Thomas Pearson House

Adjoining the Buttonwood Hotel on the east side there stood until 1944 a plain three story house plastered. However originally it was of the beautiful black and red brick construction. The land on which it stood was part of the land which John Blunston let William Wood have and part of the 9 acres which Joseph Wood sold to John Bethel for the Darby Mills in 1695, and where John and his son, John had their homes. Very early in 1700 Isaac Norris bought 3 lots here and leased them to new settlers. One lot was leased to Benjamin Pearson and later to his son Thomas.

The Pearsons were descended from Lawrence and Patience of England, Yorkshire. Their son Benjamin born 1683 married Sarah Burbeck 1703 and came to Darby in 1712. They had children, Benjamin, Joseph, Thomas, John, Samuel, and Joshua. Benjamin was described as a very sedate man and one who never got adjusted to America and who accumulated no property. In one place it was recorded that he had to cross the race to eat at his son Benjamin’s house. So that he must have lived on the south side of the race and his son next to the Buttonwood. He perhaps lived in the old John Bethel house. He died in 1763 at the age of 81 years. His son, Thomas died the same year, January 13th and willed that his father have the house “he now lives in his lifetime”.

Thomas Pearson was born on February 12th, 1708 and came to Darby with his father in 1712. At the age of 14 he was apprenticed to Joshua Copeland of Chester for a full term of 7 years to learn shoemaking. March 3, 1732 he brought a certificate from Chester to Darby Meeting. June 30, 1732 he married Hannah, daughter of John Blunston Jr., birth 1712, death 1778. He was quite active in the Meeting serving on several occasions as in 1754 appointed to take care that strangers are not buried with stones in the graveyard. At the time the Friends did not allow markers on the graves. This was a mistake resulting in the graves of John Bartram and others being unknown. The rule was later changed to allow small stones. He was Justice of the Peace for many years and in 1761 acted for Samuel Bethel Jr. to recover his interest in his grandfather’s property that was left to the two younger children by Bethel’s second wife, Jane Parker. It seems that Thomas later bought the old Bethel House which was on the site of the I.O.O.F. Hall. He at least owned it and passed it to his son, John. He also bought a lot from Job Harvey and tanning and currying tools. He became a tanner. His wife had lots which are now the property of the Meeting on which she received ground rents. They had a large family, Ann born 1733 married David Morris of Plymouth; James born 1735 became a house carpenter living in Philadelphia; John born 1740 lived in house on site of I.O.O.F. Hall; David born 1742; Sarah born 1744 married William Warner Jr. of Darby; Susanna born 1746 married Hugh Lloyd; Mary born 1748; Hannah born 1751 married Jacob Serrill; Elizabeth born 1755; Thomas born 1756 by father’s will “Messuage etc. where I now live in Darby with lot of land adjacent at 21 years of age”.

Thomas was a member of the Library Company. In 1741 he bought the property on Water Street described “house, barn and water courses etc. 27 perches subject to a quit-rent of 2 pounds to Isaac Norris”. He evidently lived here at the time of his death for in his will he left it to youngest son, Thomas, “the house where I now dwell etc. the land on both sides the mill race”. From Thomas Jr. it passed to his son, John M. Wheelright of Southwark. 1825 George Serrill, storekeeper of Darby acquired the property from John M. Pearson. George Serrill was unmarried and there lived with him, his sister, Mary and his brother Jacob. Jacob S. Serrill in 1772 married Hannah, daughter of Thomas Pearson. The Serrills had a farm out Punting Lane.

Jacob Serrill was very prominent in Darby. He was councilman, school director. Burgess 1876-1879. He was a director of the First National Bank of Darby from its organization and vice-president at the time of his death. He was a member of the Senate of Pennsylvania 1860-63. He died in 1899 at the age of 83 years.

The old house was bought by John Pappas 19XX and used for a restaurant until 19X4 when he sold it to the Chester Trolley Company for a waiting room. The house was torn down 1944. Jacob Serrills land was on the other side of the race. His barn etc. On this site Dr. Harrington built a movie-house and drug store. Prior there was an old house in which Washington James lived as Darby’s undertaker before he built the house in which Charles Drews now lives.