GERMANTOWNE CRIER



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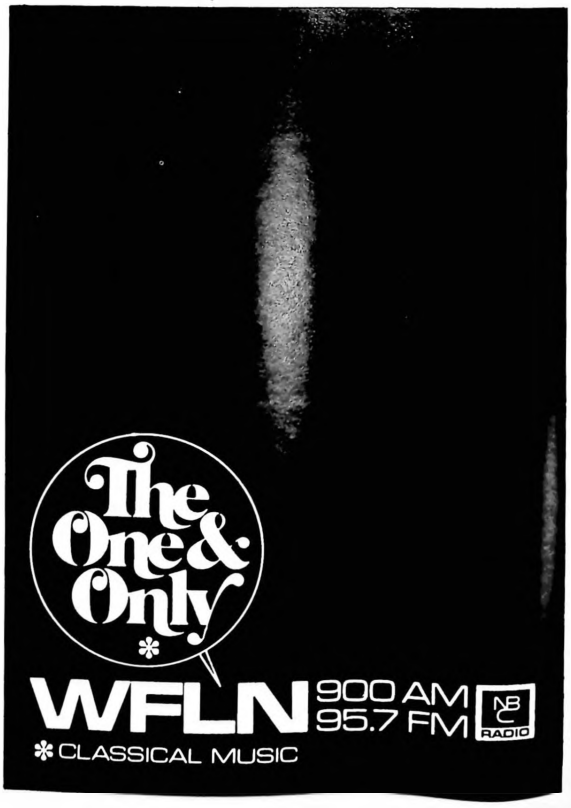
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The Germantown Historical Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and promoting the cultural tradition of Germantown — through the preservation of historic landmarks, the maintenance of a museum of relics, a costume museum, and a library; the sponsorship of lectures and tours; and the publication of articles relating to local history.

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GERMANTOWNE CRIER



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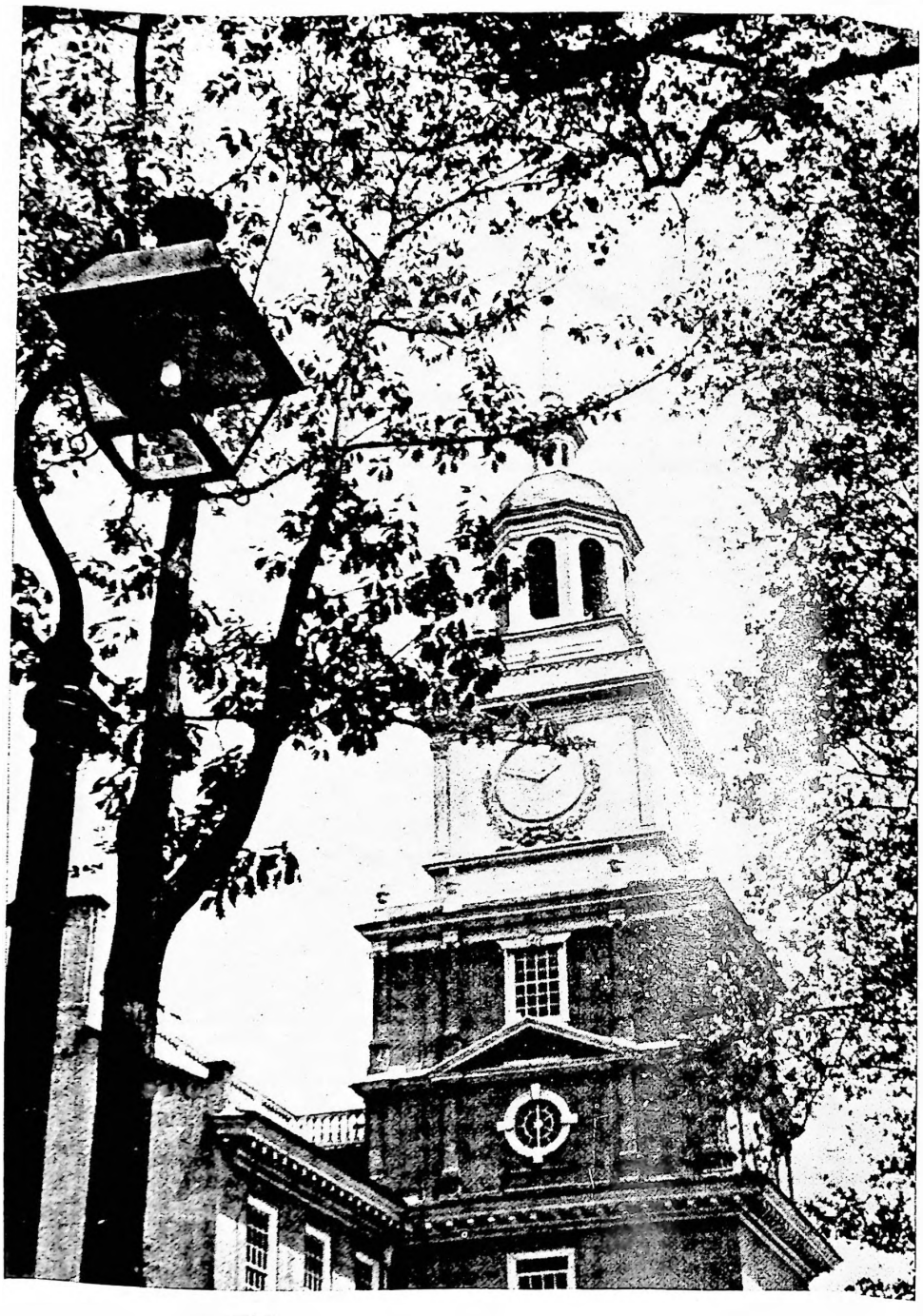
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Kirk & Nice is small building (with sign on front) at far left. Larger building in center of picture is old Washington Hotel. Narrow street separating two buildings is early Washington Lane.

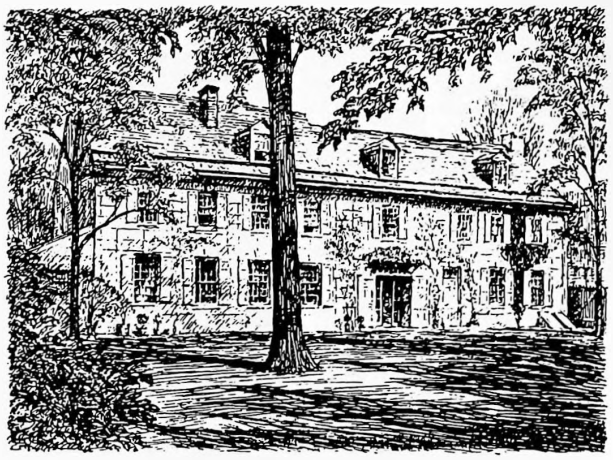
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The Significance and Development of Wyck's Architecture

By THOMAS WISTAR, JR.



Pen-and-ink by Thomas Wistar, Jr., from a 1902 photograph

"WYCK" – 1690

Any account of Wyck's architectural development can only be undertaken at this time without benefit of completed documentary and architectural research. When archival and structural investigations are made, an authentic record can then be put together. However, a good deal can be told on this subject based on what is now known.

As the only building begun in the seventeenth century remaining today within the present Philadelphia city limits — a claim some say should be shared with "Wynnstay," situated on the other side of the Schuylkill River — Wyck holds a preeminent place among those buildings still standing which make up the historic architectural heritage of our country.

There are a number of factors besides its extremely early origin which contribute to the architectural significance of Wyck. Unlike the later built, more sophisticated historic mansions in the Philadelphia area, and indeed throughout the English colonies, Wyck was not built at one time; rather, its construction took place at various times over a period of one hundred and thirty-four years. Because of this gradual structural progression from a modest pioneer dwelling to the extensive house one sees today, the style of Wyck's architecture is not a product of contemporary English architectural design manuals, as are, for example, two of Germantown's more sophisticated mansions: Stenton (1728), of the Queen Anne period, and Cliveden (1763), of the Georgian period. As such, their style is uniform with all the historic mansions of the same period along the eastern seaboard. Wyck's architecture, on the other hand, is vernacular, reflecting the building methods and style of the builder's background and using the building materials indigenous to the locality. Examples in Germantown representative, as is Wyck, of the Dutch-Germanic vernacular tradition are Grumblethorpe (1744), the Green Tree Tavern (1748) — directly across Germantown Avenue from Wyck — and the Johnson House (1765). Built of native fieldstone, these have the characteristic early Germantown feature of a pent eave running above the first-floor windows, with pedimented hood or balcony above the entrance door.

The building of Wyck was begun about 1690 by Hans Milan, a Quaker Netherlander from the Lower Rhineland, in the then newly settled wilderness hamlet now called Germantown, just eight years after Penn founded his colony. As indicated by the massive triangular stone foundation of the original chimney complex, still to be seen in the cellar, this earliest stone structure was probably limited to two rooms with adjoining corner fireplaces, one in each room, a large oven taking the space between them. One of these rooms, which must have been the kitchen, had a brick floor, still to be seen, and the opening of its fireplace measured seven feet across with the oven in its back wall. The other room had a cellar below it. Probably a gambrel roof provided sufficient headroom for sleeping quarters in the garret. This first small dwelling, which approximated the dimensions of the small homes that Penn recommended his settlers should build, is now the southerly half of the rear end of the house. Like his fellow settlers, Milan used the fieldstone prevalent in the Germantown area. The trees from his clearing provided the wood from which the beams and rafters were hewn, the floor boards sawn, and the roof shingles rift.

Milan soon doubled this structure in width, with cellar and second and third floors added, under a broad gable roof. This completed the building of the rear half of the present house, seen on the left in the picture. It is generally believed that this sizable house, thirty-six feet long, twenty-nine feet wide, and standing more than thirty feet high to the roof ridge, had been constructed before the end of the first decade of the eighteenth century. This would make Wyck one of Germantown's largest homes in that early period. In

typical Dutch fashion, Milan placed his house with gable end to the road.

The second stage in the construction of Wyck also took place about this time. In 1714 Milan's daughter married Dirk Jansen and Milan built a second smaller house for their family, fourteen and a half feet from the end of his house toward the road. This second house constitutes the front portion of Wyck, seen on the right in the picture. The front entrance has a "Dutch door," its upper and lower halves divided. It has a full cellar and is two and one-half stories high. However, the remains of what appears to have been a very low attic window opening, just above the second-story floor, would suggest that this house at first had only a first floor and a low-roofed second floor, the third floor being added later. Milan must have been a man of foresight, anticipating future development of the house, for he placed the southeast wall of this second house in precise alignment with the southeast wall of his first house. He also made the floors of the new house at the same levels with the first one. These previsions permitted the two houses, when later joined, to make one long facade without a break in roof eaves, wall or window alignment.

The third stage of Wyck's structural development was the joining of the two separate houses at the second and third floors, bridging an open carriage or cartway below, running between the buildings. This most probably occurred in the second quarter of the eighteenth century during the occupancy of Caspar Wistar and his wife, Catherine Jansen, who had inherited both the houses. The Wistars had a town house in Philadelphia and used their place in Germantown as a summer home. Undoubtedly, they needed a bigger house to accommodate their large family.

It is generally supposed that the closing in of the "cartway" did not take place until the last quarter of the century, as witness the representation of Wyck in the mural depicting the Battle of Germantown in 1777, on the wall of the banking room of the First Pennsylvania Bank in Chestnut Hill. In the writer's view, it is unlikely that the inconvenience imposed by this interruption in the continuity of the first-floor living quarters would have been tolerated for so long a time. This cartway was probably closed in and flooring laid down to connect the first floor of the two houses not long after the upper floors had been connected. Large double doors in the outside walls maintained a passage across the width of the house. The panel mouldings and long strap hinges on these doors suggest a mid-eighteenth century date. Wyck had now become the large house one sees today, under one eighty-foot-long gable roof.

Most of Wyck's outbuildings still remaining date from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. These include an extremely rare icehouse, a smokehouse, possibly used at one time as a kitchen, a carriagehouse, at one time used as a granary, and the great barn, now converted to a residence. Like the house, all these buildings were built of local fieldstone. The pottingshed attached to the back of the carriagehouse, and the adjoining greenhouse, date from the first decade of the twentieth century. Except for the last two mentioned, all the outbuildings have recently been restored.

The final phase in the development of Wyck's architecture started in 1823 when Reuben Haines "the Younger," a great-grandson of Caspar and Catherine Wistar and the sixth generation of the family, engaged his friend William Strickland, the eminent architect of that day, to draw plans for extensive alterations to the interior of the house. Strickland was a leading proponent of the Greek Revival style in America. The classic Greek temple he had designed for the Second Bank of the United States had just been completed in Philadelphia. A few years later, he was the architect chosen to design the present tower of Independence Hall. He was in such demand to design important civic and other public buildings that Wyck must have been one of a very few private houses ever to receive the benefit of his attention.

Under Strickland's skillful direction, the disjointed room arrangement of the combined first floors of the two houses was transformed into the gracious unified plan of today. All chimneys and their fireplaces were taken down and new ones built, partitions were removed and floor construction renewed. The area under the "passageway" was excavated at this time, thus connecting the cellars of the two houses. In the back half of the house he placed the present library room and enlarged the dining room, taking in the old kitchen. The dining room still contains eighteenth-century woodwork. An addition, housing the present kitchen and pantry, was built onto the rear end of the house. In the spacious parlor at the front end of the house, he blocked up the windows in the end wall facing the road and moved the fireplace to the center of that wall from the north side of the room. He then connected these rooms from front parlor through entrance stairhall and "passageway" to the library with a series of six-foot-wide double doors, placed on the center axis of the house, creating a vista through these open doorways almost sixty feet long.

Strickland was an innovator. His introduction of the large biparting, sliding glazed doors, which he placed inside the existing exterior double doors on the outside walls of the passageway, is possibly the earliest use of this feature, so prevalent in residential design today. The six-foot-wide double doors on either side of the entrance stairhall are pivoted and swing into the hall of the same width so that they may close off the rooms on either side or swing open into the hall, shutting off the entrance on one hand and stairway on the other.

On the exterior of the house, except at the rear gable wall, Strickland covered the fieldstone rubble walls with stucco, refined by "lining," i.e., grooved lines representing ashlar courses, and by shaped keystones and vousoirs above window and door openings. A reticulated wood lattice covers the wall of the long facade facing the south lawn. Surprisingly enough, this treatment gives to Wyck a kind of French Provencal appearance, quite unrelated to its background.

The house remains today just as Strickland transformed it, more than a century and a half ago. To this substantial, comfortable house, its sturdy unadorned architecture reflecting the Quaker taste of its builders, he brought a further grace and repose within and a quiet sophistication without. Standing in the shade of its ancient trees, amidst its setting of garden and dependencies, the long facade adorned only by the

rhythmic pattern of its many windows in a network of lattice on which the roses climb, Wyck indeed manifests the charm derived from simplicity and restraint implicit in the Quaker ethic. The old home has come down to us carefully conserved through almost three hundred years, a monument of continuity in our American heritage.

Germantown Telegraph

One of the most important sources of information on nineteenth century Germantown is the weekly newspaper of that period, the *Germantown Telegraph*. Published from March, 1830 to August, 1883, it was the lifework of one man, Philip R. Freas. It was Germantown's only newspaper for the first thirty-five years of its publication and was the most widely subscribed and read local newspaper throughout its lifetime. As interest in nineteenth century Germantown has blossomed in recent years, so the use and value of the *Telegraph* has rapidly increased. Unfortunately the collection of issues of the *Telegraph* housed in the Library of the Germantown Historical Society has deteriorated considerably during the course of the twentieth century. Thus it was decided that in order to make the *Telegraph* available to a much wider public audience it would be necessary to microfilm the complete "run" of the *Telegraph* in possession of the Historical Society the entire fifty-three year "run" of the *Telegraph* was microfilmed last summer and fall. The *Crier* is now pleased to announce that the *Germantown Telegraph* on microfilm is available at both the Library of the Germantown Historical Society and the Reading Room of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The study of nineteenth century Germantown will be greatly facilitated by this addition to the holdings of these two historical libraries.

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A Map of
Historic Germantown

Designed by J. Riegel, Jr.

This detailed map, elaborated with numerous sketches, shows the locations of streets, historic buildings, churches, etc. It is replete with data concerning local people, places, and events.

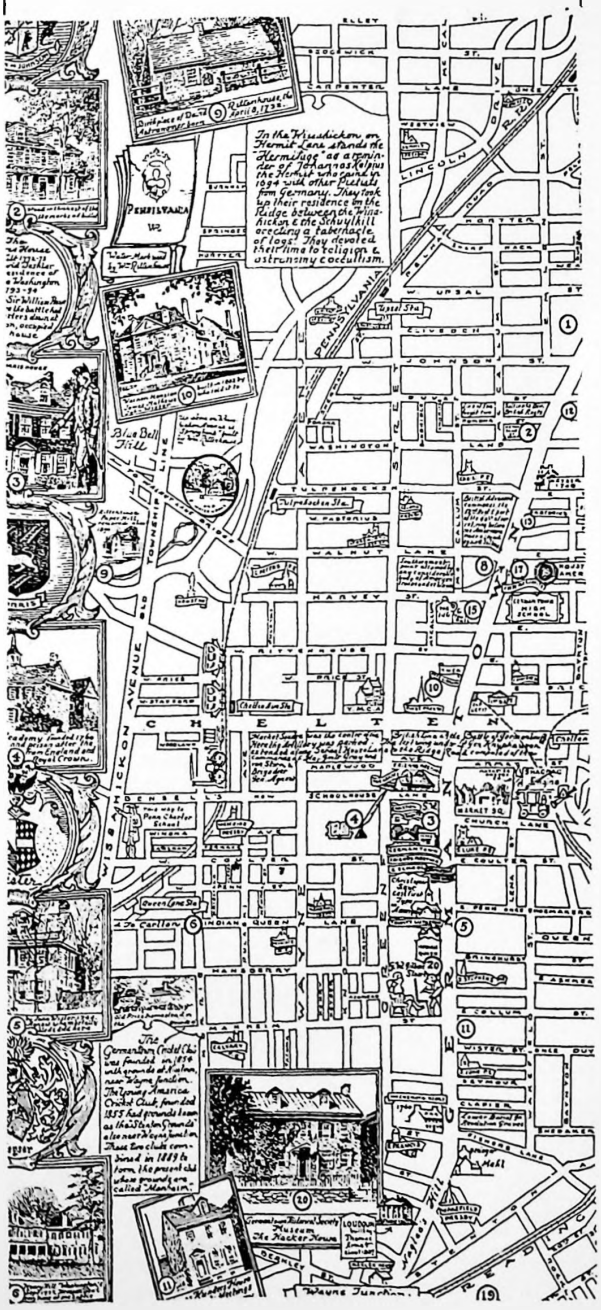
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after the Battle of Germantown. Has remained in the
family for nine generations. Remodeled in 1824 by Willia
land. Lafayette was entertained here July 20, 1825.
18th century musicians
French Consul

2. GREEN TREE TAVERN — 6019 Germantown Avenue
Built by Daniel Pastorius in 1748. Pastorius kept the tav
his death in 1754. Note: high in the side wall near the roof
lettered "DPS 1748." Now, administrative offices for t
Methodist Church of Germantown
Carillon playing at designated times.

3. EBENEZER MAXWELL MANSION — Tulpehocken and Greene Streets
Built in 1859. One of the outstanding examples of Domestic Gothic Architecture, attributed to Josep
Hoxie.
Greet Mr. and Mrs. Hillel Levinson.

4. MENNONITE MEETING HOUSE, GRAVEYARD MUSEUM SHOP — Germantown Ave. above Herman S
The original meeting house erected of logs in 1708, was the first Mennonite Meeting in the Unite
States. The present church, still the "Mennonite Mother Church" was built in 1770. Inside the sma
building, original pews continue in use and the communion table was used in 1686 by the drafters
the first protest against slavery. William Rittenhouse, America's first papermaker is buried in th
small cemetery.
Floyd singers in the Meeting House.

5. THE JOHNSON HOUSE — 6306 Germantown Avenue
Built in 1768. Site of a fierce conflict during the Battle of Germantown in 1777. The house still co
tains bullet holes and a cannon ball that chipped the north corner of the house. Also an Undergrou
railroad stop during the Civil War. Now headquarters of The Women's Club of Germantown.
Cake Sale
Book and Publications Sale } between houses.

6. THE PETER KEYSER HOUSE — 6316 Germantown Avenue
Property purchased by Dirck Keyser from Adam Simon Kuhn in 1756. Keyser and his son had
tanyard on the property. Also site of the above Battle. House and grounds now owned by Kirk a
Nice. Now headquarters of the Northwest Philadelphia Branch of American Red Cross.
Red Cross Modeling of early uniforms.

7. KIRK AND NICE — Germantown Avenue at Washington Lane
On May 6, 1761, the first and oldest funeral establishment in America was founded. Still owned a
operated by the eighth generation of the founding family, Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Henderson.
Exhibit of old furniture made by the family.

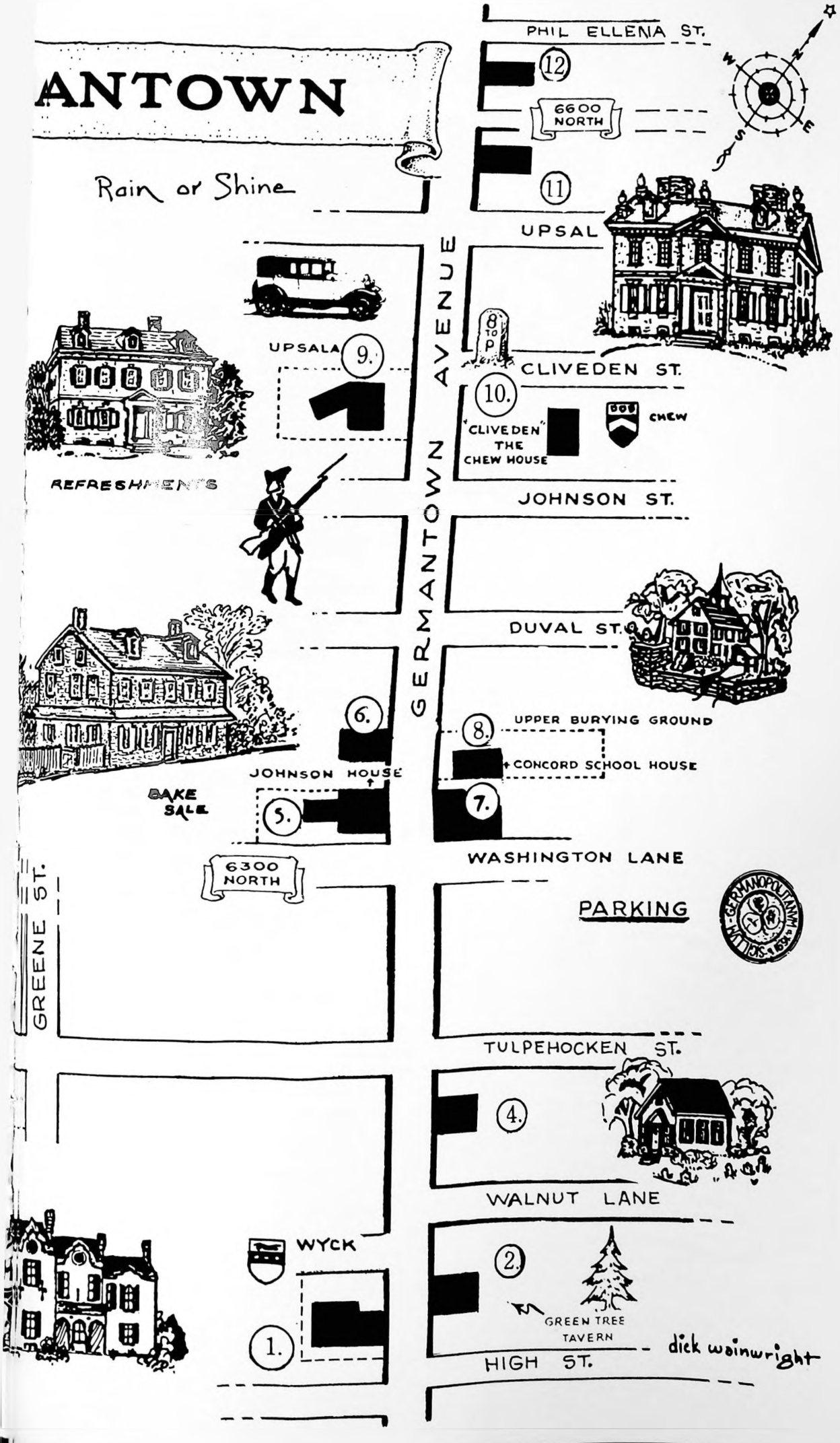
8. THE CONCORD SCHOOL HOUSE AND UPPER BURIAL GROUND — 6309 Germantown Avenue
Built in 1775. Used as a school for many years by the residents of Upper Germantown. Occupied
the Charter Oak Library, and was the building where "the meeting was held which led to the organiz
tion of the Junior Order of American Mechanics." Was headquarters of the Site and Relic Societ
early organization of the Germantown Historical Society.
18th century school room — CLASS IN SESSION — Performed by members of the
Germantown Theatre Guild under the direction of Mrs. Katharine Minehart.
18th century Paper Makers — in yard. Demonstration given by Roosevelt Middle School student
Burial ground — oldest known grave, Cornelius Tyson 1716.

9. UPSALA — 6430 Germantown Avenue
Built in 1798 by John Johnson, 3rd. During Battle of Germantown, cannons were placed on the groun
by Americans storming Cliveden on the opposite side of Germantown Avenue. Today it is considere
one of the finest examples of late Georgian architecture. Upsala Foundation was formed in 1943 b
interested people to raise funds to buy the house.
Clothesline Art Exhibit — presented by Margurite Marshall
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Swedish Consul and people dressed in native costume
Refreshments

10. CLIVEDEN AND BARN — 6401 Germantown Avenue
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Governor Penn. Occupied by the British, the house withstood the American attack during the Battle
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Trust for Historic Preservation since 1972.
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11. CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN OR DUNKARDS — 6613 Germantown Avenue
Built 1770. Mother Church of the Brethren.
Greet Councilman Joseph E. Coleman.
Black History Exhibit.

12. ST. MICHAEL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH AND BEGGARSTOWN SCHOOL HOUSE —
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German Consul.


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The Sesquicentennial Plus One of The Birth of Ebenezer Maxwell

8 January 1827 — 8 January 1978

By Mark F. Lloyd

Introduction

The following four perspectives on the life of Ebenezer Maxwell (1827-1870) were prepared under the auspices of the History Committee of the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion, Inc. They were presented at a gathering of interested members of the Maxwell Mansion on 8 January 1978. Any who may have a particular interest in the life of Ebenezer Maxwell or the research methods of the History Committee should contact the author or Mrs. Deborah C. Vaughan, Chairperson of the committee. It is hoped these perspectives will help to acquaint more people with the life and times of Ebenezer Maxwell and of Victorian Age Germantown in general.



EBENEZER MAXWELL MANSION

Aspects of his life:

Ebenezer Maxwell, the social man.

When Ebenezer Maxwell married Anna G. Smith in 1853 the newlyweds took up residence on North Eighth Street about a block below Girard in the old Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia. This was the neighborhood in which Anna had grown up and in which the Smith family had operated a lumber business for over fifty years. Inasmuch as he was a virtual stranger to the city (having only arrived in 1849 or 1850), Ebenezer's social circles must have been dominated by his wife's family and friends. But we may only conjecture on this point: no evidence has been unearthed which might allow us to identify his circle of friends during these years. In March, 1857, however, the Maxwells moved to present day 131 West Walnut Lane and there a definite social setting gradually emerged.

In Germantown the Maxwells' social life revolved around a group of prosperous businessmen and their families who made up the heart of the Second Presbyterian Church, corner of Greene and Tulpehocken Streets. Here were bankers, brokers, gas meter manufacturers, railroad executives, lumber merchants, publishers, dry goods merchants, and the like. These were Ebenezer's business associates and fellow suburbanites. There can be no doubt that their residence in the immediate neighborhood and their participation in the affairs of the Second Church were clear indicators of the size and bounds of Ebenezer's social circle. None of these families were what we would call "old Philadelphians" nor did any possess "old money," but almost all were a part of a rising social elite, set in motion by new wealth to be had from the industrial revolution. It is here in his social circle that we see most vividly Ebenezer's upper middle class status.

Two of Ebenezer's closest friends we know well. They were Joseph G. Mitchell and Charles E. Morgan, Sr. Mitchell was the President of the Mechanics' National Bank (now through merger part of PNB) and the moving force behind the founding of the Second Church. He was ten or twelve years older than Ebenezer and was his sponsor in many of Ebenezer's business ventures. In 1860 Mitchell named Ebenezer to the Board of Directors of the Mechanics' Bank, a position Ebenezer held until his death. Charles E. Morgan was a dry goods merchant and a very close business associate of Ebenezer's. He was a man who would leave quite a mark on Philadelphia. In the 1880's he was one of the founders of United Gas Improvement (UGI) and his son, Charles E. Morgan, Jr., was both Ebenezer's lawyer and the founder of the Morgan, Lewis, and Bockius law firm. Thus we see Ebenezer Maxwell as very much a part of an increasingly prosperous and powerful stratum of Philadelphia society. Though that stratum was not fully developed during Ebenezer's lifetime it was nevertheless a consciously elite social group even in the 1850's and 1860's.

Ebenezer Maxwell, the religious man.

Ebenezer Maxwell was born and raised a Presbyterian and we have no evidence that he ever belonged to any other church. This latter is quite noteworthy, because for most of his first decade in Philadelphia his personal and business ties were to Quakers. Ebenezer Maxwell was brought up by his parents in the Presbyterian church of his small home town of Charlton, New York. The Maxwells were Scotsmen with strong Presbyterian convictions. One of Ebenezer's uncles, Ebenezer King Maxwell (1783-1840), was a Presbyterian minister. Given the later developments of his life, we can be sure that Ebenezer brought a very real commitment to Presbyterianism to Philadelphia.

Ebenezer Maxwell first came to Philadelphia in 1849

or 1850. And through the first six or seven years of the following decade his activities must have repeatedly drawn him to the old Northern District Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends at Sixth and Noble Streets. We know that as early as 1850 Ebenezer was close friends with and perhaps a business partner of William P. Bangs. Bangs was married to Sarah Emlen of the well known family of Quaker Emlens and both the Emlens and the Bangses were members of the Northern District Meeting. In 1853 Ebenezer married Anna G. Smith. And the Smith family was one of the oldest and most respected families of the same Northern District Meeting. Anna's grandparents and several of her father's brothers and sisters were very active in the meeting and in the work of the Society of Friends in general. Thomas Smith, her uncle and partner in her father's lumber business, is an excellent example. He was a bachelor and devoted all his spare time to educational and charitable causes sponsored by the Friends. When he died, he left almost his entire estate to the Friends Boarding School at Westtown. Anna's father, Hugh Smith, however, apparently married out of meeting and was disowned by the Society. Thus the influence of the Quakers was considerably mitigated in Anna's immediate family. Her mother's religious convictions were probably Reformed Dutch, but this is not certain. In any case the combined families of Bangs, Emlen, and Smith no doubt exerted a great deal of influence in favor of a Quaker affiliation for Ebenezer and Anna as long as they lived in the Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia. But there is no evidence (despite extensive research) that Ebenezer or Anna ever attended the Northern District Meeting of Friends or any other religious institution before their move to Germantown in 1857.

Once in Germantown, Ebenezer's Presbyterian persuasion exerted its full force. Within a year after moving to West Walnut Lane he had helped found the Second Presbyterian Church in Germantown at the corner of Greene and Tulpehocken Streets. He was elected to the church's Board of Trustees and named Vice-President of the Board. He would serve on the Board of Trustees for the rest of his life. Both he and his wife joined the church as communicant members and their six children were all raised in the rented pew which was so typical of nineteenth century Presbyterianism. It was in the Second Presbyterian Church in Germantown then that Ebenezer gave full proof of his serious religious convictions. In his long term and consistent attendance, in his service as a church officer, in his generous contributions to the church coffers, in his training of his own children — in all of these ways we see a man who took his religious life very seriously, a man whose sense of duty to church was very properly Victorian.

Ebenezer Maxwell, the family man.

When Ebenezer Maxwell left his hometown of Charlton, near Albany, New York, in the late 1840's, he seems to have severed most ties to his own family. His sister, Margaret, had married a man named Isaac Gray and had come to live in Philadelphia and perhaps she was the reason for Ebenezer's move here. But when Isaac Gray died suddenly in January, 1854 Margaret took their infant daughter and returned to Albany. And other than Margaret there is no evidence that any of the Maxwell family either lived in or followed Ebenezer to Philadelphia. In coming to Philadelphia Ebenezer was very much on his own.

Ebenezer's marriage to Anna G. Smith in 1853 marked the beginning of his own family. Five children were born to this couple in the next seven years: Eleanor, Walter, Eliza, Edward, and Clarence. It then seems that Ebenezer and Anna decided that their family was large enough. Though Anna was only twenty-seven in 1860 the Maxwells stopped having children. Nine years later, however, a sixth child, William, was born. It was a rather clear case of an unplanned baby which came late in marriage. The resemblence to patterns in modern families is striking: planned family size, birth control, and an unexpected child born several years after his siblings. Thus in many ways the Maxwell family was very similar to contemporary family life.

On the other hand the limitations of nineteenth century medicine left the Maxwells very much unlike their twentieth century counterparts. Though improved medical practice had reduced the rate of infant and child mortality, three of the six Maxwell children did not reach the age of eighteen. Typhoid fever seems to have been a recurring problem and was lethal to at least two of the Maxwells including Ebenezer himself. The great danger of infectious disease molded the nineteenth century lifestyle in ways we can hardly imagine today.

Two of the three Maxwell children who survived to adulthood never married and thus the Maxwell clan carried on only through the second daughter, Eliza, who married William A. Garrigues of Plainfield, New Jersey.

There is some evidence that Ebenezer's mother-in-law, Ellen C. Smith, lived with the family in the early 1860's, but otherwise no family members other than those of the immediate family ever lived in the Tulpehocken Street house. This is marked contrast to the Hunter family which succeeded the Maxwells in the mansion.

Ebenezer Maxwell, the businessman.

The childhood and earliest adult life of Ebenezer Maxwell are almost entirely unknown to us. We know nothing of his schooling or professional training. From all appearances he arrived in Philadelphia as a young man in 1849 or 1850 with no business connections or ready capital; his only assets seem to have been his own ambition and engaging personality and his close friend, William P. Bangs, of Dover, New Hampshire. The 1850 U.S. Census returns reveal that Maxwell and Bangs were already associated in business in Philadelphia and that perhaps they had worked together in Massachusetts before coming to Philadelphia. How and when Ebenezer met this man and why they became business associates and later partners are questions for which we have no ready answers. Whatever the source and nature of the bond between the two it was a lifelong attachment.

Beginning in 1850 Ebenezer went to work as a salesman for Charles W. Churchman, a wealthy com-

mission merchant with offices at Front and Chestnut in the very heart of Philadelphia's old commercial section. Churchman was an erudite and socially prominent man. His circle of friends included the famous English banker of the day, George Peabody, and the statesman and scholar, Daniel Webster. By 1850 Churchman had already moved to a fine mansion in suburban Germantown. In many ways Charles W. Churchman served as the model for Ebenezer Maxwell's adult life.

Ebenezer worked for Churchman for three years. These years clearly served as his apprenticeship in the world of business. In the summer of 1853, probably in consequence of his marriage to Anna G. Smith, he was able to form an independent business with Bangs as his partner. That same summer when he was called upon to administer the estate of his wife's father, Ebenezer revealed that he was already a very competent accountant. "Bangs and Maxwell, Commission Merchants" as the firm was known, imported domestic products for distribution to wholesale jobbers. We have no record of the business' accounts during the 1850's, but records have remained from the 1860's when emergency taxes were levied by the Federal government to finance the Civil War. The records reveal a moderately large business which occasionally enjoyed windfall years and likewise occasionally suffered losing years. The personal incomes of both men followed the same pattern.

In most years of the 1860's Ebenezer Maxwell reported an income equivalent of $50,000 to $75,000 in present day terms, but in the two years immediately following the Civil War he reported no taxable income at all and in 1864 earned the equivalent of $250,000. In general his tax returns reveal a moderately well-to-do man who could readily afford the handsome lifestyle of Philadelphia's Victorian upper middle-class.

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Sarah Read Logan — Buffer Extraordinaire

By MARY L. P. KENNEDY

Mrs. John M. Kennedy, 3rd (Mary L. P.) was President of the National Society Colonial Dames of America in Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 1970-1974. This paper was read, October, 1976, at a national meeting (Biennial) in Washington, D.C.



Stenton

The problems attendant on researching the lives of 18th century ladies seem to prove that grace without allure, skills without schooling, and duty without aggressiveness lead only to obscurity. History records that at age of eighteen, Sarah Read, a daughter of Charles Reed, married James Logan on the ninth of the tenth month in 1714, the settlement of whose family was in Burlington, New Jersey. Since her father had died in 1705, and no mention is made of her mother in this connection, the laws of nature may permit us to assume that she did have a mother. Sarah is reputed to have been "a woman of character uncommonly excellent, beautiful in her person and possessed of all the virtues that endear and ennoble her sex." If schooling in the three R's was not considered a virtue in a female of the 18th century, then Sarah Read Logan's virtue was without a taint.

Sarah's husband James, who in his middle thirties was already a power in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, has had a desire for social recognition during his climb to success. This end, in combination with an appreciation of elegancies of life, inspired him to court in succession the daughters of two gentlemen whose gratifying position in the city would have lent luster to his own life. But despite his intellectual and economic attainments his suits were declined by the young ladies' august parents.

The immediate result was that at the age of thirty-eight, in the year 1710, obviously following a deal of soul-searching, he decided that he was "firmly resolved never to set up a gentleman" and to "sit down with ease and happiness instead of show and greatness." History does not record how his interest happened to light upon young Sarah Read who was fourteen years old in the year 1710. However, light it did and embraced a courtship of four years during which he wooed her in person and by letter. The following is a quotation from a paragraph in one of his many letters and typifies most of them to her:

"I therefore resign thee up to that Gracious God, thy tender and merciful Father, to whom thy innocent life and virtuous inclination have certainly rendered thee very dear, that He may dispose of thee according to His Divine Pleasure, and as it may best suit thy happiness, Humbly imploring at the same time and beseeching His Divine Goodness, that I may be made worthy to receive thee as a Holy Gift from His Hands, and then thou wilt truly prove a blessing, and we shall forever be happy in each other."

Considering the times and the custom in the Friends Meeting of calling upon the Deity for help in the progress of a man's wooing, there was nothing in these letters to bring a blush to a maiden's cheek while such a letter was read aloud to her untutored ears. Consequently they were married in 1714 in the Great Brick Meeting House on High Street amid the hearty congratulations of Logan's friends who avowed that he had made the most fortunate choice possible. He was happy indeed in the possession of an obedient wife who within the year began to establish a family which increased in numbers with rapidity.

Sarah had seven children, three of whom died young, leaving her with Sarah Logan, born in 1715; William Logan in 1718; Hannah Logan, 1720, and James Logan, Jr., 1728. The last four named lived to grow up. From careful perusals of letters and journals written by the masculine members of the family, one gathers that no thoughts and ideas of the feminine contingent of society were considered worthy of record. Nonetheless the journals, however inadvertently, depict Sarah Logan as a thread of peace and strength weaving through the lives of her family, holding them

together in a semblance of accord. There was the time when James, despairing of a scholarly bent in their son William, decided to keep him at home and tutor him himself, Sarah convinced him that school in England was the wiser course, pointing out that as William lacked capacity, so James was wanting in patience. So with William off to school in Bristol, Sarah managed to capture a little more serenity for Stenton.

Sarah's two daughters were instructed at home. James managed to instill in his daughter Sarah much more than the ability to read and write and do sums. In 1724 when Sally, as she was called, was nine years old, James boasts in a letter to Thomas Story, "Sally, besides her needle, has been learning french, and this last week has been very busie at the plantation in ye dairy in which she delights as well as in spinning but is at this moment at ye table with me (being First Day afternoon and her mother abroad) reading the 34th psalm in Hebrew, the letters of which she learned very perfectly in less than two hours time."

When young Sally Logan married and subsequently died at the age of twenty-four in childbed it did not take James long to relinquish all dreams of intellectual companionship from any of his children. He wrote to a friend confiding that all his offspring were unscholarly and took after their mother. He considered that while they had virtue and discretion, a mixture of his talents with their mother's, might be of more use to the children.

By 1724 Sarah was demanding a new kitchen in their Second Street house. James, despite his expectation of its costing at least one hundred pounds, readily complied with her wishes. Even gentle Sarah after ten years of marriage had learned that the way to a man's purse was through his stomach. More power to her when one considers that her husband was laying plans to build a handsome plantation house to be named Stenton on his five hundred acres in Germantown. At this time, with an increasing family, a wife who reflected credit on him with her modesty and devotion, and his acknowledged importance in the commonwealth, to say nothing of his increasing wealth, he evidently forgot his resolve "never to set up a gentleman" and "to be content with ease and happiness instead of show and greatness." This forgetfulness on his part would have caused a schism between him and the Society of Friends had it not been for Sarah. For with the disapproval of the Friends James' power would have lessened considerably. She felt called upon to soothe the Meeting on one hand and to influence James to modify his elaborate plans for the plantation house on the other. James was also indulging in worldly fashions in his dress which brought down the censure of the Friendly People. So poor Sarah had to cope with that, too. James' continuing success in all his endeavors, however, testifies to Sarah's high standing in the Quaker City and her influence on her husband.

In 1728, after Stenton was finished, Sarah completed the family circle by producing James Logan, Jr. She then concentrated even more on training her daughters in the skills of housewifery. Needless to say she was well equipped to be a notable mentor. An exquisite sampler of the finest Dresden Point graces the parlor today of one of her descendants, Mrs. Sarah Logan Starr Blain. Another charming sampler with the alphabet and the names and birth dates of her children hangs in the museum house, Loudoun, in Germantown, which once sheltered other descendants. The stitches are set to perfection, the composition of the work finely conceived, and the threads still richly glowing. A needlepoint purse in the muniment room at Stenton today, wrought by her daughter Hannah for her husband, John Smith, bears testimony to the excellence of Hannah's instructress.

Hannah, the younger daughter, married John Smith at the age of twenty-eight, which gave Sarah a number of years of visiting in attendance as chaperone and of frequent informal entertaining at Stenton. Since she and Hannah were in close rapport and of like disposition, most of their social intercourse was with family or family connections. Journals record large groups forming to attend meeting and returning to Stenton to lunch afterward. Hannah's swain mentions several intimate talks with Sarah about his hopes of marrying Hannah and his gratification at finding them so sympathetically received. But when push came to shove, there was always the irascible James to deal with. Sarah advised Smith to leave the matter of James in her hands.

Throughout Sarah's life with James she was perhaps in closer contact with the Indian tribes than she would otherwise have chosen. They would come in large groups to camp at Stenton at which time she frequently found herself placed in the position of commissary to the tribes. At night they were reported to pour into the house, and as many as would fit lined in sleep the wide and handsome staircase that is such a feature of Stenton's hall. She and her daughter, during these visits, worked behind closed doors as much as possible as the Indians were curious and would silently appear at the ladies' elbows at the most unlikely times.

When James with Governor Keith and four other councillors attended a large council of Indian Chiefs some distance away, Sarah, at the behest of James, accompanied the party. James was suffering from an acute attack of rheumatism and wanted Sarah along to soothe and nurse him as they jolted over the rough roads to Conestoga. Naturally, any potions she applied were of her concoction which she distilled in accordance with her own recipes. It was also with her recipes (or receipts as she would have termed them) that she nursed John Smith, who, while dining at Stenton, was stricken and brought to bed with ague and fever. Sarah nursed him tenderly for several days and finally wrought a cure.

It was during this interim and the period thereafter that Smith had reason to hold Sarah in the high regard that his journals and letters have indicated throughout his association with her. For James, crotchety in disposition by nature, stricken by the death of his most promising child, handicapped by the pain of a broken and badly mended hip and frustrated by increasing ill health, made life unpleasant for those surrounding him. There is no record of the methods Sarah used to attain success in finally extracting a letter from James giving his consent to Hannah's marriage to John Smith. Sarah carried the letter to Monthly Meeting to present it there while she, herself, gave verbal consent at the same time.

Two years later, in 1750, James suffered a stroke. On

May 14, 1750, Sarah's nephew James Pemberton wrote to his brother in England: "Our friends and relations in general are well. Uncle Logan grows more and more fretful and tedious to all about him."

And on May 15, 1750, John Smith wrote to Dr. Joseph Gamble: "I have repeated opportunities of observing the unhappiness that attends life without health. Poor Father Logan's health hath been several months so helpless that he cannot go to bed, rise, dress himself nor move without assistance, and so deprived of his speech that he cannot express a sentence though he can at times say some words pretty plain — Reading, which used to be his principle [sic] diversion, seems now disagreeable to him, seldom keeping a book in his hand many minutes at a time."

The following excerpt from a letter of James Pemberton to his brother John, written on May 28, 1750, albeit restrained in wording, plainly shows the cross that Sarah had to bear: "Cousin William Logan and wife are both very unwell. Billy's complaint is something of a pleuritic pain etc but he seems rather better this morning: Aunt stayed with him all night which is the first she has left Uncle: He seems rather heartier and stronger than he was, but not at all more able to express anything and often very urgent to do it and so impatient with those about him as to render the attending on him a very difficult task. Cousin Jamey should often reflect whether he is spending his time more profitable than he might have done here, in discharging a son's duty in attending on his aged, helpless parent."

When James finally died in 1751 all of Sarah's well-wishers in which the city abounded, hoped that at last she would have time for herself and friends and could live out her life in peace and enjoyment. William moved into Stenton and immediately undertook what he must have considered improvements to the plantation house. These could well have been the inspiration for his mother to build a house for herself on the land in Germantown which she came into at James' death. During this time of building, Sarah was "confined by a hert (hurt) received a few days since in the street." William wrote to John Pemberton in London, "My dear mother has undergone much pain this winter by either dislocating or breaking some small bones of her arm near her wrist joint, but is better and likely to do well."

Unfortunately, for the next year or two Sarah did not do well and in the May of 1754 died at the age of fifty-eight. Again, thanks to her devoted son-in-law John Smith we have the following record in a letter to Samuel Smith: "I write to acquaint thee that Dear Mother Logan departed this life a little before three o'clock this afternoon — if any friends incline to attend the funeral from Burlington, you will be here in time by three o'clock." After naming those whose attendance is especially desired he then adds: "My heart is very much afflicted by the loss we have met with, so that thou wilt excuse my saying no more."

John Smith, at least, among her family, was truly cognizant and wholly appreciative of Sarah's capacity in smoothing the path between her husband James and all who had to tread that path to deal with him. Comforting indeed it is to know that John Smith deeply loved and admired her for it. Without his recognition of her strong yet gentle spirit the purport of her soothing influence would have gone unrecorded.

The above glimpses of Sarah Read Logan require my thanks to those of her descendants who have put their libraries at my disposal. Namely, Mrs. Drayton Smith for her volume of Love Letters of John Smith, and Mr. Henry Cadwalader whose fascinating library yielded bits and pieces from letters of James Logan. But most of all I am indebted to Miss Sarah A. G. Smith whose scholarship has made this history possible by sharing her findings with me.

Memories of James Logan
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