

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, November 19, 2012

**Socially Acceptable:** Each generation of Americans has held certain things acceptable and others frowned upon. Supposedly less noticeable in America than in other countries, status or class nonetheless played a role in what was or was not acceptable. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, I grew up in middle-upper-class society, sometimes influenced by Quaker traditions, which were often in conflict with one another.

In my parents' generation, the success or failure of the male head of the family determined the "class" in which the family operated. The four male Marshalls—Warren, Albert, Henry and Clarence—of whom my father was one, inherited a growing and very profitable business, if properly managed. None of them were college graduates, and all went into the family business after high school. They got along with one another famously for about 15 years after the decease of Israel Marshall, father or uncle to each of them. They were expected to take on the management role, and this they did, complete with its way of life. Each had a comfortable home with one or more servants and a wife and children that fit into the picture. The men smoked good cigars, even at home, and the women did not smoke at all. Mostly, they attended Quaker Meeting regularly, either at Hockessin or at Kennett. Three of the four owned vacation homes and managed time there when their families were in residence. Each owned two or more fine American automobiles. Old-time Quakers may have thought this lifestyle too extravagant, but it was condoned.

The four wives—Bertha, Abbie (not Abigail), Lucy, and Esther (my mother)—each belonged to the Kennett New Century Club and to several other women's clubs as well. They were supportive of their husbands' whims and capable of running their households and raising the children. Two drove a car (one of whom enjoyed it); the other two did not. They were more fortunate than a typical housewife of those days, however, as there would be someone in the family's employ who could chauffeur when needed. Women always wore hats when they went out, the styles becoming more ridiculous with the years.

In 1926, three of the four, including my father, resigned from the National Vulcanized Fibre Company, and each of the three pursued his separate interests. Sociability within the families remained close, however, and visitations and reciprocal meal invitations were frequent. Into this environment I was born, and although it would be unacceptable today, there were many human prejudices we never thought about. Yorklyn was a friendly place, and women would wave and men would throw up their hand when passing in a car or on foot, regardless of whether the greeters knew each other.