The Quaker Hill Quill

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
521 N. West Street
Wilmington, DE 19810

Vol. IV, Number 3, August, 2015
302-655-2500
www.quakerhillhistoric.org

Elizabeth Montgomery Reminisces: Stories of 18th C. Quaker Patriarch--and Patriot--Joseph Tatnall

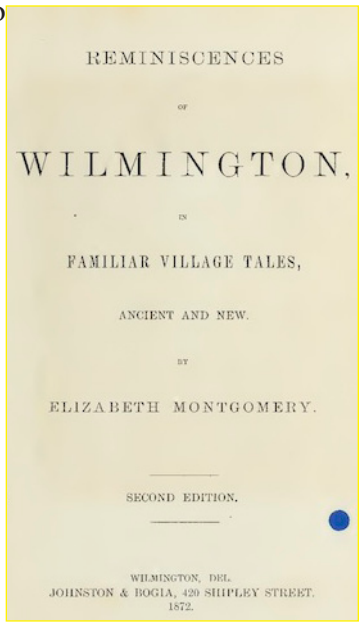
by Mary Starkweather-White

In 1851 Elizabeth Montgomery wrote *Wilmington: Reminiscences of Familiar Village Tales, Ancient and New.* The book is a treasure trove of stories about old Wilmingtonians, many of whom lived or worshiped on Quaker Hill. The book was a resource for famous Delaware author H.S. Canby and continues to be a resource today. In it, she describes, among other things, the patriarch Joseph Tatnall.

Tatnall, she says, was a true patriot, the only one who ground flour for the revolutionary army at the risk of the destruction of his own mill. His house served as the home of General Lafayette during his sojourn here, and the latter remembered Tatnall for his kindness. On Lafayette's return in 1825, he looked for Joseph Tatnall, who was by that time deceased, and stopped at Tatnall's son's door to pay his respects.

When, as President, Washington stopped at Tatnall's home and mill, he was followed by a crowd of admirers. Elizabeth Montgomery paints the scene thus: "Gen. Washington, and other officers, received his hospitality during their residence here; you will hear more of his patriotism in the sequel. When President, once he alighted at Mr. Tatnall's gate, entered the yard and knocked. Mrs. T came to the door and wished to send for Mr. T, but the general preferred to go to the mill, and leave his chariot at the gate. These gentlemen walked back to the house, followed by crowds of boys, rejoicing in the fine chance offered them to see the man whom the people delighted to honor. One of the joyous boys, lately deceased, an old gentleman, related the incident with much zest as a remembrance of General Washington."

Once Tatnall met a soldier who had returned from seven years fighting in the American revolution to a dilapidated farm and many family responsibilities for aged relatives. Ailing and depressed, he was advised by his physician to take a trip to the West Indies, which he could ill afford to do. Joseph Tatnall, hearing of his need and having no ready funds himself at the time, gave him flour worth $1200 to sell and thus financed the soldier's trip, which restored his health.


REMINISCENCES

OF

WILMINGTON,

IN

FAMILIAR VILLAGE TALES,

ANCIENT AND NEW.

BY

ELIZABETH MONTGOMERY.

SECOND EDITION.

WILMINGTON, DEL.
JOHNSTON & BOGIA, 420 SHIPLEY STREET.
1872.

In the winter of 1775 Robert Morris, financier for the Continental Congress, chartered a brig owned in part by Joseph Tatnall and piloted by Captain Montgomery. The brig eluded British suspicion as it sailed for the Caribbean, taking on produce and munitions, until American independence was declared.

After the war, Tatnall presented the Old Town Hall (which was new then) with its bell.

Elizabeth Montgomery presents an admiring and admirable portrait of Quaker Joseph Tatnall.

Also in this issue:

Quakers and the Education of African Americans in Delaware during the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

by Bradley Skelcher, Ph.D., Associate Provost, Delaware State University

The need for a large and stable labor force in the American colonies brought about the reliance on imported African labor in the form of slavery, beginning in the mid-seventeenth century in Virginia and Maryland, where the demand for labor was the highest. This demand was due to the labor intensive production of tobacco. Other colonies, too, became reliant upon an enslaved African labor force to supplement and sometime replace indentured servants from the British Isles. The legality of enslavement came through a series of colonial laws beginning in Virginia in the 1660s, followed by Maryland in the same period in the late seventeenth century. Eventually, slavery spread throughout the English North American colonies. English slave owners included Quakers. William Penn, who founded the colony of Pennsylvania, was also a slave owner. Philadelphia was a major trade center that included the importation of slaves. Nonetheless, when it came to conversion of slaves to Christianity, the Quakers held different views than their other Christian counterparts. They also differed on the purpose of education. They did not consider literacy an important part of the conversion process as did others that believed the ability to read the Bible was important.

William Penn, Colony Founder

There was a concern, however, among slave owners about the conversion of slaves to Christianity and their status following it. This concern was the accepted practice in England-- and later within the United Kingdom and Great Britain-- that they could not enslave Christians or fellow British citizens. This belief prevented the enslavement of the Irish and Scots when discussing what to do with the unemployed and poor within Ireland and Scotland during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Additionally slave owners in the English colonies believed that manumission must follow conversion to Christianity. **Many also believed that Christianity would lead to rebellion among the enslaved Africans. Exodus was an important part of the Bible and religious instruction that captured the attention of enslaved Africans.**

Nonetheless, England encouraged the colonies in America to allow slaves to convert to Christianity. In 1682, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed a law that allowed the religious conversion to Christianity for enslaved Africans without losing their status as slaves. It also allowed those already converted to remain slaves for life.[1] Because of the growing concern about Quakers and other religious groups and their undue influence over religion among Native Americans and Africans in the colonies, the Church of England in 1701 created the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG).

Anglicans were the only ones allowed to conduct missionary work, and the SPG supported the conversion of Native Americans and enslaved Africans to Christianity through religious instruction. Essential to the conversion to Christianity for the SPG was the necessity to read the Bible and understand it. Thus, they included education in the process of conversion.[2]

However, many continued to believe conversion would lead to disobedience and rebellion. The SPG in their religious instruction stressed obedience to their masters and acceptance of their enslavement, hoping to relieve reluctant slave owners who might believe otherwise. To relieve further fears of conversion, Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, wrote in 1727:

Conversion does not make the least alteration in Civil Property; that the freedom which Christianity gives, is a freedom from the Bondage of Sin and Satan, and from the Dominion of those Lusts and Passions and inordinate Desires; but as to their outward condition they remained as before even after baptism.[3]

Even with this assurance, SPG missionary Philip Reading complained about masters in Appoquinimink, Delaware, and their reluctance to allow religious instruction to their slaves as late as 1752. He wrote:

I have often both publickly and privately recommended it to Masters and Mistresses, as a duty of the greatest importance, to forward as much as in them lies the instruction for the Slaves;...Some, even of our own church…are strongly prejudiced against their slaves being instructed...[4]

Increasingly, these efforts of religious conversion and their justification came to resemble those early beliefs expounded by George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends in the mid-seventeenth century and those of his fellow Quakers. There was a significant difference, however. Quakers believed in the "Inward Light" that was within everyone. There was no need for ministers, priests, or other worldly guidance toward salvation.

George Fox, Founder of the Society of Friends

True believers could communicate directly to God. Therefore, there was no need for the reliance on the ability to read the Bible as a predicate to conversion. One only had to believe.

Evidence of this belief was reflected by Fox during and after his trip to Barbados 1671. Fox saw the need to expose enslaved Africans to Christianity in Barbados even though the slave owners did not. After his visit, so many enslaved Africans began attending Meeting, a law was passed forbidding them from doing so in 1676; it was not repealed until 1810.[5] In his letter to the Governor of Barbados (1671), Fox responded to what he interpreted as slander "that we [Friends] teach the negroes to rebel." Instead, he wrote that Friends "exhort and admonish them [slaves] to be sober, and to fear God; to love their masters and mistresses, and to be faithful and diligent in their masters' service and business." He also insisted with this that their "masters and overseers would love them…"[6]

What Fox and other Quakers were addressing was the fear that conversion would lead to rebellion. Conversion in the Anglican sense would eventually mean literacy or the ability to read the Bible and understand it. Both were feared, especially when many enslaved Africans came to favor Moses and Exodus and the implications of escape from slavery or --even worse-- slave rebellion once they were exposed to the more radical aspects of the Bible. Yet, conversion to Christianity relied in part on the ability to read and understand the Bible. Thus, initially, there was reluctance to convert or even expose slaves to Christianity in part because of these fears. Nonetheless, many Quakers and others still believed it was important to expose enslaved Africans to Christianity. However, for Quakers, education was not essential. They allowed Native Americans and enslaved Africans to attend Meeting without having the ability to read the Bible. This was still considered a dangerous precedent as Reverend Philip Reading expressed in a letter to the Secretary for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1752. He wrote:

Some, even of our own church, who are otherwise well-inclined Christians, are strongly prejudiced against their slaves being instructed; and I sincerely wish that the slaves themselves by their rebellious behaviours after baptism, had not given too much

cause for such prejudice; and for the looser part of mankind, it can hardly be expected that those should promote the spiritual welfare of this meanest branch of ye families, who think but little if at all, of their own external state.[7]

Conversion, many believed, would lead to a sense of equality with their masters and resistance to their status as slaves.

Nonetheless, for Quakers education was important for people to conduct their daily lives. **And providing education to all was an important expression of their belief in the equality of all human beings for women and people of different races.** This belief naturally led many Quakers to challenge slavery altogether. As Quakers came to accept the notion that slavery was wrong, more came to believe in the importance of education for African Americans once they were free. In 1693, George Keith wrote "An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes." This was the first written protest against slavery by a Quaker after the Germantown Protest in 1688. He expressed the need to teach them to read and provide them with a Christian education.

Therefore, in true Christian Love, we earnestly recommend it to all our Friends and Brethren, Not to buy any Negroes, unless it were on purpose to set them free, and that such who have bought any, and have them at present, after some reasonable time of moderate Service they have had of them, or may have of them, that may reasonably answer to the Charge of what they have laid out, especially in keeping Negroes Children born in their House, or taken into their House, when under Age, that after a reasonable time of service to answer that Charge, they may set them at Liberty, and during the time they have them, to teach them to read, and give them a Christian Education.[8]

Increasingly, many Quakers began to question the ownership of slaves among fellow Friends. These antislavery sentiments intensified during the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 1740s. The religious revival movement focused on bringing Christians back into the churches. The Great Awakening emphasized equality and democratic worship for all followers. This intensified with the American Revolution for independence from Great Britain in the 1770s, which also stressed equality and freedom. John Woolman and Anthony Benezet were two Quakers that played an important role in protesting against slavery during this time.

In 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting took steps to end the slave trade among Quakers by barring any that did so from leadership. It also organized committees to visit Quakers that owned slaves in an attempt to convince them to free them. In 1761, the Delaware legislature passed a law imposing a ten pound duty on the importation of a slave into Delaware, an important step in abolishing the slave trade in the colony. This law was also an example of the political strength of the Quakers in the legislature. John Woolman toured Delaware in 1766, speaking out against slavery. In 1774, anyone owning slaves would be disowned and removed from Meeting.[9] In 1775, Anthony Benezet, one of the founders of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, also started the School for Black People or the African Free School in 1770 in Philadelphia. Benezet believed that integration into society following manumission depended strongly upon an education. When he died, he left his estate to the support education for black children.

At the Duck Creek Monthly Meeting in Delaware in 1774, members called for the manumission of slaves owned by Quakers. They set up visiting committees to encourage Quaker slave owners to

Abolitionist Anthony Benezet

free their slaves. They also started a committee on slaves in 1775. Warner Mifflin from Camden began manumitting slaves owned by his wife and father in

1775. He later co-founded the Abolition Society of Delaware in 1801. In 1777, John Dickinson began the transition of his slaves to freedom by first changing their status to servants, thus avoiding a tax that would have been levied for each freed slave. In 1786, Dickenson freed all of his fifty-eight slaves, following a change in the law allowing him to do so without a levied tax.[10]

In 1778, Quakers at Little Creek Meeting in Delaware discussed their concerns about the newly freed slaves. So successful were their efforts in convincing their fellow Quakers to manumit their slaves, it became necessary to form a new committee

Little Creek Friends Meeting

named the Committee in the Case of Free Negroes. Members of the committee included Warner Mifflin, William Jackson, William Wilson, Isaac Jackson, Rebechah Chambers, Philecia Say, Mary Alston, and Isther Hoope. They visited freedmen to check on their welfare. They realized that freedom was not enough, having growing concern about "the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor Africans set at liberty amongst us."[11]

The Quakers at Duck Creek and Little Creek Meetings turned their attention to these spiritual and temporal matters concerning the freedmen. In July 1779, the Committee in the Case of Free Negroes reported:

They had under consideration, that of restitution and education weightily before them, and there appears a willingness in the minds of [some] to comply with what shall be thought just and reasonable, and some progress is made in their education.

They decided that they should also offer an education to the freedmen.[12] Also in their monthly report, the Committee in the Case of Free Negroes mentioned the school instruction of African Americans. They reported that "some of the young ones are at school [while] others [are] teaching in families and find an opinion in the minds of Friends generally to promote their education." [13]

In 1778, Quakers began demanding monetary restitution in addition to providing education to the freedmen. There was resistance to this as reported by a member of the Committee in the Case of Free Negroes. He said that the Committee had been obstructed in their service to the freedmen "by too great a backwardness in Friends making restitution to that injured people."[14] **Nonetheless, their efforts to provide to freedmen restitution for years of unpaid service while enslaved continued into the early nineteenth century.**

In 1803, David Wilson of Duck Creek Meeting reported that the West Boarding School was still in operation although there was a small attendance. Thomas Stewartson, Treasurer of School, offered his concerns about continuing the school with low numbers. Apparently, the tuition paid by the African American families was not enough to maintain the operation of the school. Soon after in 1811, the Little Creek Meeting and the Murtherkill Meeting established schools for African Americans. Samuel R. Fisher of Philadelphia played an important role in establishing schools for African Americans in these Meetings. He gave $1000 to Little Creek Meeting, stipulating that it was "to be applied by the Preparative Meeting of Little Creek in Providing for or in the Education of the descendants of the Africans in a school within the company of their Meeting."[15] He also specified: "The teacher of which school must be one of the said African race."[16] Fisher wished that Little Creek Meeting should move toward a liberal education emphasizing reading, writing, and arithmetic. He observed that "the young people of cullar [sic] are as far as the rule of three [in arithmetic]."[17] Both schools continued in operation until at least the late 1830s. In 1837, Reverend William D. Yeates mentioned the two schools in a letter printed in *Colored American* and the *Liberator* newspapers.[18]

It is not clear when, but Daniel Cowgill

Quaker Hill Quill published quarterly @2015
Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
521 N. West Street, Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Executive Director: Mary Starkweather-White
Editor: Terence Maguire

contributed to the continuation of the school for African Americans in Little Creek Monthly Meeting that was started with the financial assistance of Fisher. Cowgill, a member of the Murtherkill Meeting, donated land and $800 to the school. Later, he moved to the Little Creek Meeting. After his death in the 1830s, the Trustees for the Little Creek Meeting settled with Sarah Cowgill, the executor of the estate. She directed them to use the account of Daniel Cowgill for the building of a schoolhouse for Africans Americans that he had planned to do if he had lived. He willed that any funds left over after completion of the schoolhouse should go toward paying the tuition for children whose parents could not afford to pay. In 1832, a member of the Little Creek Meeting wrote T.R. Fisher in Philadelphia and noted that:

The school is now taught by one who got his education at the one set up by thee…I think it has been an excellent thing for the poor people of cullar [sic]. They will always remember.[19]

Jonathan Mifflin also played an important role in establishing a school for African Americans in the Murtherkill Meeting. It is not clear where the school was located, but it may have been located around the community of Magnolia. Mifflin contributed $900 to the Trustees of the Meeting to pay for the tuition of the "Cullard [sic] Children which were not likely to get [an] education…" otherwise.[20] The Trustees determined who was able to pay for the tuition of their children and who was not.

Quakers in Wilmington also strove to establish schools for African Americans. The first school to open for African Americans in Wilmington did so under the auspices of the Abolition Society of Delaware in 1801. Carter G. Woodson mentioned in his book the school opened by Quakers in Wilmington offering free instruction to African Americans in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Pauline A. Young wrote about the school in which she pointed out twenty pupils were enrolled and had an African American teacher appointed by 1816. Later, the Quakers added a library to the school that they had built between West and Tatnall Streets on Sixth Street. Young cited that Evan Lewis had sold the lot on which they build the School to Friends named William Seal, Jacob Alrichs and Benjamin

Webb. The school cost $800. [21]

In 1824, the Wilmington Association for Promoting Education of People of Color founded by the Society of Friends started the African School Society and the Female African School Society. In 1826, the African School Society for male students began holding school in a building on 10th and Orange Streets in Wilmington. In a nearby building, the Female African School Society held classes on 12th Street. School met on every Monday. In class, Quaker teachers gave instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic. This curriculum was similar to the one offered in Little Creek and Murtherkill Meetings. These schools continued to operate through the end of the Civil War until the Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People took over the schools in 1866. Furthermore, the tradition of meeting every Monday for intellectual pursuits also continued to the present in Wilmington with the Monday Club.

Clearly, the Quakers did not fear an educated freedman. They saw an education as the foundation for equality and as a pragmatic device that would provide for a quality of life in freedom. This differed from other religious groups that saw an education or a literate slave as a necessary step for conversion to Christianity. Both believed Christianity led to conformance of the enslaved African to his plight in life to serve the master. This view changed among Quakers as the Society of Friends began to believe in the abolition of slavery altogether beginning among them and eventually for society as a whole. To be sure, education was important to Quakers not for religious instruction to be converted through reading the Bible. This was not necessary, for everyone possessed an Inward Light, and true believers could reach salvation individually. Education was seen in a more pragmatic light. In the process of manumission, Quakers believed that freedom was not enough. They believed in education as restitution for the years of unpaid services, and many went as far as providing their freedmen with money to compensate them albeit in the form of reparations. Education was an important restitution because of its longevity. No one could lose an education or have it taken away, as could land and money --and for that matter freedom itself. In the history of education in the United States, Quakers played an instrumental role in establishing a practical and liberal educational experience for African Americans, both free and enslaved.

Footnotes

[1] (Rodriguez 2007)
[2] (Glasson 2015)
[3] (Black 2015)
[4] (Reading 1752)
[5] (Webb 2013)
[6] (Fox 1985)
[7] (Reading 1752)
[8] (Keith 1693)
[9] (Williams 1984)
[10] (Calvert 1963); (Abolition Society of Delaware 1801-1807)
[11] (Society of Friends, Men's Minutes of the Little Creek Meeting 1778); (Society of Friends, Men's Minutes of the Little Creek Meeting 1779)
[12] (Society of Friends, Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Women Friends of Duck Creek 1779)
[13] (Society of Friends, Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek, Little Creek, Murtherkill, Three Runs and Cool Spring 1779)
[14] (Society of Friends, Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek Meeting 1780)
[15] (Fisher 1811)
[16] (Fisher 1811)
[17] (Fisher 1811)
[18] (Society of Friends, Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek Meeting 1803); (Hancock 1971)
[19] (Unknown 1832)
[20] (Unknown 1832)
[21] (Woodson 1919); (Young 1947); (Abolition Society of Delaware, Minute Book 1801-1804); (Delaware Association 1867)

Bibliography

Abolition Society of Delaware. "Minute Book." *Manuscripts*. Wilmington, Delaware: Historical Society of Delaware, 1801-1804.

—. "Minutes." Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Historical Society, 1801-1807.

Black, Jeromy. *The Atlantic Slave Trade in World History.* New York: Routledge Press, 2015.

Calvert, Monte A. "The Abolition Society of Delaware, 1801-1807." *Delaware History* X, no. 4

(October 1963): 295-320.
Delaware Association for the Moral Improvement and Education of the Colored People. "Minutes." *Manuscript.* Wilmington: Delaware Historical Society, April 20, 1867.
Fisher, Samuel R. "Letter to the Monthly Meeting of Little Creek." Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Historical Society, July 2, 1811.
Fox, George. "To the Governor and Assembly at Bardados, 1671." In *The Journal of George Fox*, by George Fox, edited by John L. Nickalls. Philadelphia: Religious Society of Friends, 1985.
Glasson, Travis. "The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 2015." *Oxford Bibliographies.* Oxford University Press. 2015. http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0067.xml.
Hancock, Harold. "William D. Yeates' Letter of 1837: Slavery and Colored People in Dealware." *Delaware History* XIV, no. 8 (April 1971): 205-216.
Keith, George. *An Exhortation & Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes.* August 13, 1693. http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qwhp/gk-as1693.htm).
Reading, Philip. "Letter to Dr. Philip Bearcroft, Secretary to the Honourable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts." Newark, Delaware: Archives of the SPG, Morris Library, University of Delaware, October 10, 1752.
Rodriguez, Junius P. *Chronology.* Vol. One, in *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political, and Historical Encyclopedia*, by Junius P. Rodriguez, edited by Junius P. Rodriguez, 1-75. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007.
Society of Friends. "Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek Meeting." Swarthmore, Pennyslvania: Friends Library, Swarthmore College, May 27, 1780.
—. "Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek Meeting." Swarthmore, Pennsylvania: Friends Library, Swarthmore College, July 7, 1803.
—. "Men's Minutes of the Duck Creek, Little Creek, Murtherkill, Three Runs and Cool Spring." Swarthmore, Pennsylvania: Friends Library, July 24, 1779.
—. "Men's Minutes of the Little Creek Meeting." Swarthmore, Pennyslvania: Friends Library, Swarthmore College, September 7, 1778.
—. "Men's Minutes of the Little Creek Meeting." Swarthmore, Pennyslvania: Friends Library, Swarthmore College, April 4, 1779.
—. "Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Women Friends of Duck Creek." Swarthmore, Pennsylvania: Friends Library, Swarthmore College, July 24, 1779.
Unknown. "Letter to R.R. Fisher." Wilmington, Delaware: Delaware Historical Society, December 7, 1832.
Webb, Simon. *George Fox in Barbados.* A Quaker Book from the Langley Press, 2013.
Williams, William. *The Garden of American Methodism.* Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1984.
Woodson, Carter G. *Education of the Negro Prior to 1861.* Washington, D.C., 1919.
Young, Pauline A. *The Negro in Delaware Past and Present.* Vol. II, in *Delaware: A History of the First State*, edited by H. Clay Reed. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1947.

Upcoming Events:

• Dr. Newton talk (11/14/15): This Delaware Humanities Forum talk by Dr. James Newton, former UD professor, will focus on the Underground Railroad and its cooperation between the races.

Dates for below events TBD

• Film/ Educational programs (2015-6): film version of Colin Toomey's *Better Angels* trilogy.

• Multi-church tour (2015-6): We will hold a multi-church tour of the following: St. Peter's, Grace Church, Wilmington Friends Meeting, Tabernacle, and Temple United.

• Hannah Penn talk (2015-6): DHF interpreter's talk on Hannah Penn.

• UGRR workshops for children (2015-6): For 20 years we have been offering 3 or more Underground Railroad workshops for children in January and February

"Rights in Common with Other Americans..."

by Terence Maguire

While Thomas Garrett was the most famous stationmaster in Delaware, he was by no means the only one. Two other active supporters of the UGRR were Peter Spencer and Abraham Shadd, both African-Americans.

In 1782 Spencer was born a slave in Maryland but was freed when his master died. He moved to Wilmington, succeeded in business, and in 1813 founded the first African-American church, the

Peter Spencer, founder of the African Union Methodist Protestant Church

African Union Methodist Protestant, still thriving today. Shadd was a cobbler, businessman, and farmer, descended from a Hessian deserter of the French and Indian War who married a black woman. Both acted as stationmasters for the UGRR, but their support for black equality did not end there.

In 1831 they were joined by a third black man from Wilmington, teacher William S. Thomas, who taught a school for black children supported by the Wilmington Monthly Meeting from 1812-1835. During those years Thomas taught almost 400 young African-Americans sponsored by payment vouchers from the Wilmington Monthly Meeting School Committee.

Together these three men drafted a letter published for the Sept. 24 issue of *The Liberator*, William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper.

At a church meeting in July, 1831, all three roundly condemned a proposal gaining popularity among whites and some blacks. It is hard to imagine a idea endorsed by both abolitionists and slaveholders—but such was the American Colonization Society.

The proposal, originally promoted by a Black man, Paul Cuffe, was to start a colony on the west coast of Africa populated by American blacks returning to their supposed "mother country." Cuffe and many white supporters assumed that black people in America would never gain full acceptance as citizens, so they might as well find a land where they could. In 1815 he took the first shipload of 38 free Negroes to what would become Liberia. Many freed slaves were sent there, and free Negroes were encouraged to emigrate and start anew. For some it made sense.

Spencer, Thomas, and Shadd disagreed, vehemently. They wrote that, for most Black Americans, "Africa is neither our nation nor our home…our language, habits, manners, and morals are different from those of Africans." In addition, the reports of life in that colony suggested great hardships and high mortality among those who had emigrated.

Most of all, the three felt African-Americans had earned a place in this country. The goals of the ACS were "wholly incompatible with the spirit of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence." African-Americans were "Natives of the United States…we have our attachment to the soil, and feel that we have rights in common with other Americans." They acknowledged that in that current time, those rights were denied, but they looked forward to a time when the "more than ordinary prejudice" against blacks would subside.

Spencer, Shadd, and Thomas could hardly have imagined the many generations necessary for their hopes to be realized—if indeed they have yet been. Sadly, many today have grave doubts about that realization. Nonetheless, the determination of these men to have patience and hope, over 180 years ago, is inspiring.

Support Quaker Hill by

Supporting QHHPF

Become a member—As a member of QHHPF, you will receive many benefits, including invitations to lectures, workshops, and social; events; and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping QHHPF be strong voice for preservation as a means of enhancing the economic and cultural health of the city. For more information, go to **wwwquakerhillhistoric.org** and click "become a member."

Make a donation—send a check made out to QHHPF to

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
521 N. West Street
Wilmington, DE 19801

Girls playing in the Meeting House yard across from the school at Fourth and West, 1910.

Learn about Quaker Hill from

Images of America: Quaker hill

127 pages brimming with pictures and illustrations of the Quaker Hill area, (such as the one above) from its earliest days to the present. Assembled and written by QHHPF and published by Arcadia Publishing.

Available from Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
521 N. West Street
Wilmington, DE 198101