



Quaker Hill Quill

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
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THOMAS GARRETT: A QUAKER STANDS HIS GROUND

On February 7, 1860 Thomas Garrett wrote a letter to his friends Joseph and Ruth Dugdale and Isaac and Dinah Mendinhall informing them that he had not yet been kidnapped by Marylanders so they could breathe more easily. Garrett had received letters from some of his friends advising him to leave his home and to migrate to England for a year or two with his wife, Rachel.



Patricia A. Lewis, Harriet Tubman URR Community History Interpretive Project

Garrett's friends were concerned because of a resolution that Curtis W. Jacobs, a delegate to the Maryland Legislature, introduced about 1860, offering a reward to any persons who would deliver Garrett to a Maryland jail for stealing slaves. Thomas Garrett had responded to the accusation (i.e., stealing slaves) by writing a letter to the "Peninsular News", an anti-slavery newspaper, published in Milford, Delaware (unfortunately the relevant issues for that newspaper are unavailable). In Garrett's letter to the newspaper, he denied the charge of stealing slaves. But he stated that if any slave or anyone in distress needed his help, it was his duty to aid them. Garrett also stated that the donations he had recently received from Great Britain were insignificant compared to the amount of money that he expended for clothing and other assistance in helping God's poor over the last 37 years.

Fortunately, the American Anti-Slavery Society published a relevant pamphlet called Anti-Slavery Tract No. 4 with an article entitled: "The Reign of Terror in the Slaveholding States" (1859-1860). This pamphlet included Thomas Garrett's response to Jacobs' allegations and a copy of the resolution that was supposedly introduced in the state legislature by Curtis Jacobs. The resolution apparently offered a \$10,000 reward for anyone who would capture and deliver Thomas Garrett to a Maryland jail. It stated also that Garrett

became rich by stealing slaves and collecting a bounty on each slave that he helped escape from his or her owner.

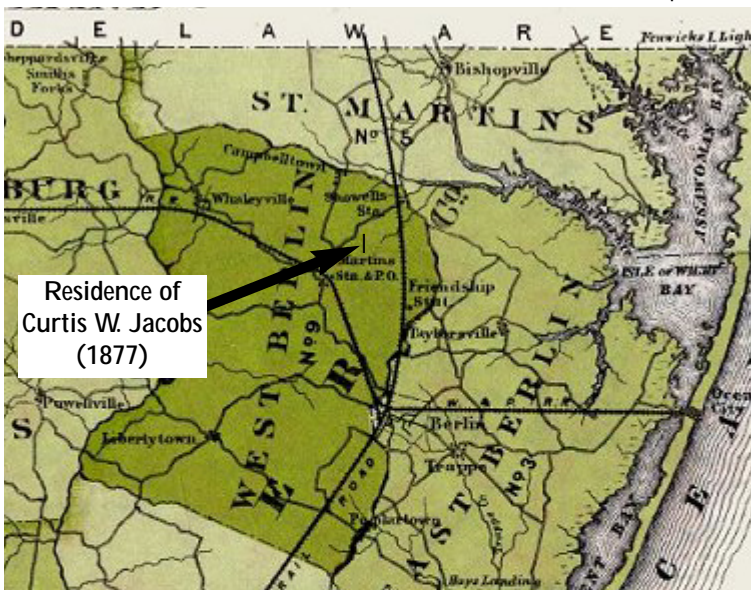
Curtis W. Jacobs (1818-1884) was born in Sussex County, Delaware. Upon his father's death in 1831, Jacobs inherited the mansion, farm and one slave. Shortly thereafter he sold this farm and moved to Worcester County, Maryland.

In January 1841, he married Mary A. Holland of Baltimore Hundred, Delaware. The couple lived in Worcester County, Maryland, where they were an integral part of that community for the rest of their lives. They had four children. Curtis W. Jacobs and his father-in-law, Captain William Holland, together owned at one time 38 slaves.

In the late 1850's Jacobs suspected that he was losing some control over his enslaved people, a suspicion that in some cases was to be proven true. He believed the influence of suspected abolitionists traveling through, as well as that of as well as free blacks living in the area, caused the discontent among some of his slaves.

Curtis W. Jacobs made speeches supporting legislation to compel all free negroes to leave the state of Maryland.

In 1855, on separate occasions, two of Jacobs' slaves ran away but only one of them succeeded in escaping. On six other occasions, he discovered that several of his slaves were involved in a plot to try to poison him and his family. Some of his enslaved women murdered their children and aborted their new-



1877 map showing the location of the residence of Curtis W. Jacobs (who wanted Garrett jailed), a few miles below the southern border of Delaware (map: Edward H. Nabb Research Center for Delmarva History and Culture)

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To Celebrate Thomas Garrett's Birthday (August 21, 1789), in this issue:

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Oral History of Robert E. Seeley, Jr. — 4/9/2011 — Excerpts, Family History, Etc.

I found out I was related to the family of the abolitionist, Thomas Garrett...The Underground Railroad was a part of American history...It is a love story about people caring for other people that were enslaved...Here's a relative of mine who put his life on the line...Other people were involved. I researched them, too-people like William Still.

I was able to connect with some of my cousins...I wanted to get information-letters, documents, pictures...A lot of the collection was donated in Delaware...Helen Sellers Garrett donated a lot of Thomas Garrett's collection to the Historical Society...There's a silver tea set donated in Delaware-given to Thomas Garrett in 1866 by the African American community...The tea set says...:"To Thomas Garrett, through evil report and good report, a wise benefactor..." signed by "the colored people of Wilmington, Delaware..." This was days after the passage of the 13th Amendment... (see in "Thomas Garrett and the Silver Tea Set" in the May, 2012) issue of The Quaker Hill Quill

To Thomas Garrett it was God's will in his life and he was only a vessel...Through Thomas' years he suffered...one time he was thrown off a train and hurt his leg...In 1848 he was put on trial...He gets fined \$5,400, which almost bankrupted him...The trial brought many more abolitionists to the cause of freedom...

I was first doing genealogy in the 1980s...I started on my father's side of the family in 1991...the Garrett line...Pat Lewis asked me down to Wilmington to a forum...I thought that I should do it...the first performance was Pat Lewis and I...I shared with the Havertown Historical Society and I spoke at churches...I also talked about Abraham Pennock, who wrote in newspapers in Upper Darby...I talked about [Thomas Garrett's] vision in 1813-a vision from God-like Paul's on the road to Damascus...

Many people in Wilmington never saw where he lived--he lived in 227 Shipley Street...People in this meeting house helped Thomas Garrett and restored his fortune, his goods...The trial was good, because it gave the cause publicity...

I wanted to reflect on the Inner Light and our purpose. We should all have a purpose...I know Thomas Garrett would give a lot of credit to the African American community...Samuel Burris was put on the auction block in Dover and Isaac Flint purchased his freedom...


Eli Garrett married Frances Sellers and Frances would move down here...Dr. Henry Garrett was a dentist and lived near Thomas...His wife was Catherine Canby...The Canby family was also involved on the Underground Railroad...Elwood would marry Catherine Wollaston...The Wollastons were also involved on the Underground Railroad-the Wollastons who attended this meeting I believe were also involved in the Underground Railroad...Elwood Garrett was a photographer...a couple of pictures he took were of Thomas Garrett...The studio was on Market Street...Wilmington, Delaware was filled with abolitionists...Look at the Delaware Abolition Society-some members attended here at the meeting house...John Wales represented Thomas Garrett in 1848 and attended here...

In January, 1830 Thomas married Rachel Mendenhall. I am a second cousin seven times removed to Thomas

Garrett and am also related to Mary Sharpless, his first wife...

He died in 1871...Arrangements were made the year before that for his body to be carried by six African Americans from his home to the meeting house (see separate article on Thomas Garrett's funeral on page four)...Services were held at his home at 227 Shipley Street...The streets were crowded on the way to a full meeting house...The first person to stand was Lucretia Mott from Philadelphia. She was a strong abolitionist and also for women's rights...

He did the will of God...He died in peace...He saw the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments...His reward was his pleasure in knowing he did God's will...If we work together, as they did on the Underground Railroad, we will accomplish the goal of spreading the word of people who gave their lives for freedom, breaking the law of the land-not God's law...The objective concerns not just the work of Thomas Garrett, but also of others like Samuel Burris, the Mendenhalls, the Agnews, the Bernards...

The meeting house was very important...There were a bunch of people who cared about other people to put an end to slavery...Wilmington, Delaware was the gateway to the eastern line of the Underground Railroad...This was a slave state...It was a connection right close to the line to freedom...It's a story that needs to be told-a love story about people caring about each other... 

A Quaker Stands His Ground *continued from page 1*

borns so that they might escape the bondage of slavery. He was known to be very hard on his enslaved people, yet he also thought it was his duty to preach to them about principles of morality and religion as well as to educate them from an early age.

What really exasperated Jacobs the most was receiving a letter in 1857 that revealed an escape plan to be executed on July 5 that involved some of his slaves. He felt the plot was due to the involvement of abolitionists. He hired several men to help him to collect his slaves that were hired out to different farmers in the area. Jacobs' concerns and frustrations regarding his chattel eventually led him to the decision to ship his slaves down to Alabama and hire them out.

In any case, Thomas Garrett stood his ground. He refused to be intimidated by the likes of Curtis W. Jacobs. Knowing Garrett's generosity, if he knew that Curtis W. Jacobs was in city of Wilmington, he likely would have invited him to dine with him and his family. Thomas Garrett never left Delaware to migrate to England and he continued to be Delaware's greatest station master on the Underground Railroad until the end of the Civil War.

NOTE: The facts in this article have been taken from many sources, but special thanks go to a Master's Thesis by Daeanne J. Kuczma (Salisbury University, 2011) called "Curtis W. Jacobs and the Nature of Slavery on the Eastern Shore of Maryland."

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Community History Interpretive Project (HT/CHIP) is a partnership of Patricia Lewis and John Creighton. 

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Quaker Hill Upcoming Events

Underground Railroad Workshops for Children (January and February, 2013)

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 2013 at the Wilmington Friends Meeting at 401 North West Street, Wilmington, DE.

The first workshop, presented by Barbara Randolph on January 26, 2013, features a film about a real-life family that escaped on the Underground Railroad; a dramatization by the participants of an escape using coded spirituals; the creation of collages by the children using pictures of abolitionists; a brief lecture on local Underground Railroad history; a visit to the grave of Underground Railroad Stationmaster Thomas Garrett; and refreshments.

The second workshop, presented by Darleen Amobi on February 16, 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 Patricia Lewis and Mia Muratori on February 23, 2013, will feature a story about Thomas Garrett; an arts-and-crafts project about articles to take on an escape; and refreshments.

The programs are free and open to the public.

In Memoriam

**It is with great sadness that we note the death of
Board Member and Coordinator of Church Relations
Rev. Christopher A. R. Dolley**

Thomas Garrett's Final Days *continued from page 4*

noble character. He said that he felt that Garrett's body had been the temple of a noble spirit, aye the temple of God himself, and some day they would meet the spirit in the heavenly land beyond the grave. T. Clarkson Taylor then said that the time for closing the services had arrived, and in a very few words commended the lesson of his life to those present, after which the meeting dissolved, and the body was carried to the graveyard in the rear of the meeting house, and placed in its final resting place.

Thomas Garrett's was laid to rest under an oak tree outside the Wilmington Friends Meeting House, near Mary Sharpless Garrett, his first wife, Rachel Mendinhall Garrett, his second wife, and Sally Garrett Hewes, his daughter.

From the moment of his vision from God in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania in 1813 to put an end to the evils of slavery, his mission was unwavering. Thomas Garrett died in peace knowing he fulfilled God's will.

Robert Seeley is a descendent of Thomas Garrett



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Thomas Garrett's Final Days

Following the Civil War, Thomas Garrett continued his work for many minority groups in America. In 1870, when African Americans were given the right to vote by the passage of the 15th Amendment, Garrett was paraded in a carriage pulled by African American men through the streets of Wilmington as they hailed him "Our Moses."



Robert E. Seeley

While confined to bed due to illness, Garrett said: "I have lived to see my Divine Master's will accomplished, my mission's ended, I am ready to go." A few months later, on January 25, 1871, Thomas Garrett died.

His body rest peacefully at his home at 227 Shipley Street in Wilmington, Delaware near the silver tea set he received from the African American Churches in 1866, after the passage of the 13th Amendment to end slavery, as many people came to pay their last respects. When the time arrived his coffin was not put in a wagon drawn by horses, but on the shoulders of six African American men. They carried his body up the hill to the Wilmington Friends Meeting, as many women, men, and children, both black and white, lined the streets, sometimes two or three deep, to an overflowing meeting house. His coffin was placed in the middle of the meeting and the lid removed. There was a smile upon his lips, and his face was aglow. The first person to speak was his dear friend Lucretia Mott, from Philadelphia. She felt that it was fit and proper that the good deeds



of this man's life should be remembered, for the encouragement of others. She spoke of her long acquaintance with him, of his cheerful and sunny disposition, and his firm devotion to the truth as he saw it. Mott spoke about the inner light within all of us that guides us. Aaron M. Powell of New York was the next speaker, and he spoke at length with great earnestness of the life-long labor of his departed friend in the abolition cause, of his cheerfulness, and his courage. William Howard Day then came forward, saying he understood that it would not be considered inappropriate for one of his race to say a few words on this occasion, and make some attempt to pay a fitting tribute to one to whom they owed so much. He did not feel today like paying such a tribute, his grief was too fresh upon him, his heart too bowed down, and he could do no more than, in behalf of his race-not only those here, but the host the deceased has befriended-and of the whole four millions to whom he had been so true a friend, cast a tribute of praise and thanks upon his grave. Rev. Alfred Cookman, of Grace M. E. Church next arose, and said that he came there intending to say nothing, but the scene moved him to a few words. He thanked God for the works of this man; he thanked Him especially for his

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