



Quaker Hill Quill

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation
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Wilmington DE 19801

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Thomas Garrett and the Silver Tea Set

Thomas Garrett was unwavering in his efforts to end slavery. He endured many hardships—the trial in 1848, in which he was convicted of helping runaway slaves and given a heavy fine that nearly bankrupted him, the death of his three beautiful daughters, the reward for his arrest offered by the state of Maryland, the threats on his life, and the boycotts from buying goods from his hardware store—but none of these stopped Thomas Garrett from fulfilling the will of God in his life. Thomas listened to the Inner Light and was at peace, despite his travails and the turmoil around him.



Robert E. Seeley

Thomas was honored to receive this beautiful tea set, but remained humble. He knew that many people, both black and white, worked together on the Underground Railroad, and any credit for his own part in it was due to God, not himself. As in all things, the Inner Light had guided him.



Robert E. Seeley is a descendant of Thomas Garrett

(Illustration of Tea Set at Delaware Historical Society)



In January of 1866, on the third anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and only days after the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States outlawed slavery, Thomas Garrett was presented a silver tea set by the African American Churches here in Wilmington. The tea set bore an inscription that read:

“To Thomas Garrett

Through Evil Report and Good Report, The faithful Friend and Wise Councilor, The Fearless Champion, and Generous Benefactor of the Wronged and Oppressed, From the Colored People of Wilmington, January 1866.”

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Wilmington, 1777: Sufferings of Friends

"In the year 1777 I was owner of and Lived at them Mills in the State of Dallaware on the side of White Clay Creek abought two Miles north of Christiana Bridge . At the time the English Army Lay between my Mills and the head of Elk, and the American Army, some of them on the Hill by White Clay Creek Bridge, in Sight of my House & Mills and Some of them nearer to Newport." [Daniel Byrnes, Clerk of Wilmington Friends Meeting].



Kim Burdick, MA, MPA

At Wilmington Monthly Meeting held **the 13th of 8 month 1777**, the friends appointed to attend the last Quarterly Meeting informed this meeting "that it was there recommended to monthly meetings to collect a regular account of the sufferings of friends, now in this time of trial, agreeable to the advice of our last Yearly Meeting." Daniel Byrnes was appointed to the committee.

On the 27th of the 8th mo., 1777, Friends Meeting House in Wilmington was forcibly taken by soldiers belonging to the American Army. The meeting was held under a shady tree in the graveyard .

The 28th of 8th mo., 1777. "we think it may be requisite for us to meet oftener than once a month, therefore adjourn to this day, two weeks beginning the 11th of next month at two o'clock in the afternoon."

9th Mo., 1, 1777 "friends at White Clay Creek [report] taken from Caleb Byrnes what was supposed to be six ton of Hay by the American Army L20:0:00 for which [he] was not willing to receive pay "

9th Mo., 3, 1777. As sounds of the Battle of Cooch's Bridge echoed across the fields, the Friends at White Clay Creek received a frightening message from Philadelphia. The Continental Congress had imprisoned without a hearing twenty well-respected local Quakers, including John Penn, the day before. Although Thomas McKean sought the Writ of Habeas Corpus for them, the Continental Congress refused. The "City of Brotherly Love" was no longer a safe place for Quakers.

9th Mo., 6, 1777. Another British attack was expected at any minute. Daniel Byrnes was informed that his home would be the site of a council of War at 5 o Clock that evening. Security measures were tight.

"On the 7th Day of the week Clement Bidle, an officer as I Suppose in thy Army Came to my House and informed me that General Woshington had Sent him to let me know that the wheat & Flour in my Mills must be Removed...I Did then believe thou intended it as a favour to me as I was not Looked on as an

Enemy to my Country and therefore I could Do no other thing but Submit to thy orders." [Daniel Byrnes to George Washington, 1790].

5 tons of hay were taken from Washington's headquarters at Quaker William Marshall's Stanton farm yet Nathanael Greene sputtered that the "villainous Quakers were employed to serve the enemy."

9th Mo., 11, 1777. Battle of the Brandywine, Chadds Ford.

9th Mo., 12, 1777. The British occupy Wilmington, Delaware.

For a more comprehensive and carefully-foot-noted account by Kim Burdick, please see "I Remain Your Friend, Daniel Byrnes" at www.halebyrnes.org



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Thomas Garrett's shop.

The origins of Wilmington date to a failed real estate development by a man named Thomas Willing. Some Quakers had been living in nearby Pennsylvania and were attracted by the area. They moved down and were responsible for building the community that has succeeded to this day.

If you want to understand the social origins of Wilmington Friends Meeting, look at Henry Canby's book, called Age of Confidence, describing his youth in the 1880s and the 1890s. In it he describes the community as he knew it at that time. The people then, not only the Quakers, were comfortable and thought things were going well and always would. They were a little smug. The book was written in the 1930s, looking back to the 1880s from the perspective of the Great War and the Depression. The confidence seemed short-sighted.

He describes a Quaker community which was very business-oriented. I remember that when I was a boy, it was difficult to buy lumber in Wilmington without dealing with a Quaker. The Quaker business community was the center of the community and the center of the meeting.

There was a time when you had to live close to work. That changed with the advent of streetcars—first horse-drawn ones, then in the 1880s and 1890s, electrified ones. It encouraged people who wanted more space to build along Delaware Avenue.

Streetcars were very much part of my experience growing up. There were double tracks on 4th Street. In those days there were regular streetcars going up Quaker Hill. I remember two types of streetcars with different types of gearing—one louder than the other. There was more public transportation then on Sunday than now.



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Quaker Hill Upcoming Events

Berry Festival (June 3, 2012)

The Wilmington Friends Meeting at 401 North West Street will hold its annual Berry Festival, which is free and open to the public, on Sunday, June 3, 2012. In past years the festival has featured musical acts, bungy-jumping, a giant slide, children's games, a plant sale, and food—including, of course, berries! Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation's own Bob Seeley will be present via videotape in the character of his famous ancestor, Underground Railroad Stationmaster and Past Quaker Hill Resident, Thomas Garrett!

Quaker Hill Annual Picnic (June 27, 2012)

The Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation and the Quaker Hill Neighborhood Association will hold its annual joint potluck and picnic on the grounds of the Wilmington Friends Meeting on June 27, 2012. The Thomas Garrett Humanitarian Award will be given to Lisa Samson for documenting Quaker Hill oral histories on film. Lisa, who is the Wilmington Friends Meeting historian and a member of the Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation board, has a master's degree in history from New York University in history and archival research, has worked for National Geographic, and is the co-author of the book, *The Oral History Workshop*. Currently she is also the proprietor of a business documenting other individuals' oral histories.

Recent Events

Bucktoe Cemetery tour (March 10, 2012)

Quaker Hill Historic Preservation Foundation Board member Darleen Amobi arranged a tour of old Tweed's Tavern, owned by the Hockessin Historical Society, and of the Bucktoe Cemetery, an historic African American cemetery in New Garden Township, PA. The cemetery boasts the graves of at least eight Civil War veterans. The Land Conservancy for Southern Chester County hosts several events at the cemetery. For more information, visit thelandconservancy-forscc.org.

Market Street tour (April 7, 2012)

The Delaware Historical Society hosted a tour of Market Street for the Quaker Hill Historical Preservation Foundation on April 7, 2012. To schedule a tour of Market Street, contact the Delaware Historical Society.

Support Quaker Hill. *Support QHHPF.*

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 about becoming a member, go to www.quakerhillhistoric.org and click on "become a member"

Make a Donation—Send a check made out QHHPF to:
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Oral History of Howard W. Starkweather, Jr.—9/17/11—Excerpts, Reminiscences of Wilmington Friends School on Quaker Hill, Etc.

In 1932 at the age of six, I entered Wilmington Friends School on Quaker Hill and was there through the fifth grade. Starting in the middle of the second grade I began piano lessons at Wilmington Music School a few blocks away at 8th and Washington Sts. Somewhere during my elementary school years my parents joined Wilmington Friends Meeting.

I lived in Wilmington through high school and after graduate school returned to Wilmington.

I had various rides to Wilmington Friends School and while it was at 4th and West Streets during first and second grades I was there half-day. After that my family had moved to Westover Hills and I could go home by streetcar. I had two choices: I could walk down 5th Street and pick up streetcar #10; or I could walk on West Street and pick it up at Delaware Avenue and ride the streetcar to Rising Sun Lane, then walk home the final mile.

At its center city location Wilmington Friends School was an old building which had grown up gradually. It was not the most satisfactory and had no space for sports. It had to transfer its people elsewhere for games.

The school was never primarily Quaker. When it was started in 1748, it was not for Quaker families but for the community. It was essentially a school for

the kids in the community. The original building had been first a meeting house. That space became two buildings. It was gradually added on to. The elementary school tended to be on the 4th Street side. I clearly remember that the 2nd grade was on the 2nd floor. The last part built was the gymnasium, which still exists and which became an apartment house.

One day we were having water color painting. One of my classmates emptied his water jar out of the window on the 4th Street side and an unfortunate gentleman was walking by. Remember: this was in the depths of the Depression and having water poured on your clothes was no joke! The principal, Charles Bush, appeared in the classroom, highly incensed!

[The school usually celebrated May Day, and one of the senior girls would be the Queen of the May.] One year there were no girls in the senior class. At that point in the Depression some families who sent children to the school sent their boys but not their girls.

In terms of shopping Wilmington was a one-street town, with a lot of successful, well-regarded places to get clothes on Market Street. A building not as far down as Market Street—probably on Shipley or Tatnall—was Delaware Hardware, said to be the residue of

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