THE BULLETIN
of
RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Volume IV  FALL 1981  No. 1

INCORPORATED APRIL 30, 1948

Headquarters and Museum

THE FINLEY HOUSE
113 WEST BEECH TREE LANE
WAYNE, PENNSYLVANIA 19087

Visitors Cordially Welcome. Telephone MURray 8-2668.

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THE PRESIDENT’S REPORT - 1981

The years go by so quickly that it always comes as a surprise when a long time member of our Board of Directors resigns. This spring it is with the deepest regret that we have accepted the resignation of Miss Caroline Robbins. She became a Director in 1949, immediately following the incorporation of the Society. Over the years she has served as Secretary-Treasurer, acting President, and President. As a Professor of History, and an internationally known historian, Miss Robbins contributed her skill, even at our local level, as well as her time, with much generosity and thoughtfulness. Her interest and support are still firmly with us, but she will be greatly missed at our monthly Board meetings.

The Finley House continues to be open to the public on Tuesday afternoons from 2 until 4 o’clock and at other times, for matters of research, by appointment. It has been gratifying to note the increase of visitors. Quite a few are new residents of Wayne or other parts of Radnor Township who are interested in finding information about their houses. We have photographs of many old houses in the township; also maps of numbered lots in Wayne which show its early development by Drexel and Childs. (Did you know that Wayne was one of the first “planned” communities?) In one of our rooms there is a large drawing (almost like the modern aerial photograph) of Wayne streets and houses, done at a somewhat later stage of development. It includes the steam plant, which provided the community with heat, easily recognized by the plume of smoke rising from its stack. It is always delightful when some children study this picture and discovers his own house looking, very often, almost the same as it did in those more peaceful times. We welcome all visitors and do our best to answer their requests.

As usual, my thanks to our faithful membership. If you know of people who might be interested in joining the Radnor Historical Society, do suggest that they pay us a visit. I am sure they will leave, happily, with a membership application in hand.

Sincerely,
Dorothy Therzman

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY

The Annual Meeting of the Society was held on May 18, 1980, at the house of Mr. and Mrs. George M. Aman III. A substantial part of the building was erected between 1762 and 1783. Faithfully and carefully renovated and restored, it is the subject of an article by Katharine Hewitt Cummin which appears elsewhere in this issue. At the Meeting, Marilyn Caltabiano, Mrs. Robert I. Cummin, John L. Dale, John H. Grant, Dr. Emanuel Schwartz and Mrs. John W. Watson were elected as Secretaries until 1983.

On October 26, 1980, Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Wilson were gracious hosts to the Society at The Brick House. Mr. Wilson presented the first fascinating chapter of “If Only These Old Things Could Talk.”

“The Creative Venture” was held at the Finley House on December 7, 1980. Members were invited to submit original works of art and crafts for exhibition at that time. The collection and arrangement of the paintings, carvings, photographs and needlework were ably supervised by two of the board members, Mrs. John Stuart McNeil and Herbert S. Henderson.

To celebrate the tercentenary of the granting of the Charter to William Penn by Charles II on March 4, 1681, the Society enjoyed an informal talk and discussion led by Miss Caroline Robbins on March 4, 1981, at the Finley House. The text of her talk and a synopsis of the discussion appear on the next page of the Bulletin.

WILLIAM PENN, MYTH AND MAN, 1644-1718

Ramsay MacDonald, writer and statesman, wrote of William Penn: “As a stout champion of the right of independent thought and speech, as the apostle of true religion, of justice, gentleness, sobriety, simplicity, and ‘sweet reasonableness’ in an age of corrupt splendour, morose piety, and general intolerance, Penn would be secure of a place among the immortals, even though no flourishing state of the American Union revered him as its founder.” Yet Penn’s activities and achievements variously affected his reputation. The only man whose name was borne by one of the colonies, and that a very successful enterprise, he found himself in later life troubled by severe financial difficulties, at odds with the settlers over proprietary powers and wishes, and disposed at length to sell the province, on terms favorable to religious liberty, to the British government. An enigmatic character, though early reposing admiration for his sufferings for his faith, he long suffered neglect even in the New World. Until this March, tercentenary of the Charter bestowed by Charles II in 1681, no scholarly edition of his papers appeared. The volume just published under the editorship of Mary and Richard Dunn by the University of Pennsylvania Press, first of the four projected, begins to remedy this omission.

Penn was carefully educated: in Essex; in Ireland where his father the Admiral moved after quarrelling with Oliver Cromwell; at Oxford following the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 and until sent down for non-observance of the rules of the re-established Church of England; in France; and, briefly, before the Great Plague of 1665 shut its doors, at Lincoln’s Inn. A visionary boy of religious experience, he first heard a Quaker at Macroom. Again in Ireland, when he was looking after the family’s Irish estates, the same Quaker, Thomas Lee, convinced him, and he was soon, as a Friend, imprisoned for attending meeting. Back in London late in that year, 1667, he quickly became a vigorous advocate of his new beliefs, preaching, writing, and controverting critics, besides defending himself and fellow sufferers in the courts. In one famous trial his sturdy defence helped to strengthen the independence of the jury vis-a-vis the judge. He also supported candidates for Parliament in 1679 likely to urge amelioration of the cruel laws against religious dissenters, and developed a keen interest in plans for colonial refuges for members of his Society. One of three trustees for a settlement in West New Jersey, 1675-1681, he was to invest in holdings both there and in East New Jersey as these became feasible. In 1680 he petitioned Charles for the land named by the King Pennsylvania, successfully obtaining his request not too many months later. Both Charles and his brother and successor James liked the Penns, were said to have owed them money, and may, it has been suggested, have been anxious to speed out of England yet more nonconformists.

Penn’s first visit to the new province, 1682-1684, lasted less than two years, but even so the colonists moved to amend both the Frame of Government and the Laws he had drafted for their guidance. The second visit, 1699-1701, was also short and revealed serious opposition to his claims and ideas. The Charter he felt obliged to sign on the eve of departure, reversed many earlier proposals, though certain proprietary rights remained until 1778 to annoy the Pennsylvanians and make the Penn name unpopular. Serious attention to the Founder was long in being given although some foreigners and the Friends studied his work. The brevity of American experience does something to explain difficulties, but Penn, though somewhat successful with Stuart Kings, English aristocrats, and congregations at home and on the continent, lacked a statesman’s flexibility as administrator.
Between American visits and after the accession of James II in 1685, Penn was powerful enough to render much assistance to Quakers, but, by the court favor enjoyed, laid himself open to suspicion of being, like the King, a Catholic. With the flight of James in December 1688, Penn suffered constant harassment and a two-year suspension of authority in Pennsylvania. Retirement to escape his persecutors led to some disfavor with the Society of Friends who believed in facing accusation; appeals to the settlers brought little response. Personal bereavement came with the death of Gulielma, the wife married in 1672, and of their son Springett two years later, in 1696. But after the return of his proprietary powers he made a fortunate second marriage to Hannah Callowhill and was to owe much to her and her relations during the embarrassing disputes with the Fords after his return in 1701. Chronically short of money in spite of inherited wealth in his own and Gulielma's families, he left everything to the care of Philip Ford, an unscrupulous steward, and signed, without reading, documents that eventually brought him in 1708 to nine months in a debtor's prison. Generous friends and Queen Anne's dislike of the Fords' pretensions brought about a more modest settlement of their claims, and release from jail. But activity was soon slowed by illness bringing an incapacity to implement the desired sale of Pennsylvania.

Penn could be persuasive, was a sincere Quaker and a gifted defender of the rights of Englishmen to be ruled by laws to which they had consented, to trial by jury and to liberty of conscience. He was tireless in explanation of objections to oaths, to doffing the hat and to setting up a paid ministry. In argument in seventeenth century fashion he could be very sharp with such opponents as Richard Baxter, Jeremy Ives and others both in public, sometimes daylong debates, and in pamphlet warfare referring to "imperious behaviour," or foolish "prating," or "arrogance," and the "evasions and perversions" of adversaries. This brusqueness probably served him ill with both English and colonial politicians. MacDonald, after the encomium already quoted, though acknowledging some philosophic breadth in his expositions of Quaker thought, also stressed ineptness in public affairs with all save those few, rather unexpected, friends at court.

He had warm friends in the Society and others who thought well enough of him to help in his later troubles. Indeed he must have seemed often enough a conventional Englishman firmly convinced of a structured society and deferential behaviour within it. Assurance of his own position and rectitude blinded him to the desire of settlers for more freedom in running their affairs. Yet the Pennsylvania he founded anticipated many later ideas current about the America for example of the nineteenth century—an asylum for the oppressed, a melting pot of varied peoples, where all could live and worship as they pleased protected by the rule of law.

In the ensuing discussion last March 4, questions were varied and not all were answerable. Would Penn, if alive today, approve what has come to pass in his province? Would he seem a desirable dinner guest being something of a compulsive talker without a notable sense of humor? Others speculated about the desirability of returning to some of his concepts, that of the "green city" for example. Jack Grant asked why Penn spent so little time in Pennsylvania to which the answer, in part, was that his chaotic finances impeded action, and in part, that the crises arising both in 1684 and in 1701 seriously concerned the colony. Lord Baltimore was using every effort to regain for Maryland land he thought rightfully granted him and which Penn felt essential to the well being of the Philadelphia he planned. Penn won. Again, after 1701 the British government which had seriously considered abolishing proprietary colonies and was absorbing New Jersey into crown hands seemed to threaten Penn's proprietary rights. Much
effort was expended and Penn felt that his personal presence would be more effective than those many letters he sent influential friends. Again he won, at least, so far as Britain was concerned, as interest in consolidating the colonies waned. The question of Penn family claims was answered by Jim Dallett. In the revolutionary years Pennsylvania paid $850,000 to the four male representatives and the British government appropriated an annuity of 40,000 Pounds, eventually discontinued after the male line had failed. Others, of course, suffered without compensation although a few holdings personally held by the female line remained into this century.

CAROLINE RUBBINS

RADNOR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Annual Treasurer's Report
May 1, 1980 to May 13, 1981

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From:

Savings Account 2,300.00
Advertising 170.00
Balance May 1, 1980 862.25

$10,821.92

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| Balance Checking Account - May 13, 1981 1,068.76

$10,821.92

Membership is open to all persons interested in the Society. Minimum dues are $3.00 per year, which are tax deductible.

JOHN H. GRANT,
Treasurer

Contributing Membership $10.00
Sustaining Membership $25.00
Student Membership $1.00

All contributions are deductible (to the legal limit) for United States Income Tax purposes.

THE MATLACK HOUSE

The Matlack House stands near the juncture of Newtown, Easttown and Radnor Townships, and thus near the line dividing Chester from Delaware County. Behind the house rises a steep, almost conical hill, called "Pikeland" when the Darby-Paoli road was laid out in 1710. Although Radnor's original lots long lay as oblongs, the piece containing the Matlack House assumed, in less than a century, the shape of an elongated hexagon conforming to natural features of the terrain. Bound in part by streams and later by roads, it surrounded the conical hill and included a part of Little Darby Creek.

William Davis established a gristmill by 1706 below the property where the smaller stream met Darby Creek. This first mill in Radnor led to the development of Darby-Paoli road when the inhabitants of Easttown, Whiteland, and Newtown petitioned for public access to it. Davis is credited with founding St. David's Church nearby. It generated Church road which, until this century, ran straight to it, and was responsible also for the first local liquor license and the first local school.

The major portion of the forty-six acre hexagon changed hands four times, at least on paper, before 1696. Then John Longworthy, ship's carpenter, bought one hundred acres of which this was a part. In 1762, after five more transactions, most of them unrecorded, Nathan Matlack became the owner.

Matlack, a blacksmith, of East Bradford had bought nearly one hundred and fifty acres adjoining the hexagon two years earlier. This property was occupied downstream in 1696 by David...
THE "MATLACK HOUSE" which was the meeting place of the Society on May 18, 1980.

Evans, the third owner, and called by him Bryn Odyn, Darby-Paoli Road, when laid-out, ran by Evans’ house, between his orchard and his meadow. Evans’ wife was Mary Jones, daughter of Radnor’s largest landholder.

David and Mary inherited from her father an extensive property known as Pinifinon, a part of which was later owned by their son David who built the Plough Tavern near the Friends Meeting House.

The first David Evans died in 1710. His oldest son Caleb, who inherited the land along Darby Creek, was cited by the Friends Meeting for “the weakness which he has been so much addicted to” (presumably drink). He sued his brother David for debt, forcing a Sheriff’s sale of the inn property in 1742. He had acquired and sold another part of Pinifinon to Thomas Dennis in 1735, but issued no deed for it.

Caleb did have redeeming features, however. In 1732 he entered Benjamin Franklin’s store where, for 9s, he bought a copy of Robert Barclay’s Apology for the People Called Quakers. He also bought two copies of Aristotle at 4s 6d each. Two months later he returned for a third copy. He died in 1746 leaving his real estate to his sons Caleb Jr. and David jointly. They broke the entail on the Creek property and Caleb Jr. tried to renege on the father’s Pinifinon sale to Thomas Dennis.

The Evans brothers sued and were sued more than once. These suits, in the County Court, were instituted by individuals as owners, as tenants, as mortgagors or mortgagees, or as holders of notes unpaid. Names such as Thomas Loveacre, Thomas Troublesome, and Timothy Peaceable, used on the legal forms, speak of fictitious titles in English Common Law. No such names appear in the Chester County deed book indices, and no reference to these names has been found elsewhere.

In the end, the Evans properties were all sold as the result of these suits. Both the Creekland and the remainder of Pinifinon were lost in the aftermath of the disrupting depression caused by the French and Indian War.

William Lewis, who bought the Darby Creekland at the Sheriff’s sale, sold his one hundred forty acres to Nathan Matlack in 1780 for $80 pounds. After 1762 Matlack owned almost one hundred eighty contiguous acres, less than half in woodland. He lived on the former Evans property in the house still standing near the joining of the Darby-Paoli and Newtown roads. He was a Quaker.

In 1782 Nathan’s son, Simeon, married Elizabeth Yarnall, also a birthright Friend. He established a tannery on the hexagonal property and moved to the house in which the Society met. One can surmise that it was built for him at that time. It did not exist in 1782, but did in 1785. Between 1788 and 1796, in three transactions, Simeon bought all his father’s land. He then conveyed the forty-six acre lot to his father.

When Nathan Matlack died in the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1798, he left the hexagon to his son George who, after eight years, sold it to his brother Simeon and moved to Marple.

Simeon again owned all his father’s former land. He also bought the lot which now contains the Wayne Elementary School. These properties were valuable since farmland along the streams long bore the highest per acre assessments in the township. Not until 1823 was land along the Philadelphia and Lancaster Turnpike consistently rated higher. Simeon’s houses, one described in 1798 as 20 x 27 feet in size, two stories high, made of stone, with six windows and a stone kitchen 18 by 19 feet in size (both on the hexagonal piece), and the other house as 20 x 28 feet, two stories high, made of stone, with seven windows and two story stone kitchen 18 by 23 feet (on the former Evans land) were assessed that year at $500 and $525 respectively, well above the township median of $150-175.

Upon Simeon’s death in 1813, his executors sold his outlying lands. Until her death in 1835, his widow occupied seventy acres of the Matlack land and the house where the Society met. Their son Eli held this property until after 1860.
Of Simeon's twelve children, at least five attended the Westtown School; at least six were married in the Radnor Friends Meeting. Current demographers have claimed that Quakers, because they were Quakers, raised fewer children than members of other religious groups. But in Radnor, it was the Welsh, regardless of religion, who raised fewest children.

Large pieces of both of Nathan Matlack's properties came into the hands of Robert Paiste who had married Simeon's granddaughter, Mary Leedom. He called his part of the hexagon Shady Retreat and his portion of the (once) Evans land Pleasant Hill. There he erected a fine barn (standing), bearing a datestone R.M.P. 1858.

By this time, downstream, Levi Lewis (he had married a granddaughter of David Evans) and Samuel Caley had erected saw mills near the venerable gristmill which Lewis ran. Here, in this commercial center of Radnor, stood over twenty buildings, houses, tenements, sheds, carthouses, carriage houses, springhouses, barns, a wheelwright shop and two large mansions of the 1840's.

In 1800, David Cramley, having sold the Spread Eagle Tavern in Wayne to that community's developers, Drexel and Childs, moved to Shady Retreat and, later in the century, Herman Wendell, one of Wayne's successful builders, bought Pleasant Hill. The nearest post office, in Newtown Township, held the name St. Davids until after 1900 when, romantically, residents decided they preferred the name Wyola. The developers of East Wayne happily took St. Davids, suddenly available, as the name for the railroad station and post office which still bear it.

As the century turned, the Darby Creek area entered a new age. William T. Wright bought the hexagon, building a mansion called Ravenscliff on the hill once called Pikeland. The ducks and geese drawn to the ponds in the meadow by their generous feeding became a public attraction. The superintendent of his estate moved into the old Matlack house. Craig Biddle bought the Wendell (once Evans) land, erecting in 1900 a house called Laurento, said to have been designed by Peabody and Stearns and to have cost $275,000. Archibald Barklie succeeded him and called the place Inver House. It still bears the name. A latter owner, Simon Newman, gave it to a brand of whiskey.

Biddle sold forty-seven acres across the stream to John Sinnott who built a large house designed by Charles Barton Keen and called Rose Garland. Clement Griscom owned it later, and later still, Alfred C. Zantzinger who called it Maralbrook. On a hill to the north Daniel Moreau Barringer erected Poplar House. Downstream, the descendants of Thomas Thomas, who owned the old gristmill property for almost two centuries, finally sold it to Robert Leaming Montgomery. There he built his country seat, Ardrossan.

Until 1966 all these properties, Ravenscliff, Inver House, Maralbrook, Poplar House and Ardrossan remained in private hands. In 1966, as its first Open Space park, Radnor Township bought one hundred acres of the former mill property. Once the busiest land in Radnor, it had become the most rural. The township accepted the gift of some thirty acres of adjoining floodplain land downstream and, in 1973, bought Maralbrook which it renamed The Willows. The township now owns much of the land along the course of Darby Creek in Radnor, and is thus the immediate neighbor of the Matlack House.

Inver House and Ravenscliff, once Matlack properties, were eyed by developers after their owners died, as the escalating value of real estate and the capacity of inheritance tax collectors prevents heirs from holding their forebears' property. On the Inver House land, still undeveloped, stands yet one of the Matlack eighteenth century houses. On Ravenscliff land, now subdivided and flanking new (and attractive) construction, stands yet the other Matlack House in which the Society met.

Katharine Hewitt Commin
THE BELLEVUE HOTEL

In 1885 Mary Berrell Field (1824-1907) bought the Bellevue Hotel in Wayne from George W. Childs. Erected in 1881 to benefit from summer visitors from Philadelphia, the hotel was enlarged under her ownership. With her, when she moved from city to country, came her mother, Hannah Ashmead Pennick Berrell (1802-1897), her daughter and son-in-law Adelaide Pennick Field Arms and George Wells Arms (of Lippincott & Co.) as well as their two small children, Mary Field Arms (born in 1877) and George (born in 1881). In 1952 Mary Field Arms, then widow of Horace Jones Davis, wrote a family memoir for her descendants. This information is available through the kindness of her daughter, Miss Robert Arnold of Wallingford, Pennsylvania. Both Mrs. Davis and her brother shared their recollections with Emma C. Pat­
terson who devoted her weekly articles in the Suburban and Wayne Times from Oct. 12 through Nov. 23, 1951, to the subject of the Bellevue.

Four stories in height, made of wood painted gray and green (some advertisements called it brick), the hotel stood on the site of the current long-lines telephone building on Bellevue ave. Balconies decorated the second and third stories, each bedroom boasting a door to its own private porch. Set back from the Lancaster Turnpike, the hotel was approached by a circular drive which passed the honeysuckle covered summer house and passed the pool room, a small stone structure with domed roof, stained-glass windows and commodious porch. Tennis courts and croquet grounds adjoined the main building, while a shaded walk lined with flowering shrubs led to the Wayne railroad station. Behind the Bellevue the laundry building doubled as a servants' cottage.

Besides the cottage stood the ice house, filled each winter with ice cut at Martin's Dam and untouched until summer when city dwellers closed their town houses, covering furniture with linen cloths, placing silver in the bank, and scattering mothballs generously over the rugs before entraining for Wayne with their children, their maids, and miscellaneous paraphernalia.

From the hotel entrance a wide hall ran back to the well-lighted dining room. To the left lay a small library, to the right, the welcoming parlor with three doors to the wide porch, many mirrors, several sofas, and a grand piano. A side hall led to two card rooms, one for gentlemen, one for ladies. Behind the dining room stretched the huge kitchen, the bakery, and the “ordinary,” a dining room for nurses and children, unwelcome in the main dining area.

No bedroom commanded a private bath, but the management placed a washstand, bowl, and pitcher in each room. A guest, wanting to bathe, called the chambermaid, gave her twenty-five cents or a green ticket bought in the office. She then unlocked one of the several bathrooms, pre­pared the bath, and later straightened up the place. The baths overlooked the tennis courts.

Mrs. Davis wrote of Katie, a beautiful and vivacious girl who, while bathing, watched a tennis game. In a most alluring voice she called “Hello, hello, hello.” The men ceased playing and they cried: “Where are you?” The voice replied, “Green ticket.” As one, the ladies on the lawn closed their parasols in disgust and strode away. “Could anything be more vulgar than calling from a bathroom?” quoted Mrs. Davis.

Electric Light Reception

The Citizens' Association of Wayne request the pleasure of

Mr. and ladies

at their First Annual Ball, to be given at the Hotel Bellevue on Tuesday Evening, June 15, 1886

Dancing at ten

Cards of admission—three dollars

AN INVITATION TO A TYPICAL SOCIAL EVENT HELD AT THE BELLEVUE.

From the collections of the Society.

TICKET FOR THE JULY 4 BALL AT THE BELLEVUE.

The men rode to town by the 8:40 Paoli Express, leaving their families to enjoy Wayne. Some guests brought their own horses, carriages, and coachmen. “The afternoon drive was almost a ritual for the women,” wrote Mrs. Davis. The type of carriage dictated the ladies' headgear. The most elegant women brought bonnets from last year to wear on morning drives in the Germantown carriage, and better ones for afternoon outings in the Victoria. They also needed lace parasols and Sunday bonnets. One young woman, aged seventeen, with a horse and dogcart and a footman in the rear seat, wore out twelve pairs of long white kid gloves while driving during the summer “which her mother thought quite extravagant.”
Sunday hymn-singing, Wednesday concerts, Saturday night hops (the music stopped at 11:30 that visitors might catch the 11:50 train to town), euchre parties, an annual Masquerade, and a Fouth of July celebration enlivened the time. There was even a guest-waiter baseball game and, as for whist, so seriously was it taken that no conversation was allowed during a game. Almost all guests napped after lunch and spent some of their summer time rocking and gossiping on the capacious porch.

When the guest list diminished in the autumn, Mrs. Field closed off part of the hotel. One year Frances Hodgson Burnett, her sons Lionel and Vivian (the latter the prototype of Little Lord Fauntleroy), her private secretary, nurse, and maid occupied eight rooms on the second floor. Lionel's tubercular turn prevented their return to England. Mrs. Burnett took advantage of Wayne's well-publicized "salubrious air."

Permanent residents include not only Mrs. Field's extended family but also Sarah, a former slave, who had complete charge of the pantry. "She was indomitable. She would say 'I stands for Mrs. Field. She takes no excuses, nor do I. You hear?' And when she was through, the offenders wished they'd not been born." Irish Ellen Gallagher worked twenty-five years for Mrs. Field. Although in build, she held control over the chambermaids and had charge of the linen rooms and the sorting of all laundry. Of other employees, Mrs. Davis wrote "All the servants were colored men and women except the French bakers, who were white."

Mrs. Field had bought the hotel "with the desire to make money and enter the business world." She refused a $99,000 offer for the property one year, not eager to sell but willing to accept $100,000 if offered. In 1896 Mrs. Field lost the Bellevue "through the trickery of the lawyer and misrepresentation." Her predicament resulted from a $40,000 note which, in depression times, she was unable to meet. The beloved hotel was sold. Five years later the building burned to the ground in a dramatic fire. She might have borne that loss instead.

Mrs. Field and her family moved to Philadelphia where her mother died. When the Arms family moved to Princeton, New Jersey, Mrs. Field went with them. There she died in 1907.

PORTLEDGE

The story of Portledge exemplifies the history of several Radnor tracts, originally farms, which became, in turn, the seats of important suburban estates and, later, of fine educational institutions.

In 1952 the Baptist Institute for Christian Workers bought a 27.29 acre property on Roberts Road in Radnor Township from the heirs of Alice White Cramp. Part of the Mather family farm from 1747 to 1886, sold by the Mathers to Rodman B. Ellison who called his place Lindenshade, and sold by Ellison heirs to Mrs. Cramp, the plot was vacant when she bought it.

The house known as Portledge Mrs. Cramp and her husband, Theodore W. Cramp, built as a present for their daughter, Frances Alice Cramp Vaux. When the Vaux family moved to Philadelphia, Mrs. Cramp chose Portledge as its show house for 1980. Phyllis S. Maier wrote of its history, basing her treatise largely on newspaper accounts and courthouse records. Her full and well-documented article is available for study in the Radnor Historical Society Library. Excerpts follow:

Several generations of the Cramp family are involved in the story of Portledge. Theodore William Cramp, born in 1861, was a grandson of the founder of the extensive Cramp shipyards which built many ships for American naval and mercantile services, among them, the new Maine, the keel of which was laid on the first anniversary of the destruction of the battleship Maine in Havana harbor. Founded in 1830, incorporated in 1872 as the William Cramp and Sons Ship and Engine Building Company, this firm combined several industries in a single organization. The eight sons of the founder ran the thriving business. During World War I the company met the demand for cargo vessels and for warships by doubling its capacity. Sixty-four ships, ranging from oil tankers to freighters and troop transports, were completed.

Theodore was the son of Jacob Cramp. As a young man he had connections with the Shipyard, but later entered the brokerage business. He headed the firm of Cramp, Mitchell and Serrill, later known as Cramp, Mitchell and Shober. It dissolved in 1905. Widely known in society and club circles and active among local horsemen, he was a member of the Radnor Hunt, Philadelphia Country Club, Brymawr Polo Club, and of the Union League, Philadelphia, Rittenhouse, Racquet and Art Clubs in Philadelphia. He died at his city home at 1720 Locust Street just before Christmas in 1923.

Mary Alice White Cramp, his wife, born May 23, 1867 in Cincinnati, Ohio, was one of three daughters of Mordecai Morris White, a successful financier. It was she who bought the land for Portledge and kept it in her own name even after she gave it to her daughter. She used personal funds to pay debts of her husband's firm when it approached bankruptcy in 1914. In exchange for $600,000 the firm gave her securities considered worthless at the time. With later appreciation, they more than compensated for her original expenditure. In 1924, a law suit over these securities was dismissed by a judge who praised her for coming to her husband's aid. This formidable woman outlived her daughter. She spent her last years stopping, in turn, at her Philadelphia residence at 1800 Rittenhouse Square, at Watch Hill, Rhode Island, and at Portledge. She was a member of the Acorn Club, of the Colony Club of New York, and the Seamens' Church Institute. She died in 1947, buried beside her husband in the churchyard of the Church of the Redeemer in Brymawr.

Her only child, Frances Alice Cramp, born August 9, 1885, married Henry Pepper Vaux November 2, 1907. Newspapers reported this wedding and the Inquirer included a handsome sketch of the bride. The Bulletin described the affair in more detail:

The fashionable assemblage of guests gathered at St. James Church, 22nd and Walnut, where the Rector, Dr. Richardson, performed the ceremony, assisted by the Reverend A. J. Miller, Rector of St. Thomas Whitemarsh, at 12 noon.
houses for members of the Elkins, Berwind, Wells, Paul, Knight, Scott, and Widener families. Portledge is listed as Trumbauer's "Work No. 2049." Built of stone, with brick quoins, the exterior was later covered with cream-colored stucco. Through imposing gates the drive swept up the hill to a house with white portico, black shutters and latticework. The east wing contained the kitchen and servants' quarters, while the Coach House, nearby, held both stables and Coachman's quarters.

In the house itself, the twenty-eight rooms included a music room, library, living room and dining room, all with marble fireplaces, and nine family bedrooms. Planned efficiently, the building required seven servants inside, while the chauffeur and gardener lived in separate cottages.

Mr. and Mrs. Vaux had three daughters: Alice, born in 1911, Emily Norris Vaux in 1913, and Susan Morris Vaux in 1915. Their nurse and that of the Cassatt boys next door were sisters; the children were therefore "brought up together." The girls, who attended the Shipley School, made their debuts at Portledge. Alice was married there in September, 1937, to Reginald M. Lewis and, after living in Connecticut and New York City, moved to Easton, Maryland.

In August of 1939 tragedy struck. Mrs. Vaux and her daughter Susan boarded the crack "City of San Francisco," a streamlined train which left Chicago on the eleventh of that month. A disgruntled man, fired by the Southern Pacific Railroad, had tampered with the tracks near the almost-dry Humboldt River, concealing the damage with sagebrush and tumbleweed. On Saturday, August twelfth, the rushing train was violently derailed, several cars rolling down the riverbank. Twenty-four people were killed and many more injured. Far from any town, the survivors acted heroically.

Henry Vaux heard nothing about his wife and daughter until two days after the accident when their bodies were found beside that of a Pullman porter. Dr. Norris Wistar Vaux, Henry's brother, informed the press: "It was a terrible shock to the family, particularly since first reports of the accident did not include the names of Mrs. Vaux and her daughter among the dead or injured." They were buried in the churchyard of the Church of the Redeemer.

Alice Cramp retained title to Portledge. She summered there until her death in 1947. Emily Vaux inherited the property under the terms of her grandmother's will while her father received the right to live there as long as he chose. After Emily married and moved to Canada, Henry decided to move to a smaller house, retaining five of the servants from Portledge. He died in Haverford in December, 1953, and was buried with his family at the Church of the Redeemer.

Portledge was placed on the market in 1951. The Baptist Institute for Christian Workers which bought the property had been founded in 1892 by a group of Northern Baptists who enlisted a remarkable woman, Ellen Winsor Cushing, to head an institution to educate missionaries, Christian education directors, and other professional church women. Ellen had been a Boston school teacher when appointed by the Secretary of the United States Treasury to superintendent Pope's Plantation near Beaufort, South Carolina. Southern plantations, deserted by their owners in the face of advancing Northern armies, needed supervision to help their destitute slaves. Once there, Ellen organized former slaves into a company of soldiers, drilled them and became their Captain. She even caught a Confederate spy. Married to Milton Fairfield, also a plantation superintendent, she was widowed two years later when he was lost in a shipwreck off Cape Hatteras.

She returned to Boston to direct an orphanage, The home for Little Wanderers. There she met Josiah Nelson Cushing who was preparing to sail to Burma with the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society. He soon found that it was the policy of the Board of Missions to send only married men. When his fiancée balked at undertaking a missionary's life, he persuaded Ellen, instead, to accept him. Married on her twenty-sixth birthday, an occasion he considered of "deep interest," they then sailed to Burma.
Although the Cushings found themselves in separate parts of the country, each operating a mission, she helped her husband translate tracts into the Shan dialect. Her health, undermined by yellow fever suffered earlier in South Carolina, deteriorated in Burma's climate. When her son was old enough to attend the Penn Charter School in Philadelphia, she left Burma, becoming the field secretary of the Women's Baptist Foreign Mission Society of Pennsylvania.

She dreamed of starting a training school for young women seeking Church vocations, but found little support. When three girls specifically requested to attend such a school, she encouraged them, went to the Society's Board and asked for prayers on the subject. While Board members prayed, she and a friend proceeded to rent a vacant building at Tenth and Catherine Streets. She believed that “woman in her best estate is not only educated and refined but practical.”

The school, thus started, flourished.

In 1905 Josiah Cushing returned home after forty years in Burma. The reunion proved sadly short. He spoke in St. Louis at the annual Baptist Convention, stepped down from the platform, felt faint and died. His widow undertook to finish his Shan translation of the New Testament, and his Shan grammar and dictionary. Despite her twenty year absence from Burma, despite her sixty-five years, and despite the expected effects of the climate on her health, she returned to Rangoon. There she remained for three years to see her husband's manuscripts published. On her return to the United States, she continued to lecture and to work. She died in 1915, aged seventy-five, on her way to deliver a missionary talk in Providence. It was her school for girls which, some decades later, moved to Portledge in Radnor.

The Trustees prepared the mansion house for students. They erected two dormitories and a house for the president. The first boarders arrived in 1952.
Although mission boards and local churches still required graduate-level seminary education for their prospective workers in the 1960s, the Board decided to concentrate, rather, on students neglected by other institutions. Since most colleges refused to accept the lower 80% of High School graduates and took only three per cent of those in the lowest third of the economic spectrum, it became policy to cater to young women of these groups. Renamed Ellen Cushing Junior College in 1966, it featured not religious training, but the liberal arts, enjoying a peak enrollment of 189 students in 1968-1969. Sixty per cent of its graduates from 1965 through 1978 went on to complete baccalaureate degrees.

From William Finley, the College acquired adjoining property, including a fine house built by the Snowden family as well as a swimming pool and extensive barn which, with additions, became not only a library for 55,000 volumes but also language classrooms and laboratories.

The administration performed the problems of all small colleges. Because it was small, the Middle Atlantic States representatives refused it accreditation and thus denied it eligibility for Federal funds. To counter declining enrollments, experienced throughout the country, the Trustees opened the institution to men students in 1975, changing the name to Cushing Junior college and liquidating some of its real estate.

With the change in times, however, various four-year colleges had begun to accept the type of student for whom Cushing was designed, and competition swelled from State and Community Colleges. The Board's repeated attempts to adapt to varying conditions did not, in the end, avail.

At a meeting in June, 1978, the Trustees voted to close the school. Short-term arrangements preserved the College from bankruptcy but not from the necessity of putting Portledge once more on the market.

No one is sure of the origin of the name. A former president of the college, Warren Mild, discussed this in a yearbook aptly named The Portledge:

"Every workman deserves his pay—sailors too—and Portledge is a seafaring term for a sailor's pay. In fact, it’s two words and two ideas packed into one; the way you load a ship and a mind.

Instead of a cash wage a seaman who signed on for a voyage was allowed a space in the hold which he either could rent to a shipmate or fill with goods of his own to bring back home. The greater his responsibility on board ship, the more square feet of 'Portage' he was allotted. That's the first word. Since, as a worker aboard ship, the area assigned him was a benefit, it was also called his 'Privilege.' In time these two words joined into one—'Portledge.'"

The family who named the estate where Ellen Cushing Junior College was located had their own seafaring traditions for doing so, but the idea has meaning for a college too. How much value a seaman got for his "portledge" was largely up to him. He could run it empty from port to port. He could insure a small return by renting to somebody else, or he could become an imaginative businessman on his own and, as it used to be said of Dick Whittington, put a cat in the hold and become the wealthiest merchant in London.
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