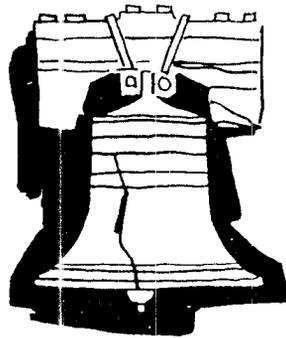


A TOUR OF OLD ABINGTON



BICENTENNIAL EDITION

HELEN L. SHAFFER

Foreword

This booklet is published with pride—pride in the historical background of the community in which we live, pride in the tradition of service of Abington Civic Club throughout its thirty-five years of existence, and pride in the literary talent and enthusiastic loyalty of one of our most ardent members, Helen L. Shaffer.

(April, 1976 - Bicentennial Issue)

(Written in 1937, revised January, 1960)

HELEN L. SHAFFER

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mrs. Albert B. Shaffer, the former Helen E. Lefferts, was born in Holland, Bucks County, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Linford Lefferts. At the age of six she moved into Abington Township, went to its schools, and graduated in 1906 from the Abington High School. In 1911 she married Albert B. Shaffer, a lifelong resident of Abington Village. Her two sons, Linford L. Shaffer, Howard B. Shaffer, and her daughter, Florence Shaffer Sutch are all residents of Abington. Three generations, including her husband, two brothers, three children, and several grandchildren, are members of the Abington Alumni Association and share her pride in the recent celebration of her fifty-fifth anniversary of active participation in this group.

Her warmth and love of family has extended to embrace her community as manifested in her years of service to its many organizations. Mrs. Shaffer has been a member of Abington Civic Club for thirty-five years and was its vice-president from 1940-1942. She has been an active member of Abington Presbyterian Church for fifty years; of the Abington Y.M.C.A. for forty-eight years, including her term as president; a volunteer to Abington Memorial Hospital for forty-five years, a member of its Women's Board for fifteen years; of Old York Road Garden Club for twenty-five years; and of Abington High School Alumni Association for fifty-five years. In addition, she has given her loyal devotion to Parent Teacher Associations, Scouting, and volunteer emergency work, and her enthusiastic support to Treasure Questers, a group interested in the study of antiques and historical background material.

Mrs. Shaffer has drawn on her intimate knowledge of her community to write of its fascinating history. We are indebted to her for her untiring efforts in delving into our glorious past and for her generosity in giving us the privilege of publishing this booklet. Its unique charm and sentimental nostalgia express her personality and recreate the past as we tour Old Abington.

*God gives all men all earth to love,
But since Man's heart is small,
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Beloved over all.*

— Rudyard Kipling

A paper on Historic Houses of Abington was presented to the Literary Group of the Abington Civic Club on January 19, 1937 by Mrs. Albert B. Shaffer, at the home of Mrs. William R. Lefferts of Baederwood. Miss Mary Baggs, who was in her late eighties, was our guest; a great deal of information was supplied by her. Mrs. Lefferts, who was a member of Abington Civic Club, passed away December 9, 1959. I should like to dedicate this paper to her memory.

The present generation seems to be more interested in what is going to happen tomorrow than what happened yesterday. To many, the past is a closed book. Their motto is "forgetting those things which are behind. Our earthly day has passed, the present is yours, make the most of it." This is not so with our Literary Group because there are a number of our members who like to delve into the past history of our community.

First, I should like to give you the history of Abington Township, how Abington derived its name, and some of the highlights concerning the progress of Abington since it was founded.

THE HISTORY OF OUR TOWNSHIP

Certain agreements with Indian tribes appear to have transferred the Abington area to the representatives of William Penn before the white man settled here. One such deed dated June 23, 1683, the year after Penn came to America, conveyed to him the land between the "Pennypack and Neshaminy Creeks." This includes the eastern part of what became Abington Township. Signatures of eight Indians and four representatives of Pennsylvania were attached, together with a separate acknowledgment by "Tammanes," sometimes described as the Original Chief of Tammany. Payment was made, according to the deed, with wampum, guns, shoes, stockings, blankets, looking glasses and other goods; so much "as ye said William Penn shall be pleased to give unto us." Another deed (Indian) of 1687 gave Penn the land on both sides of the Schuylkill river, extending South to Chester Creek and north to the Pennypack, including most of modern Abington and also considerable other territory already covered by other Indian deeds.

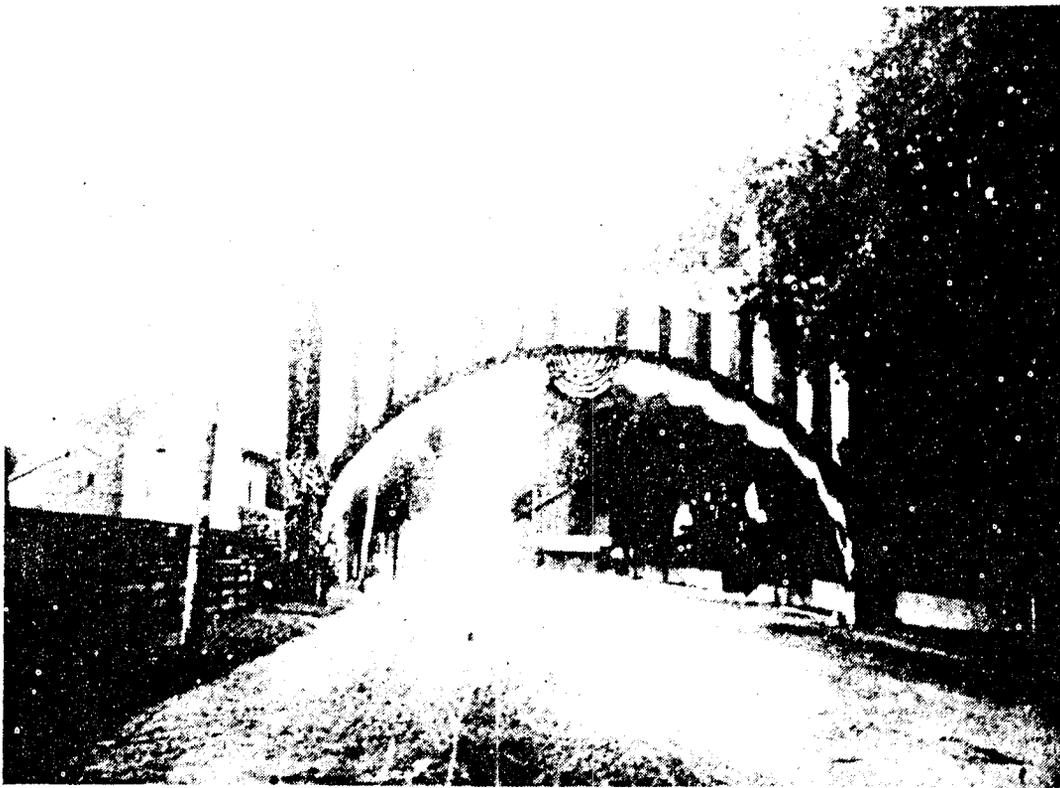
A list of landowners who were actual landowners at the time was compiled in 1734, this being the first resemblance of a census. A complete record for Abington Township with the number of acres held by each person is recorded. The names of Stephen Jenkins owning 250 acres, Widow Hufty and Widow Roberts were typical of the census. Also classified were a John Roberts Shoemaker, 100 acres, and John Roberts on the Hill, 100 acres. Familiar names like the Hallowells and Tysons were also registered and can be traced throughout the years as first landowners.

As a name, Abington is of English origin, being applied from so-called parishes formed more than 900 years ago in Northampton and Cambridge-shire, England. In records of 1690 to 1702, we also find it called Hill Township, probably after Philip Hill, who was at that time, an extensive

landowner. Abington was called Shepherds at one time, at another Moorestown, and then Abington was resumed and has since been used.

In 1832 Abington contained ten or twelve dwellings, a tannery that I will speak of later, a tavern, two stores, a boarding school, and a Presbyterian Church. One may read *The History of the Abington Church*, compiled by Captain Baggs who was the father of the Miss Mary Baggs whom I mentioned as a guest of Abington Civic Club in 1937. This book is in the Abington Library in Jenkintown.

The Abington Post Office was established in 1832. In 1870 there were forty homes. Elections used to be held in the Post Office in those days. Abington Village, the center of which is the intersection of Susquehanna Street Road and Old York Road, has a long history. These two roads are the oldest roads to be laid out (taken from "*Old Roads of Philadelphia*," a commendable book to read, which can be found in the Abington Library in company with so many books available on the history of Abington and of Montgomery County).



Picture showing the intersection of Old York Road and Susquehanna Road. Courtesy of Albert B. Shaffer. The arch was erected in honor of President Benjamin Harrison who traveled up York Road from Philadelphia to Hartsville where he took part in the Dedication Ceremonies for the Log College which was finally the Princeton Theological Seminary.

Looking South through the Arch the original Tollgate can be seen which stood in the middle of the road.

One does not realize how rich we are in historical background. During the Revolution, the Army came through Abington and brought the war right to our doorsteps. There were two other outstanding events which caused much excitement in Abington.

One was in 1830 on the Herkness Farm on Vinegar Hill, east of Abington. Gold was discovered, although little pay dirt was excavated, as the ore soon petered out.

The other one was the day in 1889 when President Benjamin Harrison traveled up Old York Road to Hartsville to attend the dedication of the Log College, which later became Princeton Theological Seminary. There was a sixty foot arch span erected across Old York Road just above the intersection of Susquehanna and Old York Roads. Men from the First Regiment of Philadelphia in their scarlet uniforms were sent to Abington Village where the greatest demonstration on the entire route was made. Flags lined the road on both sides: everything blazed with tri-color. Three hundred school children, each holding a flag, stood on the church lawn. My husband, Albert B. Shaffer, was one of these children to witness the parade. He was then four years old. A grandstand accommodating seven hundred ladies was erected: flowers of rare orchids were presented to Mrs. Harrison: and other choice flowers were given to the ladies of the Presidential Party. Another stand was occupied by the First Regiment Band of forty-two pieces.

The very first school was conducted by the Friends Meeting in 1702. The law established free schools in Pennsylvania in 1834. The earliest records pertaining to the public schools of Abington Township were in 1854-1855. The first commencement following the adoption of a two year high school course took place in 1888; there were two graduates.

I will now give you a short history of two of the oldest roads laid out by William Penn.

Susquehanna Street Road bore this name before 1695. William Penn thought the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers ran parallel to each other, so for cross-country transportation he planned five roads: namely, Susquehanna Street Road, Welsh Road, County Line, Street Road, and Bristol Road. Some of the roads started at the Delaware River but never reached the Susquehanna. The Susquehanna Street Road was the longest, running from the Pennypack Creek westward a short distance beyond Bethlehem Pike. The charter was given in 1695. The road was to be two rods—33 feet wide “except where it goes through the Presbyterian Burial Ground where it is to be 20 feet wide, 4 feet on the Burying Ground and 16 feet on the land of Widow Fletcher.” It is still the same on the side of the burying ground, which explains why Susquehanna Street Road crosses York Road at an angle and not in a straight line. Between the Pennypack Creek and the Delaware, only fragments of the road were ever opened;

but beginning at the Old Forge Road, where Lewis Roberts' mill stood, Susquehanna Street Road continues to a point in Lower Gwynedd above Ambler.

Old York Road is the third oldest road laid out by William Penn. In 1693 the Governor's Council authorized part of Old York Road to be built. It is called a Penn Road. It ran from the Delaware River in Philadelphia to the upper end of the Delaware, to Center Bridge and on to New Hope. The road was very winding, not because it was a cow path (as many people thought), but because Council did not want to cut up the farms in its path and thus laid the road around the farms. This road ran from the Richard Wall home in Cheltenham Township through the Jenkins Farm in Jenkintown and on up through Abington. This part of the road was laid out in 1693 in order to reach the Abington Friends Meeting. It was in 1697 that the road from Susquehanna Street Road to Moreland Road, Willow Grove, was laid out. The rest of the road was a completed passable project to John Reading's Landing Center bridge in 1711-1712. Then on to New Hope on the Delaware, they completed the last stretch. This road is thirty-three miles long. It was a laborious task to build a road in a country thick with timber and thin of population. No dynamite extracted the stumps; and brave men toiled hard to destroy nature's luxuriant growth, so that their wagons might pass where Indians and deer made their homes. Eight years before the Revolution, John Paul's Tavern at Willow Grove had stabling for one hundred horses.

Did you know when the first railroad came to Abington Township? It was 1855. In 1873 a station building was erected in Abington and later named Noble. The North Penn and its branches were leased to the Reading Company (then known as the Philadelphia Reading Company) for a term of 999 years in 1879.

Did you know that the first governing officials of Abington Township (so far as we know) were the supervisors of the roads, usually two in the eighteenth century? They levied a road tax on residents and collected in cash, or else permitted a citizen to "work it out" by repairing a specified length of road bed. In the early days the Township had guardians for the poor. A first class Township was adopted in 1906. It then had a population of 3800, a five mill road tax, and an assessed valuation of \$5,442,218. Now in 1960 the tax rate is 65½ mills on \$1,000 and the assessed valuation \$96,658,705. In 1961 the latter figure grew to \$99,455,910. The 1960 Census in the Township was 55,831. In 1906 there were five Commissioners elected. They were among the most prominent citizens in the Township. Their first meeting place was opposite the hospital, a property still standing known as the Samuel Jones property, midway between Horace Avenue and Woodland Road. In 1908 a new building was erected at the northwest corner of Woodland Road and York Road. This was in use until 1926. It was finally sold to the Abington Hospital and is

now used to house the interns. Finally another building was built in 1955 which is a fine building and a credit to our Township. How many know how many police we now have here? There are 52 policemen, 2 plain clothes men, 1 dog catcher, and 2 mechanics who take care of the police cars. There are also 16 crossing guards. At the time of the first United States Census of 1790, there were 881 in the Township. In 1784 there were four Negro slaves in the Township.

Did you know the first Fire Company was organized in 1889? It was located in a small frame building which housed the truck built by the local blacksmith Winder & Lightcap at a cost of \$125. Horace Avenue had not been cut through, and the Fire House was built where a barber shop now stands. In 1893 it was moved to the site of the present Abington Flower Shop. Mr. Stapler who owned the ground wanted to build a board house there, so he gave the Fire Company the ground to build another fire house on the original site; this was built in 1912. Now in 1960 we have a beautiful new Fire House on Horace Avenue next to the Township Building. Our Junior Civic Club uses this as its meeting place. Our thanks go out to this Fire Company for their untiring efforts in protecting us in this community. These brave men, as well as the Women's Auxiliary, deserve the greatest praise.

Our next public building is the Abington Memorial Hospital, which was founded largely through the initiative of George W. Elkins, who owned a great deal of land in Abington and made his home here. His motor car was commandeered many times to take people who were involved in accidents to Philadelphia. On two occasions injured persons died en route. He called together fifty interested persons who solicited funds to establish a hospital. Mr. Elkins contributed very generously, so in 1913 the Hospital was built as a Memorial to his first wife, Stella McIntire Elkins. The Abington Civic Club furnished an Occupational Therapy room here and has continued its great interest as Volunteers, workers for the June Fete, and generous contributors. Today we see a great modern medical institution evidencing the strong support and great growth of the community. It has been my pleasure to have served this hospital for forty-five years and to have been a member of its Women's Board.

Another building of which we are proud is the Abington Y.M.C.A., which is equipped with a gymnasium and a swimming pool. It has a very large membership now. This building came into existence through a bequest in 1913 of \$50,000 in the will of John Milton Colton, whose home was located on the present site of the Strawbridge and Clothier Store. The will stipulated that four of the proposed directors were to be members of the Abington Presbyterian Church, of which Mr. Colton was a member. My husband, Mr. Albert B. Shaffer, was one of the early members to be chosen for the Board, and since 1914 I have been privileged to serve in a like capacity on the Women's Board. Our Abington Civic Club has a strong affiliation with this worthy organization. We may all be proud of our town of Abington and its many fine public buildings.

Let us now start on an imaginary journey through Old Abington to refresh our minds on old houses. What WAS in the early days, and what IS now.

Bacon says:

Houses are built to live in and not to look on.

Sydney Smith says:

A comfortable house is a great source of happiness.

It ranks immediately after health and a good conscience.

OLD HOUSES IN ABINGTON

I will begin at Noble Station coming north. In 1856 what is now Baederwood was a farm of 265 acres. It was sold as the estate of a Mr. Jones to a Mr. Charles Baeder, from whom comes the name Baederwood. Jones conducted a grist mill and saw mills. He was also a farmer. In 1865 on York Road (about at the intersection of Baeder Road), an old well was found with a stone slab over the top. The Furman real estate building was situated here; now, in 1960, the Baederwood Grill has its place on this corner of Baeder and Hilltop Roads. On the opposite side is an office building.

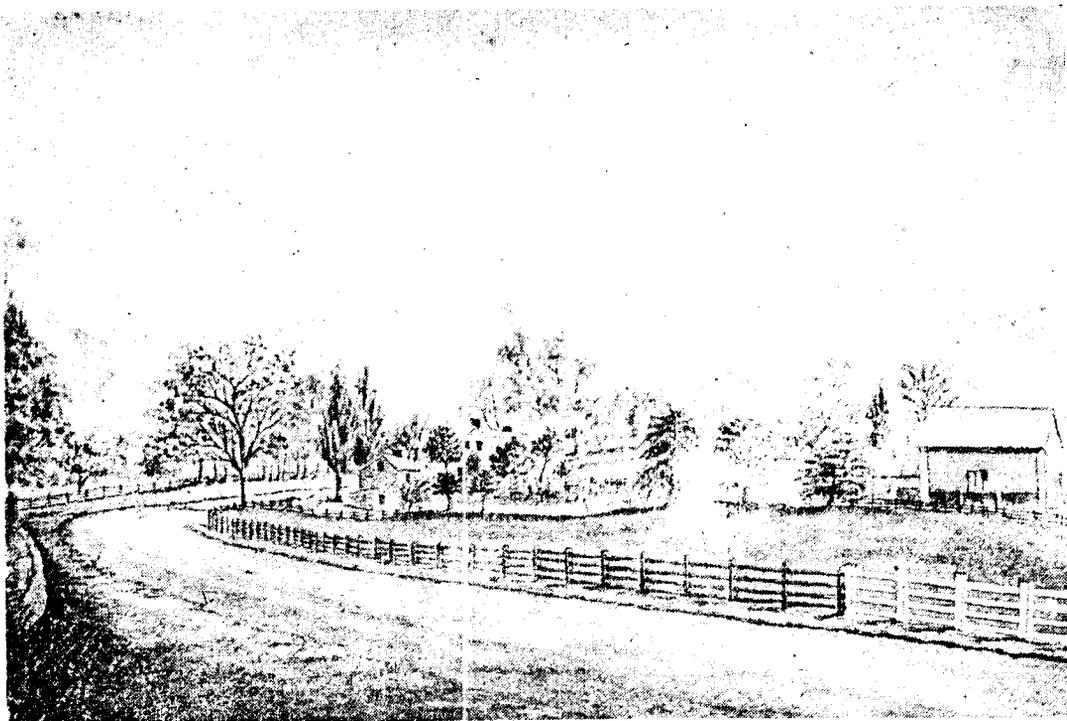
Just north of this farm on the west side of York Road, there was a most interesting house known as the Major Biddle Home. In 1937 I had the pleasure of talking with Mrs. Biddle, while gathering facts on this old homestead. I went through the old part of the house as it originally stood for over two hundred and fifty years. There were three interesting fire places; one was in her reception room and the other in the room adjoining. There were narrow mantles with wide openings; the walls of the home were very thick; and the panes of glass were very old. No locks were on the windows, but only a hole where a nail had been inserted so that the window could not be opened from the outside. In the cellar was another huge fireplace. There was an oven on the left hand side of this fireplace where all the cooking and baking was done in the early days.

In 1936 the caretaker found a penny dated 1732 with the face of King George imprinted on it. It was found near the Biddle house but a foot under the ground. The old Spring House was still there until September 1957, when it was demolished and the land bought by Mr. Pitcairn. The first owner of this ground was Mr. John Barnes who came over with William Penn in 1683. He acquired two hundred and fifty acres of land which ran from Jenkintown to Susquehanna Road. Mr. William Jenkins and Stephen Jenkins (from whom Jenkintown derived its name) both died in this house. In 1825 Moses Shepherd conducted a tannery at this site and in 1840 sold it to John Kennedy, who was also a tanner. For a living he would buy or be given old horses, knife them in the breast, allow them to run until they dropped dead, then skin them, and tan their hides. There were no S.P.C.A.'s in those days. A funny story related to me by B. Frank Boutcher was that a farmer, who traveled to market in the night so that he could be at market early in the morning, leaned over his wagon and sneezed, losing his teeth. Another farmer came along and went into Kennedy's for a lantern while the first farmer held his horse. Needless to say, the teeth were found.

Directly opposite this home, on the east side of York Road, was the home of Samuel Noble, Jr. He was a fine Quaker gentleman, a nursery man, and a farmer. He was the first president of the Jenkintown National

Bank which was organized in 1875. This property was sold to Huntingdon Valley Country Club, later to Baederwood Country Club, and is now the present location of John Wanamaker's and J. B. Van Sciver's beautiful stores.

Just north of this was the Merritt home. This, too, was part of the Barnes tract. In 1825 Mr. John McNair purchased twelve acres of land and built a spacious mansion. In 1825 he conducted a boarding school that had been in evidence since the turn of the century. It was several years later that a Mr. Henry Smith bought the place and also conducted a school here for a time. Mr. Merritt was a descendant of Mr. Smith. This property was sold and part of the land was made into a small development of homes, the "Hidden Lane Properties." In 1960 we find the old homestead as part of the Old York Road Temple. They have now added a modern educational building.



We find ourselves at the bend of the road, Brook and York Roads, where stood one of our oldest landmarks—The Dillon House—which has since been replaced by Mr. Penny's home. The original house was built in 1790. Mary Shriver, whose family owned Wharton Switch, now known as the Standard Pressed Steel Plant, married a Dillon. In time the house was inherited by her daughter, Mrs. Stewart, and all the Stewarts were born at the Dillon house.

The family of Stewarts later moved to another old home, now occupied by Mr. John Bowers, the architect. In addition to making his home in this charming Old House, Mr. Bowers remodeled it to also accommodate offices and apartments. The grounds are spacious and well-landscaped.

There still stands an old house at the foot of Vinegar Hill. Does everyone know where Vinegar Hill is? This old house was owned by Mrs. Dillon. It was built in 1730. The west wing has the original fireplace in the cellar. In 1788 an addition to the east wing was made. The original fireplace and hearth, flanked by closets running from the floor to ceiling, is still standing. I have had the pleasure of seeing through this old house. There were three trees there about which I must speak. One a black oak and two swamp maples that bloom every year are the largest I have ever seen. Part of the roof had to be cut away to allow the trees to grow.

Coming back to the bend at Brook Road on the west side, we find the old Lambert House. This house, part of which is still standing after being remodeled (now an apartment house), was owned by Mr. Wiederseim. In 1714 this property belonged to Malachi Jones. At the age of sixty-three, he became the first pastor of the Abington Church. This place comprised ninety-four acres of land which he willed to the Church. At the death of his heirs (for 142 years this was the home of the ministers of the Abington Church). Dr. Steele, a minister of this church, conducted a girls' boarding school here. It was the universal custom in the early days to conduct private schools. There were no public schools or systems adopted in Pennsylvania until 1838. Now what do we see? Best and Company.

An old house stood between the present church and Lambert's where the parish house now stands. It was occupied by John Holmes who was the sexton for many years, as late as 1392. I do not know how old it was when it was torn down.

In 1793 a stone church was built where our present church now stands. Then another church was built in 1868. This, as you know, has been remodeled twice.

Adjoining the church to the north side was the parsonage. It was built in 1856 at a cost of \$5,319.93. Part of the farm was sold for \$18,872.50. The house and thirteen acres of ground at the corner of Susquehanna and York Roads was purchased for \$4500. This is known as the Baggs House which became the church library and is now the home of one of the Ministers. (Date of Baggs House 1798). Directly opposite where the present church now stands was the first Abington Presbyterian Church founded in 1714 and built in 1719, possibly a log structure. It was located near the center of the present cemetery. This was transferred to the church by Malachi Jones for \$25.00, to be used for a house of worship and for a suitable burying ground. This comprised about one-half an acre. I have read the will of Malachi Jones found in Captain Bagg's "History of the Church" and the minutes of the cemetery beginning in 1765. It cost very little in those days to open the grave, and there was no charge for the poor. (\$1.00 was the fee to open the grave.) The manner in which the will of Malachi Jones was styled in those days was very unique.

We are now at the intersection of York and Susquehanna Street Roads. On the northwest corner of this intersection stood the old toll gate, directly in front of what is now Powell's drug store and extending to about the middle of York Road. Later, this building was torn down, and a new toll gate erected on the northeast corner where the Abington Bank now stands. The toll gate was conducted for many years by Andrew Hicks, whom I remember so well as a genial old soul. I used to pass this spot every day going to Abington High School. In 1888 a school was built on Susquehanna Street Road. The building is still in use and houses the offices of some of the administrators. It was a three room building, elementary and high school combined, and made of red stone. The old school bell was rung each time we won a football game. This was the custom for years. We either went to school by horse and buggy or by the old sleigh, for either of which we had to pay a toll. The old toll house is now situated on Susquehanna Street Road where Sewell Lane meets it. It was moved years ago, but I do not know who purchased this building and had it moved.

Just north of the bank building was the Rex property; at one time the northern end was a hotel, and the other side was owned by Enos Boutcher. There was a general store and post office conducted here in later years, but the old buildings were burned down by the Fire Company because they were falling down and were quite dangerous. Again in 1957, we had the post office just above this location, and now in 1960 it is across the street. There is a legend that, in the Revolutionary War during the Battle of Germantown in 1777, when smaller detachments of the army were stationed at Fort Washington and Camp Hill on the Susquehanna Street Road, considerable skirmishing was done through here by the American and British soldiers. An officer in the Washington army rode over to Abington to this hotel; and while he was having a few drinks, his horse was stolen; and while he was returning by foot, he was seriously wounded. It has been said that Washington stopped here at one time. My authority on this is B. Frank Boutcher who, as I mentioned before, was an old resident of Abington; this story was handed down to him by other old residents and relatives.

In 1807 where Powell's drug store now stands was a blacksmith shop. This old blacksmith shop was purchased by Mr. Dave Winder who conducted his business here for many years, and then moved to a place next to the Old Forge Inn. The latter was originally a wheelwright shop and blacksmith's. It had beautiful old beams and fireplaces, but was torn down to make way for new stores in the last decade. (There are many pictures displayed in the Fire House, the Abington Bank, and the Abington High School that depict the early days of Abington, but unfortunately they are too precious to borrow to show to groups.)

Just north of Susquehanna Street Road on the west side of a lovely home which was built by a George Stevens. Mrs. Gwinner had a boarding school here, and still later Mr. John Steele, brother of Dr. Robert Steele

conducted a school here. In 1864 Mr. Artemus Stewart purchased this place. It is now known as the "Old House" and is owned by Mr. John Bowers, who has kept the grounds undisturbed, as well as preserving the exterior of the building in its original state. Just north of where Guernsey Avenue has been cut through was another lovely old home, owned at one time by a Mr. Dando. Mr. Charles Borie (whose daughter, Mrs. Beal, organized the Women's Exchange in Abington, which is now doing a flourishing business in Jenkintown) bought this beautiful place. Now in 1961 we see the Prudential Life Insurance Building on this site.

On the northeast corner of Guernsey Avenue and York Road is another wonderful old house; Miss Sophia Wigfall and Miss Molly Wigfall lived in this home in the early days. Mr. Butler lived here until his death in 1960, and the building now belongs to Mr. Norman R. Reeves. Probably built in the early 1800's the house is very picturesque, but neither Mr. Butler nor I have ever been able to discover its history.

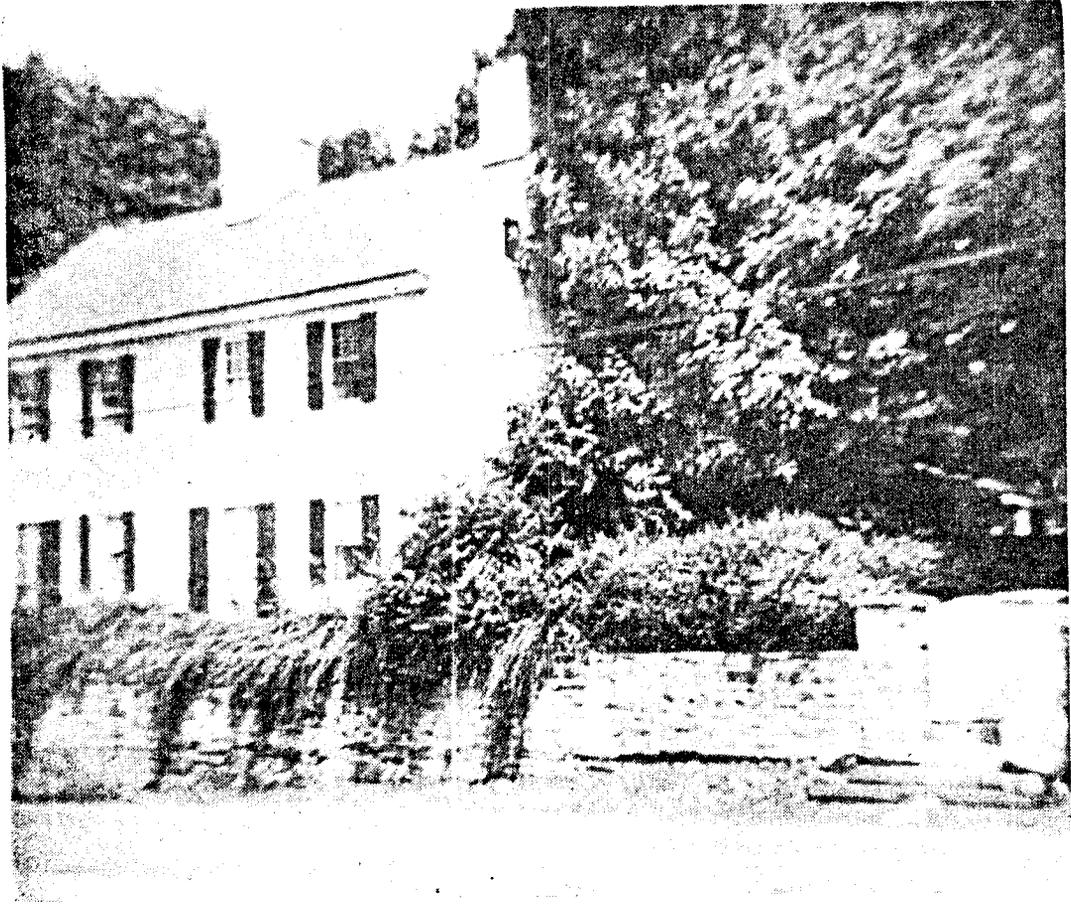
Right above this property was an old tavern known as the "Mary Moore Tavern" and also as "The Square and the Compass." The tavern derived the former name from its proprietor. Built in 1797, it was a popular place in the early days, being one of the main stops for the stage-coaches that traveled between Philadelphia and New York City. They changed horses at this tavern. It was torn down in 1890. Mr. Lissfelt and Mr. Krieder, both teachers at Abington High School, collected much data for the Old York Road Historical Society, and there are many pictures of this landmark in the school.

The Butcher and Margerum Store was on the other corner; many will remember the "Country Store" as it was then called. It also housed the post office.

Just north of this was the old house which Mrs. Quinn owned for sixty years; it is now occupied by Mrs. Heydt. The house is about the same as it was years ago except for an added room. It is heated by three stoves on the first floor. The walls are very thick, and it has a quaint boxed-in stairway. All the original doors are intact. Mrs. Quinn had records and deeds to trace it back over two hundred and thirty years, but before she died she burned them all. I have been in this house many times.

At Keith Road is the lovely old home of Mrs. Frank Johnson. It was built in 1796; the date is on a stone in the third floor. The original fireplaces are still there, together with lots of lovely old closets built in the wall. The original hinges and latches are on several of the doors, but they have been worn thin over a period of years.

At the bend of the road just north of here was the Dave Winder home, which I mentioned before as a blacksmith shop. Just beyond, was the Old Forge Inn — now torn down. On the right was Folly Farms, owned by George Elkins and sold to William Davidson. One of the houses on York



*“The House by the side of the road”, home of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Johnson, northeast corner of Old York Road and Keith Road.
Courtesy of Mrs. Frank L. Johnson*

Road belonging to the farm was very old; it is now occupied by a Mr. Kottler, a cabinet maker. In this section, one now sees Brentwood Manor, a Catholic School and Church, a Sears Roebuck Department Store, and a huge shopping center.

Just north of this area is the Ogden Home. Part of this has been torn down, and I do not know who lives here; but it was built in the early part of the eighteenth century. The old Margerum house, located this side of the bridge, is also only partially standing. At the top of Edge Hill Road where the bridge crosses Old York Road, stood an old school house, torn down during the past thirty years. Thus progress and history are made year after year.

On Huntingdon Road just north of Woodland Road is another very old house, now the residence of one of our members, Mrs. Clayton Worster. I have traced this one back to 1804 when it was owned by a Mr. Miller, but it must have been built before 1790. It was once owned by Mr. Henry Smith Ambler who lived here while conducting a butcher business in the

barn. He had purchased it in 1870, but in 1876 Mr. Ambler built a large house next to it, to which he moved. Mr. Beecher Anderson then resided there and it became known as the Anderson House.

On January 22, 1960, I had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Walter L. Tyson of Furlong, Pennsylvania, who is a distinguished gentleman of eighty-six years. This trip was made possible by his niece, Mrs. Albert Streeper of Roslyn. It was indeed a great pleasure to meet this fine Quaker gentleman. His daughter, Mrs. Aker, was very gracious and entertained us at a delightful lunch. I am deeply indebted to Mr. Tyson for one of the most interesting interviews I have ever had.

The house known as the Tyson Home in the early days is now occupied and has been for many years by a member of our club, Mrs. Craig Shields who is now Mrs. Nicholas Park. We remember this lovely spacious home, now called Highland House, as the scene of many delightful garden and card parties with "Kitty" as our gracious hostess.

Built in 1807 at what is now Highland and Keith Roads, the house retains its original charm as nothing has been added or taken away from its structure. The natural beauty of the lovely grounds surrounding the house has been preserved, but the huge farm is no longer in existence. Incidentally, a large barn once occupied the present site of the lovely home of the Herbert Grahams, and orchards and woods continued up the hill. The section was known as Highland Farms.

Mr. Walter Tyson was born in this home in 1873. He was the great-grandson of Joshua Tyson, an early landowner, who was one of the families given land by William Penn (my source of information mentions four names of Tyson and the number of acres given in the History of Abington Township). It comprised about one thousand acres. The Tyson ancestors came to this country in 1683 from Holland and Crefeld, Germany. Mr. Tyson showed me the original deed for part of the land, dated 1714. It read "Richard Kenderdine to Thomas Kenderdine—200 acres for 200 pounds;" there was also another deed dated 1769. These deeds are beautifully written and carefully preserved.

A letter dated 1800 was one which Mr. Tyson's great-grandfather received when he was in the United States Capitol in Lancaster. How many realize that the capital of the United States was located in both Philadelphia and Lancaster before it was moved to Washington? A client asked Mr. Tyson to do what he could in regard to a patent on some article. The first Tyson to immigrate was an overseer for a number of years to the Abington Friends Meeting and is buried in the Friends Cemetery, as were six generations interred there or at other Friends Cemeteries. This Mr. Walter Tyson is the seventh generation.

A document was shown to me, also in very good condition and completely legible. This document, subscribed to by a large number of Citizens

of Abington, of which Joshua Tyson was Chairman, was for the purpose of giving money or work in the fortification protection of the "City of Philadelphia." It was not dated, but was at the time the British troops were about to attack the city in the War of 1812, or the Second War with England. The list of names on this document are those who gave cash or work.

I also saw a "Public Sale" sign that was used to advertise their sale of household goods, barn, and all machinery they had used for their farm. The old plate used as a "Fire Mark" was found when the building was torn down. This sale sign was printed very much as they are today, except that it included ox yokes, surreys, wagons, a "Winnowing Mill" and a "Flax Brake." A winnowing mill is designed to blow the chaff away.

In those days, there were many ponds in Abington, for instance on the various farms. These were also used for swimming and ice skating. Edge Hill Road was the watershed and a creek coursed down through



One of the most outstanding Colonial homes in Abington Village, located at Keith Road and Highland Avenue. Highland House, formerly the Tyson House, was built in 1807. (Mr. Walter L. Tyson was born in this house in 1807) *Courtesy of J. Craig Shields, Jr.*

what is now Brentwood to eventually join the Pennypack. There was a large pond at Conrad's corner, and nearby a spring from which water was collected and stored in a huge tank to be used for sprinkling the dusty highway by sprinkling-car. There is now a shoe store here; the spring is now underground.

It is so nice to do a little reminiscing about all of these old houses which I remember fifty-five years ago. I graduated from Abington High School in 1906 when I was sixteen years of age. It consisted of three rooms, three in a class. I thought Abington was such a glorious place and its homes were so attractive, being so old even then, with so much beauty and space between them. It was most enjoyable on a Sunday afternoon to ride on the open trolleys and to drive through the countryside. It really was a lark to go to Willow Grove Park every Sunday afternoon during the summer with my father; here we heard wonderful bands like John Phillip Sousa, Victor Herbert, and Roger Pryor. Things were just "tops" then, but I am glad to be able to enjoy the many changes that have taken place just in my life. Now I sit by my television and hear all the wonderful music which I enjoyed so much as a girl when these famous musicians used to play at the Park. Good music never goes out of style.

I like to think of Sam Walter Foss's "House by the Side of the Road," and will close this History of the Old York Road Area in Abington with its lines:

Let me live in my house by the side of the road

Where the race of men go by;

They are good, they are bad, they are weak,

they are strong,

Wise, foolish — so am I.

Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat

Or hurl the cynic's bar?

Let me live in my house by the side of the road

And be a friend of man.