901 Main St. The Pearson House

There stood on the NW corner of 9th and Main Streets for nearly 200 years a frame 2 ½ story house known as Pearson’s. Now a Sharon Savings Bank building.

Early in 1700 Isaac Norris the rich man of Fair Hill Northern Liberties (the one for whom Norristown was named) bought several lots of land from Joseph Wood in Darby. Norris’s wife was Sarah Logan daughter of Gov. James Logan. His granddaughter was Debby Norris one of the belles of the Revolution period.

In 1712 Isaac Norris bought a lot of land on Darby Street next to Thomas Boid 132 perches 65 feet on Main Street for 160 pounds. In 1712 he leased or rented this lot to Joshua Johnson, a tin-plate worker at a yearly rent of 2 pounds. From 1735 to 1773 the Norris family gave the ground rent to the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1741 the heirs of Isaac Norris sold the land to Isaac Jr. Evidently Johnson built the house and had a shop in it for his tin work.

In 1742 Isaac Norris Jr. leased the property to John Pearson, saddler. The Pearson’s were one of the prominent early families of Darby. Lawrence and Patience Pearson lived in Yorkshire England. Among their many children was Benjamin, born 1683 and died in Darby in 1763 aged 81 years. He is said to have been a very sedate man and never got adjusted to America. He left no property. In 1703 he married Sarah Burbeck and in 1712 they settled in Darby, somewhere near the creek and mill race near the ford. They had 8 or 10 children. The most prominent Thomas and John, birth 1711. John’s first wife was An Bevan. In 1746 he married Sarah Wood daughter of George Wood and Hannah (Hood) who kept the first tavern on the site of the Buttonwood. May 1st 1743 the Darby Library Company (the 2nd in America) was formed after the pattern of Dr. Franklin’s Library of 1731. John Pearson was the first librarian and the library was in his home for more than 40 years. John died in 1763 and in 1773 the hospital released Sarah from the ground rent. January 1775 the Darby Fire Company was organized in the house, Henry Hayes clerk.

Sarah Pearson died intestate in 1804 and in 1805 her children sold the property to their brother Benjamin for $1000. He kept a store in the house and sold spirits. In 1810 he was Darby’s first post master and the PO was in the house. Prior to that the mail was put off at the Bell.

Benjamin Pearson married Alice Ash daughter of XXXX Ash and XXXX and had 13 children, the youngest Alice Ash, who was for 40 years school teacher n Darby. Alice, widow of Benjamin died 1842 leaving the property to 4 single daughters, Ann Bevan, Mary Bevan, Alice Ash and Abigail Pearson. In 1851 they sold to their brother Albert F. XXXX Ill. In 1885 the old house was bought by Alice Ash Pearson who lived in the house to the time of her death 1903. The house was bought by Bert Damon who demolished the house and built on the site the Damon or Keystone building. Darby Fire Company #1 met for some years in the rear of the building until they built their new house in 1912. In 1927 the building was bought by the Darby Bank and Trust Company and was remodeled for the bank. From 1922 to 1930 Cloud’s drug store used the building before moving to the original stand next to the Methodist Church where Cloud began 1881. After the failure of the bank a State Liquor Store has been in the building. Many offices are on the upper floors.

West of the old house was Thomas Bold 1712 David Thomas 1714 a blacksmith. William Priest 171X who bought from John Blunston. Joshua Calvert 1713 Samuel Bradshaw. So that with John Blunston, John Bethel Jr., John Test and Joshua Johnson and Edward Philpot and Thomas Paschall there were by 1714 about 12 families in Darby town.