

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, July 30, 2012

**A Brief History of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers):** I used to consider myself an active member of the Society of Friends. Ruth and I were married in a Quaker ceremony in the Hockessin Friends Meeting House, with about 150 friends and relatives packed inside. There was never a connection between Quakers and Shakers, or between Quakers and the Amish, although 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Quaker women wore bonnets, and men wore plain black suits with hats not unlike the Amish. The tradition came from the original opposition to frivolity and lavish dress as exemplified by society in 17<sup>th</sup>-century England. George Fox, considered the founder of Quakerism in the early 1650s, and William Penn, its most famous early supporter who persuaded King Charles II to give him a large land grant in America, both spent time in English jails because of their opposition to the Church of England and its authority. Both traveled far and wide, in and outside England, not easy in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and their message of religious freedom was popular, especially among the middle and lower classes. Penn's first visit to his new colony along the Delaware was in 1682, a few years after the first British Quakers had settled in West Jersey (Burlington, Camden, etc.).

Although Penn invited all people seeking religious freedom to settle in Pennsylvania, British Quakers outnumbered all others, especially near his new capital at Philadelphia. Since farming was their primary livelihood, they spread out to the surrounding countryside, and new Quaker Meetings sprang up in many rural places. John Marshall, whose family had been converted to Quakerism in Derbyshire 25 years earlier, arrived at the mouth of Darby Creek in 1683 and was married in the Darby Quaker Meeting House in 1688. One of his sons named Thomas (1694–1740) moved west and established himself as one of the leading citizens of Concordville. Thomas's youngest son John moved on west in 1759 and bought land in Kennett Township, Chester County, where the two branches of Red Clay Creek converge. To members of his family, he was called "John of Kennett." A public road from his farm to Hockessin Friends Meeting House, built in 1738 and just over two miles away, meant that his branch of Marshalls belonged to Hockessin Meeting for several generations.

Although Quakers were known to live the "simple life," they were fiscally conservative, and some amassed large fortunes, both in England and in this country. Until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the three largest chocolate companies in England were owned by Quakers. Philadelphia Quakers were known for their elaborate resort hotels, such as the Inn at Buck Hill Falls, Pocono Manor Inn, and Skytop Lodge, all in the Poconos, the Marlborough-Blenheim, the Chalfonte-Haddon Hall, and the Hotel Dennis in Atlantic City, and Galen Hall near Wernersville west of Reading, Pennsylvania. The Smiley family, Quakers from Providence, Rhode Island, and Poughkeepsie, New York, opened the Lake Mohonk Mountain House (in the Catskills) in 1870 and are still operating it today.

Quakers were prominent in early education. About 1790, the first school in the Hockessin area was established next to the Quaker Meeting House, and the second Friends School there was an octagonal schoolhouse that functioned until the Hockessin Public School opened in 1869. In Wilmington, the Quaker Meeting there established a Friends School in 1748, which continues to operate as a day school with about 600 students. Westtown School in Chester County, still going strong, was the first co-ed boarding school in the country when it opened in 1799.