



# Quaker Hill Quill



Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation  
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## The View from the Hill: Celebrating Quaker Hill's UGRR Workshops--and Harriet Tubman Day



who was an ordinary person who did extraordinary work”; Quaker Hill resident Bebe Coker, “American history is not complete without black history”; and from your Executive Director, [Ashley Cloud, shown left] “There’s certainly a thirst for knowledge across all generations.”

This momentum propelled us into our next workshop at the end of February which focused on the story of intrepid Henry “Box” Brown led by educator Darleen Amobi and ending with the theatrical style of Mr. Willis Phelps (courtesy of the

The beginning of the year is always the busiest time for the Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation as we kick off our programming cycle with the traditional Underground Railroad Workshops. This year yielded a marked increase in attendance and coverage due to sponsorship by M&T Bank and a concerted effort over the past year to raise the Foundation’s profile via networking and marketing. Thankfully, we saw the fruits of our labors realized on Saturday January 28th when we held our first workshop of the year at the Wilmington Friends Meeting House. Tubman researcher Patricia Lewis and artist Mia Muratori provided exactly what our packed house of over 25 attendees were seeking: personal knowledge of Harriet Tubman and an innovative craft for the youngsters; and delicious pizza from DiMeo’s on Market Street did not hurt either.

We were additionally blessed by the interest and subsequent positive article by *News Journal* reporter Adam Duvernay. He captured the essence of Patricia’s lecture and of the Foundation’s reason for focusing on education with multiple quotes, most notably from attendee Marsha Carter, “It made me feel like I’m seeing a person, not just someone who is iconic but someone

DE Humanities Forum) as he reenacted the story of the Delaware hero of Polktown, Private James H. Elbert and his participation as a Union soldier during the Civil War. A good balance of historical realism and humor marked the workshop and fostered additional interest in future programs from those in attendance.

During the gap between our January workshop and the upcoming April workshop, we did not rest on our laurels! An opportunity arose to participate in the National Park Service’s celebration of the Grand Opening of the Harriet Tubman Visitor’s Center in Cambridge, MD. The Foundation was at the forefront of organizing its contribution in the form of a historical scavenger hunt and multi-media presentation geared toward all ages and was soon joined by its colleagues at the

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Delaware Historical Society who held complementary programming on the same day. The frigid morning of March 11th yielded heart-warming attendance. In addition to friends and former attendees of our events, we welcomed the Girl Scout Troop of St. Peter's Cathedral. They were a positive and precocious group who personally inspired me to give my best during the presentation. No sooner had we wrapped up at our appointed time, when another group of eight very interested adults arrived and asked if we could run the program again! It was impossible to turn down such excitement and curiosity about history, so we enjoyed another round of sharing history and engaging conversation. It was a successful and gratifying day.

As we look forward to our last workshop slated for April 15th, I am excited to welcome our new Underground Railroad teacher and enthusiast: Harper Gould.

Harper comes to us formerly of the Delaware Historical Society and currently of the Hagley Museum. After learning of QHHPF's mission from attending the Meeting House, she expressed an interest in becoming a part of our education team. The focus of her workshop will be the local sung and unsung heroines of the Underground Railroad and the contributions and hardships unique to women who aided or traversed the Underground Railroad. Children will enjoy her innovative Quaker Friendship Quilt craft as they experience a visceral way of learning about history.

With more field trips and tours upcoming as well as our Annual Friends of the Arts Festival on Saturday June 4th, all signs point towards continued growth and impact on the downtown landscape and beyond. With continued support and perseverance, the view from the hill will continue to be positive and uplifting.

## Honoring --and Redeeming-- John Dickinson, Founding Father and Weighty Quaker of 4th & West

*by Ashley B. Cloud, Executive Director,  
Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation*

This year's Annual John Dickinson Memorial and wreath-laying took place on Saturday February 18th from ten to noon at the historic Wilmington Friends Meeting House where Dickinson is buried. Due to the providence of beautiful weather and a broad promotional campaign that promised brunch and a speaker, the Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation and the Friends of Dickinson Mansion were joined by approximately eight members of the surrounding downtown neighborhoods who were keen to learn about John Dickinson's legacy. Leading the educational charge was former *News Journal* editor and Dickinson enthusiast John Sweeney.

Sweeney provided a detailed and passionate overview of Dickinson's contributions to the founding of our country while acknowledging his somewhat tarnished historical reputation. Dickinson's initial reluctance to support the Revolutionary War against such an imposing foe as England overshadowed his later conversion and contributions to the cause. Thanks to committed individuals and groups, Dickinson may yet regain respect through the republishing of his "Letters from a Farmer" by the University of Delaware Press and the growing appeal of events such as our Memo-

rial as a tool to educate the public about all aspects of Dickinson's place in history. He was a Founding Father, Governor of Delaware and Pennsylvania, an author of the Articles of Confederation, and a fervent patriot.

A gorgeous wreath generously donated by Quaker Hill florist Flowers by Tino provided the perfect ending to our proceedings and in combination with the sunshine encouraged attendees to linger and engage in further discussion.

We look forward to the growth of this event as we continue to honor Dickinson each year and cement his positive place in history as a local and state hero.



## Views of Quaker Hill over Three Centuries

Emma Worrell, in 1917, Recreates Quaker Hill and the Meeting House People of 1817



*During this year the Wilmington Monthly Meeting will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the completion of the current meeting house, the third at this location. Below are selections from a lengthy talk by one the meeting's most distinguished persons, Emma Worrell, to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Meeting House. She was not alive when that building was completed in 1817, but her mother was,*

*and Worrell knew most of the people of whom she spoke. She wrote about 1817 in the present tense.*

*The original lecture was too long for the Quill. However, here are the introduction and some selections. Worrell has little paragraphing, her first being over 1600 words. I have taken the liberty of inserting some breaks.*

*Typed from manuscript by J. Edgar Rhoads, 2/19/1937; word-processed by T. Maguire, 2/25/2014*

Probably the first feeling that we have in thinking of a centennial celebration is of age. How old is it? We draw a labored breath of wonder and feel ourselves correspondingly aged. A century! And all that it means and all that it holds of lines, of histories and events! But immediately our feeling changes when we think of what must have been the brightness and vigor and youth of a hundred years ago and we become youthful and bright merely in the contemplation of it.

Let us then go back today to the beautiful fresh beginning and imagine ourselves in the midst of things as they were a century ago and forget the paved and closely built-up streets and see that we are standing on green "Quaker Hill," an eminence quite outside of and removed from the little town below, which clusters around the Second Street Market House and on

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Sean Reilly, V.P. of Quaker Hill Neighborhood Association, Reflects on Quaker Hill in 2014

*The following interview took place in February of 2014, at Reilly's home at the SE corner of Fourth and West and its publication was deferred for various reasons. This first excerpt of the 10,000 word transcript deals with his family history and why Quaker Hill is important to him. In a later excerpt the Quill will focus on his thoughts on the challenges of sustaining Quaker Hill.*

*The interviewer's questions are in italics.*

I was born in Wilmington, Delaware, St. Francis Hospital, Sunday, September. 16, 1956, 4:04 pm... I can see it—St. Francis—from here. Just shows you how far I rolled down the hill.

My family kind of got started when they came from Ireland in the 1870s—the Reilly family. The Scanlan family, which is the maternal side of my father—they probably came in 1860. On my mother's side, her great-grandparents' records are hard to find. They probably came in the 1850s, came into Philadelphia, lived in West Chester, migrated down to Wilmington. Some stayed in the Chadds Ford area. And I understand that there are still some family in the West Chester area—name of Carr.

My mother was Catherine Van den Broeck. My father is Francis X. Reilly, both alive and well as of this recording. My father was born in 1926; my mom in 1930—two children of the greatest generation. Their parents were born and raised in Wilmington, and my grandparents—my father's father and my mother's mother's backyards touched each other on the East side in Wilmington.

So when the Irish first came, they were the green-horns, and my grandmother, who died in 1988, at the age of 95, she would relate these stories to me. And

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up to High Street and beyond. It straggles off as far as French Street on the east but not much farther than Orange Street on the west, except along the Lancaster Pike, where the new “Black Horse” tavern is being built and where great teams of a dozen horses with their tinkling bells draw the heavy loads of Lancaster and Chester County wheat to the big mills on the Brandywine. The town pushes down also, close to the water’s edge on King and Market Street to see the sailing vessels and the still novel steamboats come up to the wharves on the Christiana. Up here on “the hill” we are quite above the noise and bustle and also happily above the malarial marshes which border the

few rods above is the modest Catholic Church, St. Peters, just built last year, 1816, which is the only Catholic church in all this region except the little wooden chapel five or six miles up the pike at Coffee Run where a priest has been stationed to give the comfort of the sacred sacraments to the Irish immigrants who on Sunday once a month come from all the country for ten miles around, often or mostly making the journey on foot. Just below us on the southwest corner of High Street is the handsome residence that William Shipley, the enterprising wealthy founder of Wilmington, built for himself in 1748, the year that the meeting house that preceded this one was built. His large



mansion on the southwest corner of Fourth and Shipley Streets (probably the largest and handsomest one in Delaware at that time) was given up to his just-married son. On West Street just a few steps below William Shipley’s residence is the house that was later to be used as Washington’s headquarters when he was in Wilmington in 1777 just before the battle of the Brandywine. Next door is the residence of Benjamin Ferris and family. He has now and is to have in the coming time, a strong influence on the intellectual life of the town.

The street can go but little further; indeed it is here but a wide open pathway, on which no vehicles go, for just beyond we come literally to the “jumping off place.” The grassy walk

creek and whose miasma fills the street with piqued-faced, yellow-skinned children shivering with ague.

There are residences here, destined to be among the historic homes of the town. Just above us, on what is now Fifth Street, is the fine old hip-roofed mansion of Thomas West, from whom West Street takes its name. This was the first dwelling-house on Quaker Hill and was built in 1738 by the great nephew or relative of the Thomas West who was Lord de la Ware—one of the earliest governors of Virginia—for whom Delaware, the river, state, and Indian tribe that lived here, were all named. Lord de la Ware visited the bay in 1610 and died in his vessel at its mouth. The road running beside the West house is called Willing’s Alley, from the first settler of the town, Thomas Willing. A

and level fields are suddenly at the top of a precipice down which we look thirty feet or more to the rough hollow at its foot. Ingenious boys have cut steps in the red earth of the cliff so that there is possible though rather rough and inconvenient means of communication with the places below. From the top of the cliff, where a lone tree stands like a faithful watchman, a beautiful view extends over the hills and meadows which mark the course of the Christiana. Off there to the southwest is Delamore, Colonel Davis’ place, just coming into notoriety in connection with the romantic history of Myra Clark Gaines. Farther out towards Newport are the Lattimer and Richardson places, and

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she was the one who was in my house, and that's another part of the story. And she lived a long Wilmington life, too.

So Philly is where a lot of my family entered and then migrated to Wilmington, for many reasons. Opportunity was number one. My grandfather—my father's father, who died in 1926, James Peter Reilly, and I think I told you the story of him getting married on Valentine's Day, at St. Peter's Cathedral.....

*What would say were your parents' and for that matter your grandparents' influence on you, particularly as regards your commitment to this area as a place to preserve?*

The two dominant people in my family are my father's father and my mother's mother....my father's father was Senator John Edward Reilly, Sr. He was from the East Side. He was a state legislator, in 1946 was elected, and then in 1952 became state Senator—and held that until 1963 when he passed away... I am named after him. He was John Edward Reilly. I am Sean Edward Reilly. I chose that name in confirmation. Sean is Gaelic for John. .... So he was a daily Mass goer, and then my father became a daily Mass-goer. And these two men, my father and my father's father, were the two most decent men God ever put on earth. ...The South Market Street Bridge is named after him: the Senator John E. Reilly Bridge.



1983 in September, they commemorated that; they were naming some structures around the city in honor of past legislators. ...Mike Castle was there and a few others, a nice day. And then in 2006 we re-dedicated it, because they had to put some money in it because they were doing the riverfront, ....Your namesake—so he's a daily influence. I wear his rosaries and his ring is always on me. ... He wasn't highly educated, but

he was a common-sense guy. He would let everyone else in the room talk before he would say anything. Then they would all turn and say, "Let's see what Jack Reilly thinks about it." He was that kind of a person who everyone turned to. He was a magnificent man, very generous. He didn't have anything. Had eight kids, lived in a narrow 12 ft row home with his wife.... He was very popular in the East side of Wilmington because he helped a lot of people. He knew ways of getting results for them. That's how politicians become politicians. You know,

*"I need a favor. I don't know how to get this done or that done."*

*"Well, here's the way to do it, and let me show you who to talk to."*

He was that kind of guy. He was a guidance counselor to a lot of people.

*That's an interesting term: a guidance counselor.*

Then my mother's mother: Esther Carr Van den Broek was a Democratic ward leader. She also had six sons, five of whom were in the service at once. She had five stars in her window. ...—ironically, it was her and my father's father, my mother's mother and my father's father were backyard neighbors on Bedford St., over on the East side, in the late 1800s—1893, my grandfather was born, around 1900 they were seven and thirteen year old kids playing with each other. Their children would marry; and that's just because they saw each other on a bus one day.

But my grandmother was in this particular house... Right before she died, in 1983, when I moved in, I took her on a tour, and she told me a thousand stories, so it was just ironic that I ended up here myself in 1983.

*And you didn't buy it because you knew it was your grandmother's?*

No, friends of mine were going to move in, and they brought me over, and my other friend just to show us the new house they were going to rent... This was in 1977, and a lot of things were happening in Quaker Hill. These old homes were brought back by a guy named Vince Joffrey. He rehabbed a lot of these houses. They knocked a lot of things down, they put a lot of things up, it's a lot different than it was, but they saved what they could, and this is one of the things they saved. My house was gutted during the riots of '68. Even the top two floors of the brick walls fell into

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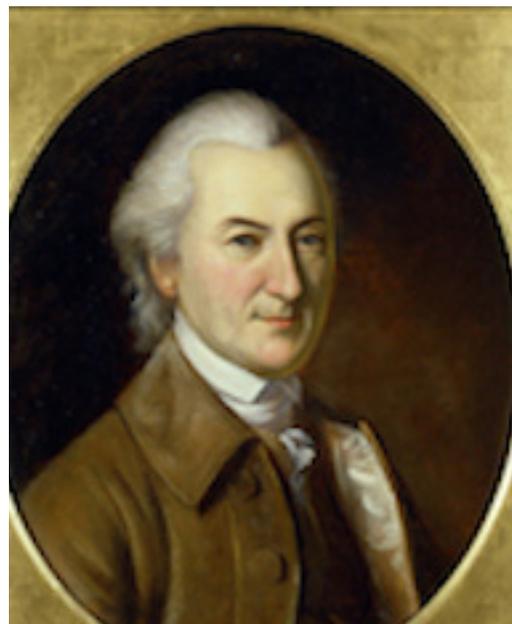
nearer in the grove of forest trees is “Tusculum,” the home of Jacob Broom, who, though not a Friend, left a considerable sum of money to the Female Benevolent Society on condition that it always remain in the hands of Friends.

Diagonally across from here on Fourth (or High) Street, is the home of one of our members, Sarah Wooley. She wears an immense beaver bonnet of an astonishing shape which looks odd among the plain “stiff pleats” around it in meeting, but which is destined to find a place years hence in the show-window of Thomas Webb, the hatter and furrier on Market Street. Down Fourth Street hill—too steep it is thought to ever dream of paving—is one way to town and up its graveled but often muddy pathway the town people walk to meeting. If it has been raining and they may be a little uncertain of the time, Eli Mendinhall and Jonathan Lamborn with their wives will say, “We are a little late today; there is the print of Deborah Bringhurst’s pattens. She is ahead of us.” And Ziba Ferris attempting to inform them of the time will say with disappointment “Oh, I’ve forgotten and left my watch on the parlor mantel.” That mantel, by the way, is a handsome one of black and white marble at Third and Shipley Street where Ziba lives in the family mansion where he and his brothers and sisters were born. He has the town’s best and oldest clock and watch establishment, a square off on Market Street. Nearby is Joseph Bringhurst’s, who has the apothecary shop on Market Street and who not long ago had the first hydrant in Wilmington put into his kitchen. He is also our first Postmaster, having received his commission from George Washington. The “post office” is only part of his drug store and is attended to by himself without much interference with his business since the mail matter for Wilmington is as yet very light. ...

On the east side of Shipley Street running back from Market is the lot of ground bought in 1748 from Timothy Stidham by Richard Carson, which he willed at his death to his daughter Dinah, who with her husband Thomas Lamborn sold it in 1788 to Mary Richardson for £138. The deed recording these transaction bears the signature of Gunning Bedford, Governor of Delaware, and is among the articles exhibited today by Lucy Tatnall and her assistants in the building across the street. ...

In the school house over the way, which has addi-

tions built to it since 1748, Miss Margaret McCamon teaches the Friends’ School for girls in an intelligent and excellent way. Geography is a new study here and is eagerly seized upon by pupils who love to pore over the brightly colored maps and to repeat by heart the rivers of Europe and Asia, a kind of precursor of the “singing geography” which came in vogue thirty years later. Grammar, too, is committed to memory verbatim without the scholars having much idea that they are learning the principles of the language which is their common vehicle of thought. They are taught to be good readers, however, and to appreciate some of our best old literature. Jesse Gause teachers the boys’ department and has the reputation of being severe in his discipline. There is a spring at the foot of the hill where the scholars go to get water and two of them carry a bucketful splashing between them up the steep hill to regale those in school with its welcome coolness, out of a gourd or pewter porringer. (Microbes had not then been discovered nor do I know that the school was more often interfered with by sickness than now). The graveyard is behind the meetinghouse and many of the people of the vicinity who have not lots in other churchyards are buried here whether they are Friends or not. The dead lie mostly in long rows without any markers, being buried successively in the order that they have come to their last home. A few families have lots reserved and set off by stone coping. The grave of John Dickinson, (*below*) the first President of Delaware, lies off in the fatherest corner. It has a very small marker inscribed “J.D.” He died in



1808, aged 75.

And now having seen how we looked outside a hundred years ago, let us enter our new meeting house ....

(*To be continued in future Quills*).

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the street. This was really a bad part of town, 1975-77; they redid the whole thing; called it Penn Village at one time, and it started to do a reunification of the city, brought it back a bit. But then, as things happen, it all turns back again sooner or later; and so those guys didn't want to live here any more, 6-8-9 months later even. It was changing that fast.

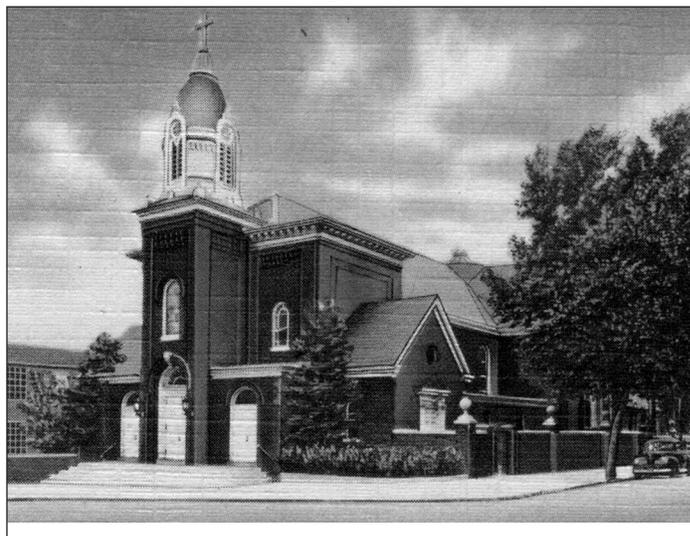
So I took it, thought it was a great place. I just loved it being close to I-95, downtown. I thought it was a cool place, subsequent to my coming to live here, renting for the first two years and in 1985, I purchased it. And that was with full commitment and eyes wide open, knowing all the history and doing all the re-search. ...

The irony is that the building that I worked out of [some years ago] is the Ship's Tavern Building, ... but during the Revolutionary War, it was the Ship's Tavern ... when Washington was staying here, in 1777, across the street from my house, he would walk own to the Ship's Tavern and have a few with Lafayette;...so my office was in that building. So here's the irony of what a day would be. I live in a house that was built in 1741; I would go to church in St. Peter's Cathedral, constructed in 1814; we would meet at the Friends' Meeting House built in 1817, for our Quaker Hill Neighborhood Association meetings; and I would work in a building that was constructed in 1757. ....

*Why is this place important to you?*

History, history, history. It's a grotesque amount of history right here, that is so central to not only to this state but to this country. There are a lot of things that people don't know about Delaware.... Why Delaware is called the Diamond State, for instance, is that Thomas Jefferson referred to it as "the jewel among the colonies." That's why you used to see that in all the publications, but they call us the First State now. And people don't know why that is, but on December 7, 1787, this was the state that ratified the Constitution that started the nation. And one of those signers [John Dickinson] is right across the street, buried. Along with Thomas Garrett, one of the greatest local emancipators we've ever had, along with some of the greatest names, aside from du Ponts, that the city has ever had—Canbys and Tatnalls and such. So there's so much history right there. Then of course Washington lived right across the street. This house is an 18th C house that we're in, and St. Peter's Cathedral (*above*)

was the first Catholic church in the city of Wilmington. And Friends Meeting House....



And my family was here and so close for so many things, either in this house directly, because they knew the Lemon family, or through St. Peter's cathedral, for different events. The East Side's not far—then, the year I moved here, 1983, they dedicated the South Market Street Bridge to my grandfather.

So all of these hooks have gotten in, and I'm like a fish that can't escape,...not pulling me apart, just keeping me here so that I can't escape....and this home was part of the Underground Railroad. The trials and tribulations—you know the Fugitive Slave Act—of 1850—Millard Fillmore. They should put him at the bottom of the barrel; he was the worst President ever. He did that to appease the South. He was anti-Catholic, anti-Black, he was anti-everything. He'd make a great Republican today....

It's a real part of American history, much like what happened at Gettysburg, what happened to Washington at the Brandywine, what happened at Pearl Harbor, 9-11. Real history happened here, with fear, emotion, all the things that brought horror into one's life. I'm sure that doors of this house were pounded on early in the mornings, and I'm sure the enslaved were in here, hiding, scared.... I never forget the emotions of people that were in fear for their lives—in my house, in America. ...They were afraid of the British at one time, then they're afraid of the Fugitive Slave Act.

*Do you know, Sean, who was living here back in the 1840s, '50s?*

I do know. I have a complete record....There was a woman named Sarah Woolley who lived here. I think

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## “Find Your Freedom” with the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway

by Debbie Martin, former Administrator, Preservation Planner, City of Wilmington

### *What's New with the*

#### *Underground Railroad Coalition of Delaware?*

Harriet Tubman Day, March 10th, is always special. As you may be aware, the Harriet Tubman Visitor's Center in Church Creek, Maryland, is opening to the public on March 11th (*see next page*), and to support that and local heritage tourism, we have developed several programs and products with our wonderful partners in Delaware and Maryland.



*A newly-discovered photograph of Harriet Tubman, taken circa 1865-1868: her earliest known image. The original will be auctioned off by the Swann Galleries in late March.*

A bi-state Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway (HTURB) Driving Guide is in production. Maryland has invited us to include a few of our Byway sites in their document, to continue to let people know that the HTURB crosses state lines. The Guide also gives directions to the Chester County Visitor's Center at Longwood, William Still's residence and Indepen-

dence Hall in Philadelphia, so we have added third state in there! Our buy-in to the Guide was generously funded by the URCD membership, DelDOT, the Delaware Tourism Office, the Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Kent County Tourism, and the Historic Odessa Foundation. Our site partners helped to gather all of the information necessary. The number of brochures that Delaware will receive is directly related to our fundraising, so there is still time to donate if you wish to do so. To help respond to the increase in tour requests, the Delaware Byways office prioritized our wayfinding signage, now in production. DelDOT will begin to sign the route at the state line near Sandtown as soon as the signs are available. The signs were made possible by small grants from 18 legislators.

The events program, “Find Your Freedom,” will take place this year from March 5-12. A partnership between the URCD, Maryland HTURB and the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, the program draws attention to Harriet Tubman Day and Network to Freedom sites through lectures, tours, and interactive family programs. The year 2016 featured the debut of Network to Freedom site stamps (like National Park stamps), and the Find Your Freedom stamp folder will return this year. The list of events is being finalized now and will be shared soon. Locally, Quaker Hill and the Delaware Historical Society will have programming on Saturday, March 11th.

One of our newer Coalition members is the Small Business Administration of Delaware, who has developed a fondness for the HTURB and for the coupon program dubbed “Byway Bucks.” Expect to see some local celebrities popping up with “Bucks” to promote small businesses along the Byway.

We are putting together our regular public programs for May 2017-April 2018, so please send your suggestions or requests. I have a “heads-up” on a May art installation at the Delaware Contemporary that will be entitled “The Conversation” and will be on a theme of

Harriet Tubman and Thomas Garrett. Stay tuned!

**Background:**

The URCD started by a group of passionate citizens long before the URCD was formalized as a non-profit in 2002. It was then that Delaware received the only large grant yet offered by the new NPS Network to Freedom Program. The grant was to help develop the context and site research for the state. Among the products was the nomination of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway in 2009. Due to fiscal requirements of the federal government, the City of Wilmington (James Baker Administration) supported the URCD, providing administrators and substantial matching funds. We took a deep breath and stepped out on our own after the grant was concluded. After 15 years, we are still a non-profit organization in good

standing, and have been recognized as tax-exempt. We are an all-volunteer group operating under a board of directors. For the past six years, we have presented regular public programs quarterly, set up at festivals, and occasionally have really great workshops! We have a small annual budget, funded mostly by member donations. We try to take advantage of great opportunities, like the bi-state Driving Guide, whenever they pop up. We strive to keep our trajectory moving forward, and even though it has wobbled a few times, great partnerships make great things happen. Quaker Hill has been one of those great partnerships.

Contact us:

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[www.tubmanbywaydelaware.org](http://www.tubmanbywaydelaware.org)



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she lived here about 1850....

There are three histories to Quaker Hill: the 18th C history, which was the building of this house this neighborhood. This was actually considered the country back then. It didn't have a next-door neighbor until a hundred years later. ...And so that's one set of history, when this house was under British rule, and then Washington lived across the street. You know one time, the news of July 4, 1776, came through the threshold of this house. So this house was here, that emotion, that expression. It's the same as the news of D-Day and VJ-Day....but they come in stages. Then we have the Civil War time. The Revolutionary War time, the Civil war time, and the World War II time, the three most prominent times in our history...

This house, which flew the British flag, never dropped the American flag, but Delaware, though it was a slave state, Wilmington was not considered a slave area, so it proudly still stayed northernly. Then of course during World War II, the Lemons, the people who lived here, had a lot of kids, and some of them went to war... This house saw all of America. And all of it passed by, from a horse and carriage to a 2015 Jaguar, just passed by the other day....All the vehicles that were ever made have passed by this house. Notable people have passed by—Thomas Garrett's funeral—all of the history...and most of the architecture that was around for that history is still here. That's what we're fighting to keep right now, but that's another battle. *(to be continued in future Quills).*

## ***Studio Group Preserves the Memory, Heritage of Howard Pyle***

by Pat Zolper, member of the Studio Group and docent at the Delaware Art Museum

Perhaps a quote by literary critic and Wilmington native Henry Seidel Canby best summarizes the influence of artist and writer Howard Pyle on his home town and beyond: “In 1880s Wilmington, industry was God and imagination was an old devil. A shining light of creativity was Howard Pyle.”

Before Pyle died in 1911 at the age of 58, he had established a reputation as the outstanding painter in the golden age of illustration. His own quote, “First a painter then an illustrator” defines his philosophy. Besides studying in New York for three years and establishing sufficient contact with publishing firms so that he could work in Wilmington, he had built his own studio in 1883, taught at Drexel, and was successful enough to provide for his family of six children.

In 1900 he added student facilities to his original building and invited applications for students. The Howard Pyle School of Art in its the first year had 500 applications for 12 places. (*Below is the original studio*). In the masters’ unit were Frank Schoonover and N.C. Wyeth, the latter moving from Massachusetts to study. This was the beginning of the Wyeth tradition so widely known and respected today.

There was no tuition for his students; materials were

provided at cost, and the students only contributed to the financial status of the studios. Pyle welcomed women to his classes at a time when such opportunity was limited. He also actively sought commissions for his students. There were sketching classes, painting classes, and critiques by the master on a regular basis. Pyle liked to live within walking distance of his property and would return home for lunch or come back in the evening for special programs.

What did he look for in his prospective students? He expected a basic knowledge of techniques so that he could emphasize imagination. “Put your heart in your painting then jump in after. Your layout [composition] should kill at 100 yards after the first half hour. There should be one point of emphasis. You cannot imitate nature.”

What happened to the studios after Pyle’s death in Italy in 1911? Wilmington friends banded together to buy 100 paintings, which formed the basis for the Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts. The collection had no home but was shown in the public library. The mission of the Society was to promote “knowledge and enjoyment of and cultivation in the fine arts in the state of Delaware.” The studios were purchased by his former student, Stanley Arthurs, and were to continue a long history of artistic use. The outer appearance is based, as it originated, on a Tudor cottage, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Inside new flooring was added and a cross section of a sycamore tree was placed in the center to indicate



where the master stood when he was teaching. The last painting he was working on, *The Mermaid*, was said to be completed by a student and today is in the Delaware Art Museum.

In 1935, the family of Samuel Bancroft donated his collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings and 11 acres of land to provide housing for both the Pyle and Bancroft collections. In the depths of the Depression, \$350,000 was raised by the community, and the Delaware Art Center was established. In 1938 when an educational component, the H. Fletcher Brown wing, was added, the name changed to the Delaware Art Museum.

And Pyle's Studios? In 1935, The Studio Group was founded by three friends who began painting together along the Brandywine. Renting various places in years to come, it was not until 1938 that they heard that one of the studios at 1305 North Franklin, the Pyle Studios complex, was available. In 1950, when Stanley Arthurs died, the property in its entirety came on the market. It was purchased by a member of the group, Ellen Wheelwright. Lighting was improved and wall space for exhibitions was provided by adding white panels. In 1964 the group was able to buy the studios from Mrs. Wheelwright and establish a building fund and mortgage. Since that time, the membership, which numbers 36 in 2017, has become entirely responsible for the ownership and maintenance of the buildings and is an incorporated entity.

Members meet regularly and are available to give tours of the studios. In past years the Group was responsible for the Clothes Line Art Exhibits, featuring local artists, which started on the steps of what was then the post office building on Rodney Square. The Fair continued for more than 15 years and featured an indoor component in the DuPont building. In 1964 the Studio Group also took charge of the "Artist of the Week" easel display in the hotel lobby. Although the time for display has been extended, the display still occurs, overseen by a Studio Group member who invites local artists, both members of the Group and nonmembers, to participate.

In 2011-12 the Delaware Art Museum featured an exhibit in memory of Pyle's death 100 years before. The show included Pyle's work and that of artists who today have been influenced by Pyle. At that time the Studio Group also had a show at the Museum and proudly paid tribute to the artist who had so influenced

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both the Wilmington art scene and beyond.

(Below: Pyle on the porch of his studio.

With permission of the Delaware Art Museum.)





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