

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, January 26, 2009

Our Area Settled by Quakers: William Penn invited Quakers (and all others) to come to the Western Hemisphere and settle in Pennsylvania shortly after his first visit in 1682–83. Many did, mostly from England, and Friends Meetings (Quakers) sprung up around Penn's new City of Brotherly Love. My direct ancestor, John Marshall, came from Elton in Derbyshire (England) in 1687 and was married in Darby Meeting, on the southwest edge of present-day Philadelphia, in 1688. As word spread of the vast inviting lands to the west, Quaker Meetinghouses were built in places like Chester, Haverford, and Concordville. The first Thomas Marshall in this country, a son of the John mentioned above, moved to Concordville and died there in 1740. He was my great-great-great-great-grandfather.

Soon Quaker families moved farther west and south, and the central organization, based in Philadelphia, authorized congregations (called Monthly Meetings) and groups of Monthly Meetings (called Quarterly Meetings) to be established where a number of Quakers had settled. In addition to having churches called meetinghouses and religious services held weekly or semi-weekly, Monthly Meetings had individual members and held business meetings monthly, while Quarterly Meetings held business meetings quarterly to which individual meetings sent delegates. In the general area near the Pennsylvania-Delaware border (Delaware was then a part of Pennsylvania known as the "3 Lower Counties on the Delaware"), such Meetings were Newark (north of Wilmington and east of the Brandywine) circa 1710, Kennett (now called "Old Kennett") 1710, Center circa 1712, London Grove 1714, New Garden 1715, Hockessin 1730, and Wilmington 1738. All except Wilmington were in Western Quarter, which for many years has numbered about 10 Monthly Meetings.

Quaker Meetings usually had connecting burial grounds, and many established Friends Schools for community children long before public schools came into being. Wilmington Friends School was established in 1748, a frame schoolhouse was built across the road from Hockessin Meetinghouse in 1790, and Westtown Boarding School dates from 1799. The tiny Hockessin Friends School functioned in two successive buildings until both Hockessin and Auburn (Yorklyn) got their first public schools in 1869. Wilmington Friends was built across West Street from the Meetinghouse near 4th Street and functioned there until 1937, when the school moved to Alapocas on the edge of the city. I attended at the old school for seven years and at the new for four years until graduation in 1941.

John Garrett was the first white settler of the community now known as Yorklyn when he arrived about 1726 and along with his Quaker neighbors built a grist mill in 1730 just behind Auburn Heights. One of these neighbors, William Cox, gave the land from his farm for Hockessin Meetinghouse, built in 1738. After Garrett's first wife, a Quaker, died, he married a devoted Baptist, with the nearest church of her faith being at Chadds Ford, 10 miles away. None of that branch of Garretts, later famous for their Snuff empire, followed the Quaker persuasion thereafter.

The Mitchells of Woodside Farm attended Hockessin Meeting starting about 1796, and the Marshalls of Marshalls' Bridge attended the same Meeting starting about 1759. Israel W. Marshall married Elizabeth C. Mitchell in 1877, and they became my paternal grandparents. Their children, Warren, Anna (Mancill) and Clarence were active members of the Meeting throughout their lifetimes. Since Ruth's father and my mother were not members of the Meeting (they both joined in later life), neither she nor I were birthright members, but we joined at early ages and were married in the Meetinghouse in 1985.