consequent upon fleeing refugees, and who belonged to the race with whom Garrett sympathized...."

Elizabeth's letter to Henry described Thomas as a good Christian, husband, father, citizen and Samaritan. Surely these choices reflected Elizabeth's own values. She added what she thought was the basis for the Quaker's special relationship with people of African descent: "he loved them with a brother's love, not because they were colored but because they were oppressed."

Local historian Peter Dalleo has a Ph.D. in African History from Syracuse University.



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Father Patrick Kenny

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He said Mass frequently at the home of Victor du Pont, whose wife Gabrielle was a devout Catholic and was a regular attendant at the church at Coffee Run

He was devoted to the spiritual training of children, traveling regularly back and forth to Wilmington for catechism classes, where he noted with tongue in cheek that one of his charges was "Susan Ennix, a girl rais'd half quaker, 1/4 presbytn & 1/4 Methodist"

Once the church in Wilmington was established he was at an impasse with the trustees who wanted him to say Mass weekly at St. Peter's rather than monthly. They reduced his stipend of \$12 per Sunday, lowering it several times in an effort to convince him to see things their way. Fr. Kenny refused to lessen his services to his other areas and reacted by suspending his services to St. Peter's until they relented

Fr. Kenny continued to labor and, noting new or renewed pain, would thank the Almighty for the



George Callahan (third from right in front row) leads a tour of St. Peter's (including the catacombs below) in September, 2013. Several members of the QHHPF Board were present.

grace of endurance. He once described himself thus:

"Like a ship not seaworthy, I must unmoor for Concord."

In 1840, after 36 painful years as a circuit-riding priest, Fr. Kenny died at the age of 77, having ministered to the spiritual welfare of residents in five missions and one established church, spanning three counties and two states.

George Callahan is a QHHPF Board member, and has been a lifelong parishioner of St. Peter's. Excerpts of his oral history were published in the Winter, 2013 issue of the Quaker Hill Quill.



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