8 Woodland Ave. Smith’s House

On the Darby side of the creek on the south side of the highway at the foot of “Smith’s Hill”, there stood until destroyed by fire in 1896 a fine stone house the oldest in the east end of Darby. For a century it was known as Smiths. Before the road was cut down for the street cars it was very steep. In the 90s bicycle guides advised the riders to walk the hill. In the time of the horse-cars there was not only used a “hill-horse”, but frequently passengers were asked to get out and walk. In March 1700 John Bethel bought 100 acres here from the Swedes (The land belonging to the mill). At his death it went to his son John. 1708. John Bethel Jr. and wife Rose (Smith) sold 9.5 acres on south side of Highway to Enoch Elliot, son of John of Kingsessing,, February 10, 1728. Peter Elliot, a cousin of William Penn bought a plantation 1681. It was largely on the Philadelphia side of the creek. He was called Peter Elliot of Marcus Hooke. His homestead was near 84th St. 14 and Buist Ave. Part of his land was the between the creeks now in possession of Samuel Tribit, a descendant. It was the Bill Moore farm of the 1880’s, 4th St. being Moore’s Lane. October 2, 1734 Enoch inherited 30 acres from his father which enlarged his plantation to 4th St. Enoch built the large stone house in 1728.

There is no known picture of the house. It was described by Townsend Ward as a 2.5 story house rough cast with dormer windows. It had an old fashioned double door with brass knockers and glass “Bull’s eyes” in the upper halves. Over the door was the date 1728. Inside doors also had “bull’s eyes”. On a door on the 2nd floor “was a wooden lock such as was seldom seen in this country, but very common in England, bolt, spring, key and case were all of wood, also the latch”. (T.W.) C. Berlin who lived next door, said the lock was in good condition in 1884. In front of the house grew two immense buttonwood trees. One of them still standing.

Enoch Elliot at his death about 1767 had considerable property including Little Tinicum Island. He had sons John, Peter, Christopher and Benjamin leaving a plantation to each one. He also had 8 negro slaves besides old Primus “who is to be free and have a house and 2 acres of land for my old negro Primus during his life”. He was buried in the old family buying ground which was covered by the extension of Buist Ave. He willed “50 pounds for a wall around the family burying ground at brother Peter’s where some of our family have been buried”. The new house and 30 acres he left to son Christopher.

Christopher Elliot and Ruth Yeoman of Kingsessing, March 10, 1786 sold the property to Col. Hugh Lloyd. Christopher died in 1787 at the age of 46 years.

Hugh Lloyd was very prominent in Darby and the county. The Lloyds came from Wales; Robert and Thomas, cousins settling in Haverford. Robert had 3 sons, Robert, Thomas and Given. Robert born 1669 married 8-13-1698 Laurey Jones of Merion Meeting. They had 8 children the youngest, Richard born March 1714. In 1736 he married Hannah Daughter of Samuel Sellers of Darby 11-11-1742. They bought a certificate from Merion Meeting to Darby Meeting. In 1747 he bought the Darby Mills from Joseph Bonsall and also 4 acres and a saw-mill on Cobbs Creek. Richard died in 1755 leaving the property to his widow and 2 sons, Hugh and Isaac. In 1757 Hannah married Lewis Davis of Haverford. The heirs sold the mill property to Isaac Lloyd. Hugh Lloyd born November 22, 1742 in Darby died in Philadelphia 1832 in the home of his daughter Hannah wife of John Coats Browne, Kensington. In 1767 at Darby Meeting Hugh married Susanna Pearson, daughter of Thomas and Hannah (Blunston), granddaughter of John Blunston the 1st. They had 6 or 7 children the most prominent Charles who kept Bell Inn and Hugh Pearson of the lumber business in Darby. His father Richard was one of the founders of the Darby Library Company. Hugh was a member of the old Darby Fire Company. December 20, 1774 he was one of those chosen from Chester Co. for the committee of Associators. He was a deputy to the Provincial Council Philadelphia July 15, 1774 and one of those who attended the Provincial Conference held in Carpenter’s Hall June 18, 1775. Early in 1776 he was commissioned Colonel of Militia in Chester Co. His was the 3rd Battalion. He was clerk of Darby Fire Company 1793-1816. He was elected to the House of Representatives from Chester Co. 1790-1792. In April 24, 1792 Gov. Mifflin commissioned him an associate Judge of Delaware County which office he held until he resigned 33 years later.

In 1815 Thomas Smith bought the property from Hugh Lloyd, and for more than a century it was known as Smith’s farm reaching to 4th St. or old Thatcher’s Lane. Thomas Smith was another prominent man. Born 1774 he died 1846 and with many of his family lies buried in St. James Cemetery. He came from Tinicum island to Darby. He was in the State Legislature 1806-7. He was elected as a Federalist to the 14th Congress March 4, 1815-17. His first wife Marie died 1809 and he married Elizabeth, widow of Justus Cock and daughter of Henry Paschall in 18XX and moved to Darby. He was Justice of the Peace 1821 and 1840-46. Appointed school director for Darby Township 1840. He had 15 children, the oldest Thomas M. seems to have inherited the property. He was a sea captain and lived in the house until his death in 1873. His brother Aubrey Henry was killed in the war at the age of 22 years 9 months. Aubrey Smith son of Thomas M. bought the place June 1, 1874. His aunts, Emily and Frances Smith lived there all their lives. Mary Rose Smith, widow of Aubrey sold the lot after the fire of 1892 to George Brill in 1898. Brill built the present brick house on the site of the old one. Brill sold to Fells after the soap plant was built on the site of Ogden’s Woolen Mills and Passmore’’s Iron Foundry. For a time the house was used as a club house. Then it was occupied by Jacob Oswald who had worked at Fells until his retirement in 1926. In 1927 Richman bought the house and turned it into a store and gas station. For a short while it was a liquor saloon, the only one ever in Colwyn.