

Chapter 60

My Welsh Quaker Ancestors

[originally written on 20 August 2020]

Introduction

I have started using the Geni.com website to expand my knowledge of my family tree. Geni.com has what they call the “World Family Tree”. Unlike Ancestry.com, where everyone has their own complete (or incomplete) family tree, Geni.com is having its users collaboratively build just a single family tree. On Ancestry.com, there can be one thousand or more duplicate entries for the same person – and these entries often have conflicting information. On Geni.com, there should only be one entry on the entire website for any given person. Individual users on Geni.com can add their ancestral lines until they connect with people already in the World Family Tree. And then their lines immediately become part of this enormous family tree. As of mid-August 2020, there are over 147 million individuals in the World Family Tree – see:

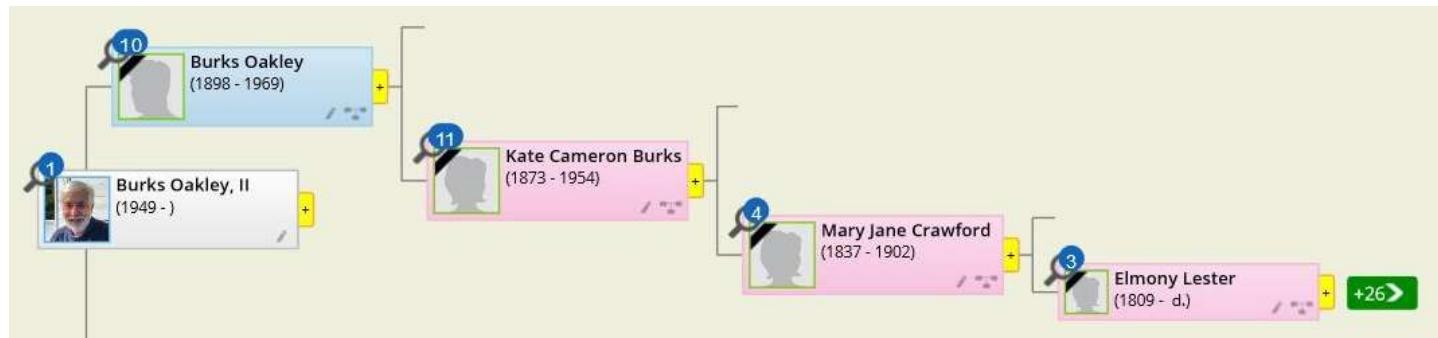
<https://www.geni.com/worldfamilytree>

Over the past year, I have added various lines from my family tree to Geni.com, and then connected these lines to individuals already in the World Family Tree.

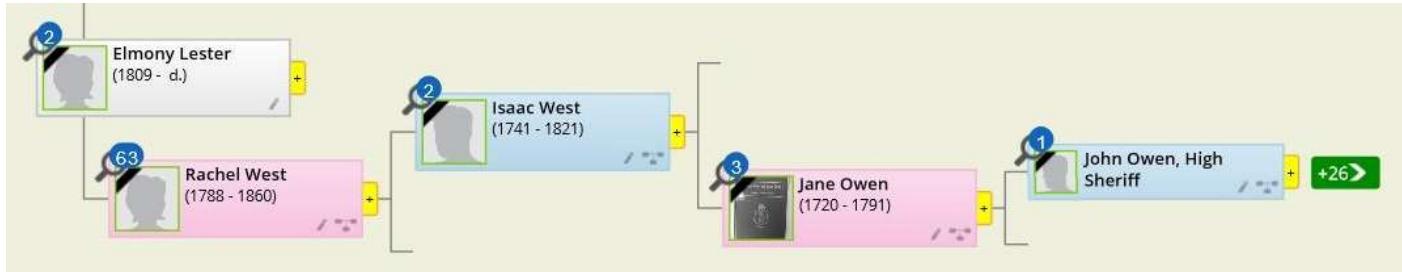
I have been exploring various ancestral lines that connect me to the World Family Tree on Geni.com, looking for information about ancestors who I knew little about. In this chapter, I’ll be examining several of my Welsh Quaker ancestors that I knew absolutely ***nothing*** at all about previously.

John Owen, High Sheriff

One of my 2nd-great grandmothers was Elmony Lester (1809-?). Here is my line on the Geni.com website going back to her:



Continuing on into the past, here is the line from Elmony Lester back to her 2nd-great grandfather, John Owen (1692-1752):



John Owen was my 6th-great grandfather:



On Geni.com, John Owen has the title “High Sheriff”. What a title! Where did he live? What do people know about him? Here is part of his profile page on Geni.com:



John Owen

Birth: December 26, 1692
Merion Station, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Colonial America

Death: January 14, 1752 (59)
Nottingham, Chester County, Pennsylvania, Colonial America

Place of Burial: Merion Friends Burial Ground, Merion Station, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, United States

Immediate Family: Son of Robert Owen and Rebecca Humphrey
Husband of Hannah Maris
Father of Jane Owen; George Owen; Elizabeth Owen; Rebecca Owen; Susanna Owen and 1 other

<https://www.geni.com/people/John-Owen-High-Sheriff/6000000002271057940>

I find it interesting that he is buried in the Merion Friends Burial Ground in Merion Station, Pennsylvania. Was he a Quaker? I should add that Merion Station is just seven miles northwest of the Philadelphia city center.

Here is some biographical information about John Owen from his profile page on Geni.com:

John was a son of Robert Owen (1657-1697) and his wife Rebecca Humphrey (1663-1697). John was born in 1692 in Merion Station, Pennsylvania. He moved to Chester (about fifteen miles southwest of Philadelphia city center, on the Delaware River) in 1718.

John married Hannah Maris, the daughter of George Maris and his wife Jane Maddock, on 22 August 1719 at Springfield Meeting in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

John was the Sheriff of Chester County (now Delaware County) for many years. He also was a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly from 1734 through 1748, with some breaks in service. He was one of the trustees of the Loan Office of Pennsylvania.

John Owen can be found in many historical references. It appears the politics of election to Sheriff could be challenging. A letter published in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History* regarding the 1743 election written by C. G. to Friend Humphreys described the movement to remove John Owen from the office. "A Vast Number of the more Modern and Sensible Quakers as well as others seem to agree with those friends as to the greatest part of the present Assembly but to fix upon John Owen for Sheriff who they say was heretofore a good officer and has Merited much by his Constant adhering to the true Interest of the People during our late Contests and being a master of a plentiful Estate is well defended against the many Temptation which poor M'K-lin [??] may be Liable to."

John Owen was the victim of the worst recorded assault on a sheriff in Chester County. While attempting to make an arrest, he was doused with scalding broth and struck with a stone.

The following was found in a Centennial booklet about the Chester County Courthouse. It is unclear if this is the same John Owen but the year and place are consistent with this John Owen or a relative: "The furniture left over from the earlier court houses was moved in, but this was not enough. John Owen, a cabinetmaker of the town, fashioned a large oval table, 7 x 8 feet, for the court room in 1725, and a smaller one for the grand jury room. Probably gate leg tables. A few of his are preserved."

John's will was witnessed 23 January 1752 in Chester, Chester County, PA.

John and his wife Hannah had six children:

Jane (1720-1791) married Joseph West [my ancestors]
George (1721-1764) married Rebecca Haines
Elizabeth (1722-?) married James Rhoads
Rebecca (1726-1766) married Jesse Maris
Susanna (1731-?) married Josiah Hibbard
Robert (no dates)

Note: Thus far no documentation has been located for the actual burial ground for John and Hannah Owen. The only source found so far for this burial ground is incomplete and other Friends Cemetery records in Chester or Delaware Counties are incomplete and many stones have become unreadable, irreparably damaged or have disappeared. As John's father and mother are in this cemetery and his father helped establish the Merion Meeting, John and Hannah are shown herein.

What an interesting man! And yes, he was indeed a Quaker. Now let's go back another generation, since that is where things really get interesting.

Robert Owen, a Welsh Quaker who Immigrated to Pennsylvania

Here is John Owen's pedigree:



This chart shows that John Owen's father was Robert Owen (1657-1697), and it appears that all four of Robert's grandparents were Welsh! In fact, going back to John Owen's 2nd-great grandparents (at the right of the chart), it appears that all of them were Welsh. I guess I shouldn't be surprised by this, since Owen is a common Welsh name.

Here is part of the profile for Robert Owen on Geni.com:



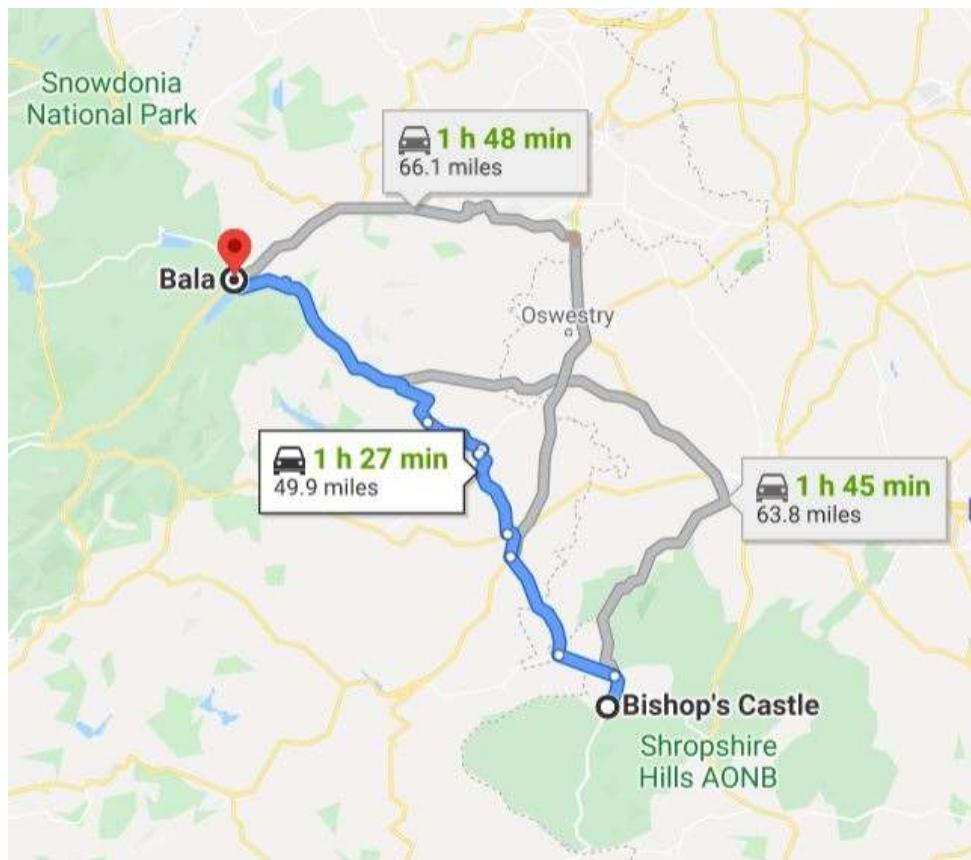
Robert Owen

Gender:	Male
Birth:	1657
	Bala, Gwynedd, Wales
Death:	October 08, 1697 (39-40)
	Merion Township, Philadelphia County, Province of Pennsylvania
Place of Burial:	Merion Friends Burial Ground, Merion Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, United States
Immediate Family:	Son of Owen ab Evan and Gaenor verch John Husband of Rebecca Humphrey Father of Jane Owen; Evan Owen; Elizabeth Owen; Gainor Owen; Owen Owen and 6 others

Robert was born in 1657 in Bala, Gwynedd, Wales. Here is a Google map showing the location of the present-day Gwynedd County in northern Wales:



I note that Bala is located ~50 miles northwest of Bishop's Castle, Shropshire, England, where the **Oakley** family first took its surname in the early 1200's.



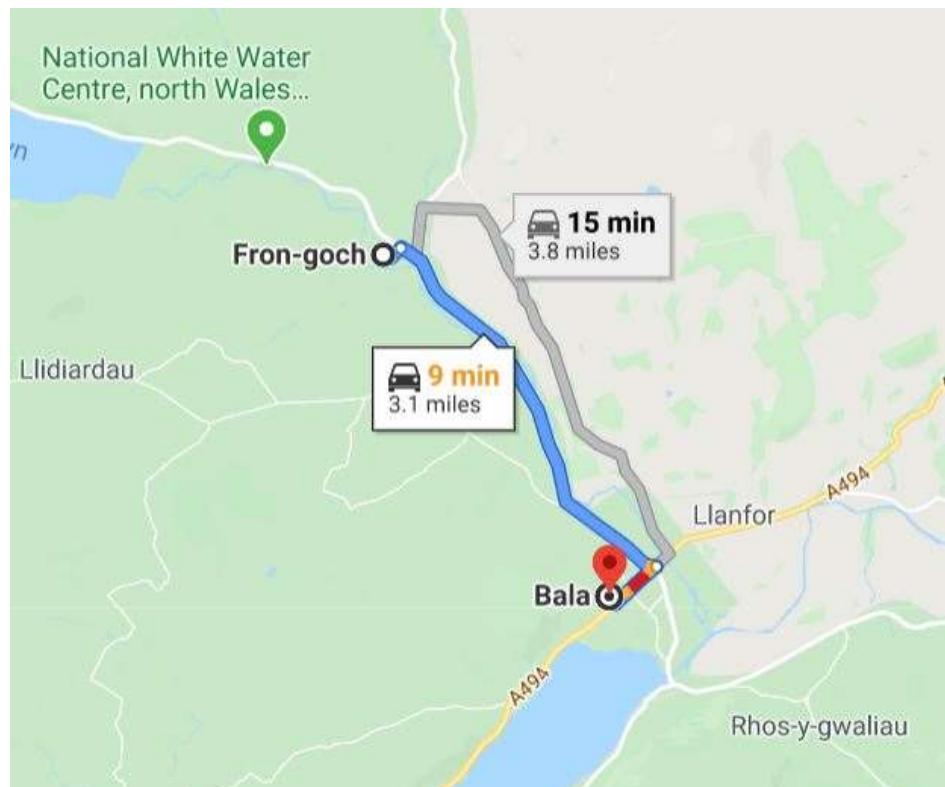
Robert Owen's profile states that he is buried in the Merion Friends Burying Ground outside of Philadelphia, so it appears that he immigrated to America at some point in his life.

There is a great deal of biographical information about Robert Owen on his profile page on the Geni.com website. Here are some of the key paragraphs (edited slightly for clarity).

Robert Owen was born in Fron Goch, Merionethshire, Wales, eldest son of Owen ap Evan, of Fron Goch near Bala in Merioneth, Wales, and his wife, Gaenor verch John.

As an aside, the terms ap (or “ab”) and ferch (or “verch”) are Welsh terms meaning “son of” or “daughter of”, respectively, as in the names Madog ap Rhys and Gwenllian ferch Rhys.

Here is a Google map showing that Fron Goch is just three miles from Bala:



I see that the National WhiteWater Centre is on the river by Fron Goch – and looking at its website, this area appears to be quite scenic:

<https://www.nationalwhitewatercentre.co.uk/>

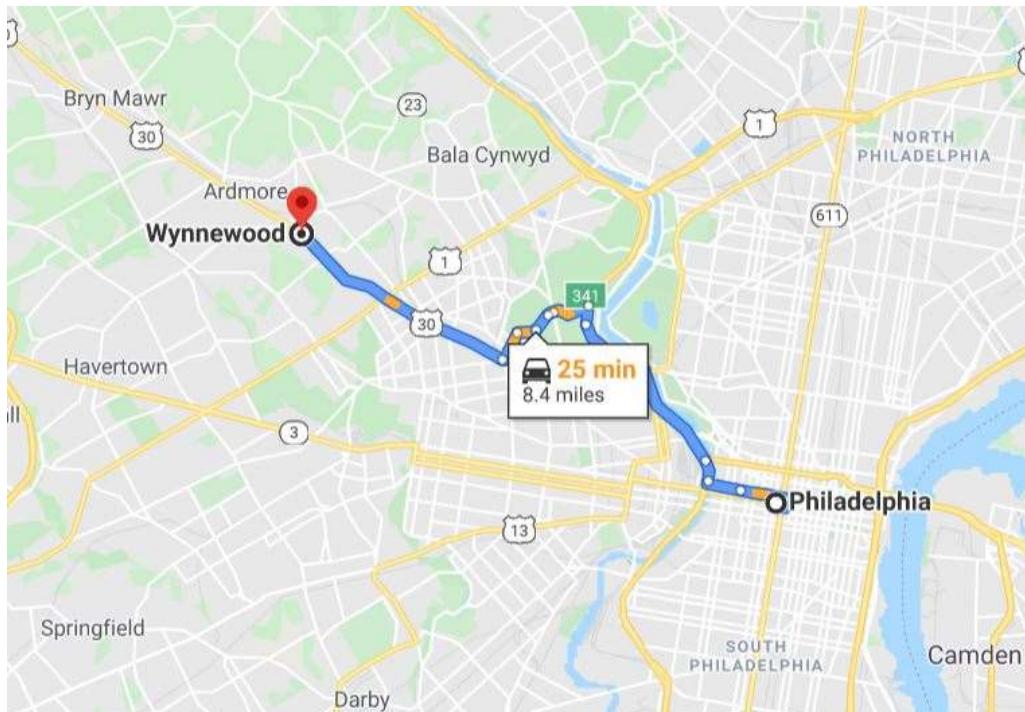
But I digress.... So back to Robert's bio:

Robert Owen married Rebecca Humphrey, daughter of Owen and Jane Humphrey on 11 January 1678 in Llangelyn Parish, Merionethshire, Wales.

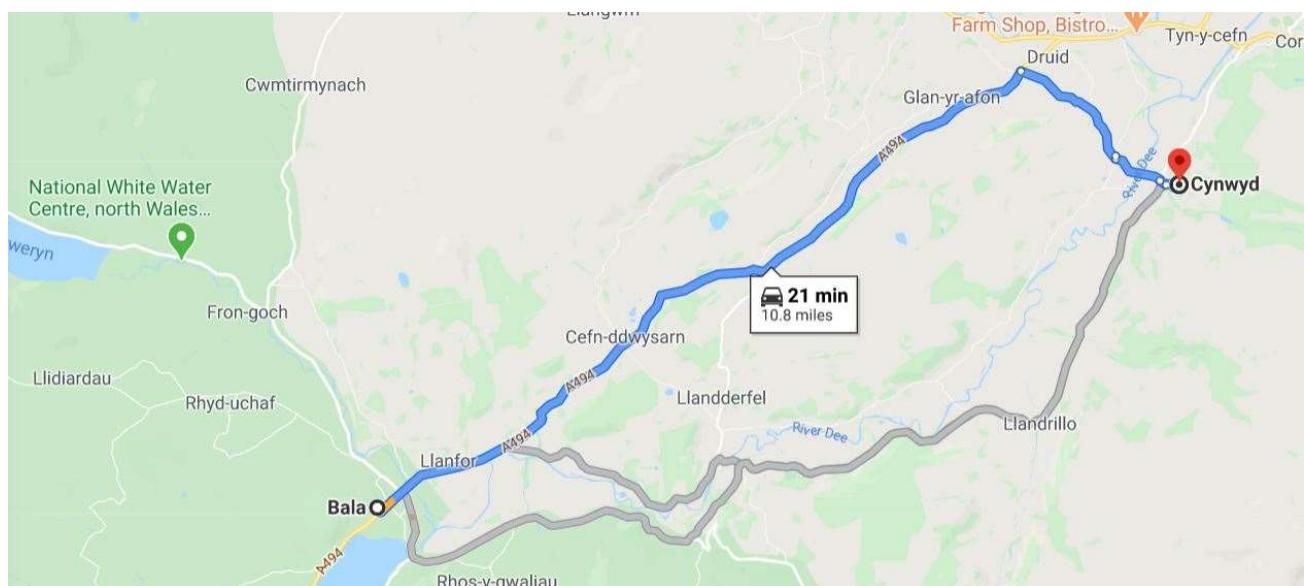
Robert and Rebecca came to America on a William Penn voyage in 1690.

“After his arrival, Robert Owen purchased, by deed dated 5. 6mo. 1691, for one hundred pounds, the lands from Thomas Lloyd, variously estimated, according to surveys, at 442, 450, or 548 acres. This land lay west of the present settlement of Wynnewood, towards the village of Ardmore, north of the P.R.R., and was the plantation, which was confirmed to his eldest son and heir, Evan Owen, by the Commissioners, on 8. 12 mo. 1704, who conveyed it, by deed dated 31 Dec. 1707, to his brother-in-law, Jonathan Jones.” (*Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* By Charles Henry Browning)

Here is a map showing the locations mentioned above – Wynnewood and Ardmore:



This is very much present-day suburban Philadelphia. This area was settled by Welsh Quakers (as I'll get to shortly). Note the towns nearby Wynnewood include Bryn Mawr and Bala Cynwyd – both good Welsh names. Bryn Mawr means “big hill” in Welsh and Bala and Cynwyd are two towns in northern Wales:



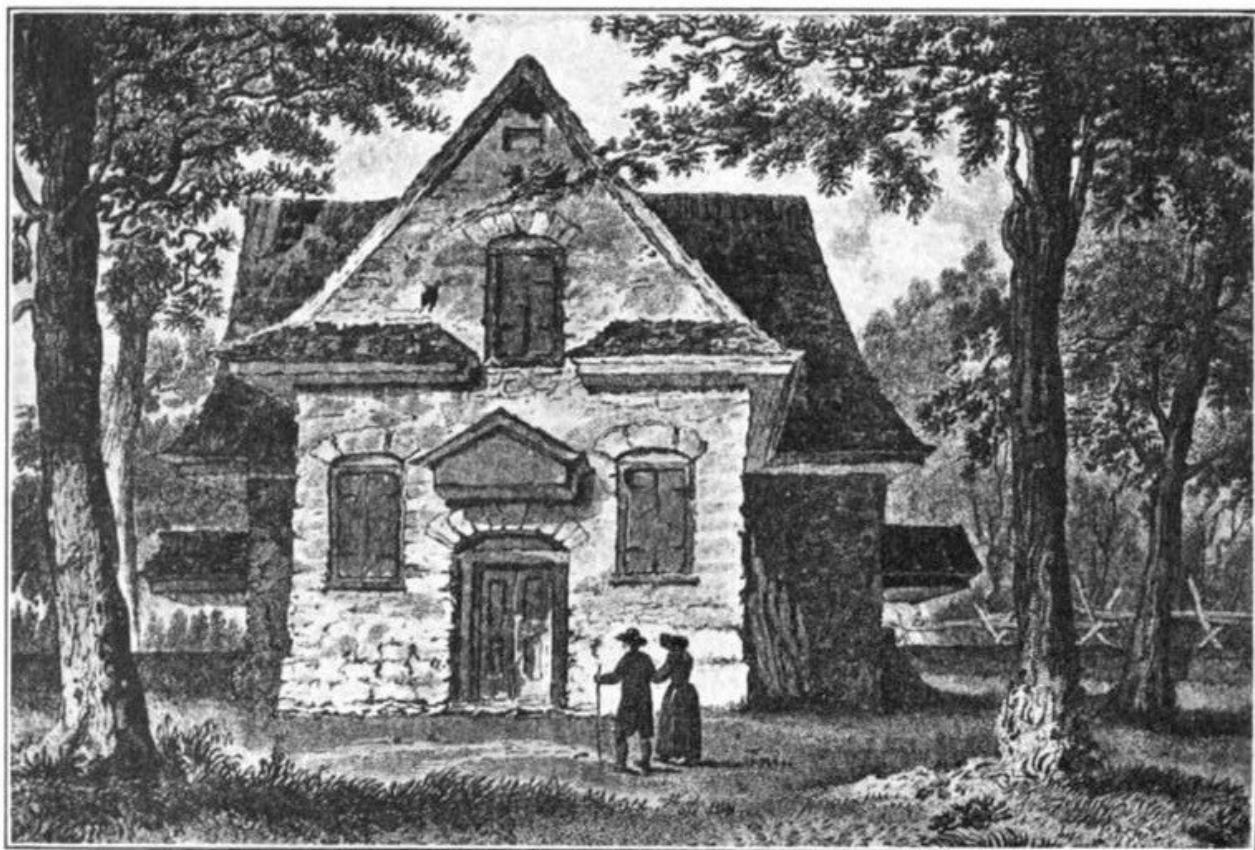
Now, back to Robert Owen's biographical information from his profile on Geni.com:

About a mile up the trail going west (on Montgomery Avenue), Robert Owen's house, Penn Cottage, was built at the same time as Merion's meetinghouse, probably by the same workmen. An old journal tells of a boy climbing an outside stairway at the Owen house to spy on William Penn saying his prayers in an upper room ..."Penn thanking God for providing comfort in the wilderness."

From this story, we judge it possible that there was an outside stair up the back wall of the meetinghouse for pupils and schoolmaster to use. Jonathan Wynne, only son of Dr. Thomas Wynne ... a Quaker minister and physician to William Penn ... had a farmhouse built about the same time about a mile and a half east toward the city in the midst of "Wynne's fields"

(now Wynnefield), a sturdy house that withstood a Revolutionary War skirmish. Though modified, these three stone buildings, the Owen house, the Friends' Meetinghouse, and Wynnestay, bear similarities to one another.

History of the building of the meeting house: Merion Friends Meetinghouse has stood as a landmark for 300 years. It is the most pictured Quaker meetinghouse in America, was the first public building in the area, and in 1998 was named a National Landmark by the U. S. Department of the Interior. Not only does its age, largely unaltered design, and continuous use make it a notable structure, but also the fact that Welsh members of the Society of Friends who built it represent the earliest migration of Celtic speaking Welsh in the Western Hemisphere. These "Merioneth Adventurers" were not accustomed to building meetinghouses in Wales. In the homeland, they were not even permitted to meet for worship in each other's houses when being persecuted as nonconformists. So here in the freedom of America, they built what they knew, something like a barn or a house, with a loft up above to be used as a schoolroom.



MERION WELSH FRIENDS' MEETING HOUSE, "BUILT 1695."

In or before 1695, the Welshmen who constituted Merion Meeting contributed labor, materials, loads of stone and wood to construct a meetinghouse. First indication that it was ready for use is found in Monthly Meeting minutes, which record that Daniel Humphrey and Hannah Wynne, youngest daughter of Dr. Thomas Wynne, were married "at the public meeting house in Merion" on 20 October 1695.

Robert Owen became a Quaker minister in Wales and was instrumental in working with William Penn to help Quakers immigrate to Pennsylvania. The Quakers were much persecuted in Wales by the Church of England. Robert was fined many times and imprisoned at Dolgelly Gaole in 1654 for "being absent from National Worship".

Robert and his wife Rebecca and their children came to Pennsylvania with a certificate of removal to Merion Monthly Meeting from Tyddyn Garrey, Merionethshire Quarterly Meeting – filed 8 June 1690. The certificate is preserved in the archives of the Haverford (Radnor) monthly meeting.

Robert was elected to Justice of the Peace and to the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1695 and 1697. He was a trustee of the Merion Meeting.

Robert and Rebecca's home was known as "Penn Cottage" and was known as a place where William Penn stayed during his travels.

Robert died 8 October 1697 in Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. His will was published in *Joseph West and Jane Owen*, which notes source as Will Book "B" Page 422, No 15 Year 1705. He is buried at the Merion Friends Meeting Grounds, Philadelphia. [Joseph West and Jane Owen were my ancestors!!!!]

Robert Owen was my 7th-great grandfather:



Amazing to find that so much is known about him. And what an interesting person he was!

The Quaker Movement in Wales

At this point, I need to step back and look at the Quaker movement in Wales in more detail. This isn't anything I knew about, for sure, and now I find that my 7th-great grandfather was a Quaker in Wales, who was persecuted for his religious practice, and then immigrated to Pennsylvania and personally knew William Penn.

I found an excellent blog posting about the Quaker movement in Wales, written by Phil Carradice:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/wales/entries/fcfbb662-23b6-3859-b521-758de2c9d08c>

The term 'Quaker' is the name given to members of the Religious Society of Friends, one of the most interesting and intriguing sects to emerge from the post-Civil War chaos of 17th century Britain.

The movement spread across the whole of the United Kingdom but, for a brief period at the end of the 17th century, Wales seemed to be something of a haven for this persecuted and widely misunderstood group of devout men and women.

The original Quakers were a small group who broke away from the established Church of England, under the leadership of George Fox, a weaver's son from Leicestershire. Fox believed that it was possible to experience Christ without necessarily having the intercession or benefit of clergy – in effect a “priesthood of all who believed”.

In a time of religious fervor, such a belief system inevitably brought Fox and his followers into conflict with the established church and with central authority. Quakers were widely persecuted under the Clarendon Code, and laws such as the Quaker Act (1662) and the Conventicle Act (1664) were used to abuse, imprison and inhibit their movements.

Such persecution did not stop them following their beliefs. And it did not stop the movement growing either. It is estimated that by 1680, there were as many as 60,000 followers in Britain.

The name Quaker stems from the early days of the movement. In the opinion of some, it originates from a time when George Fox was brought before magistrates to be questioned about his beliefs and made them tremble at the word of the Lord.

From the late 1650's onwards, the movement spread quickly into Wales. In the early days the main spokesman was John ap John – he, like other Quakers, would have deplored use of the word Leader. John, a follower of the great Morgan Llwyd, was zealous in his belief that Christ himself was a proponent of the concept of universal priesthood.

Other famous Welsh Quakers included Richard Davies from Welshpool and Thomas Wynne of Caerwys. Like all of the Quakers they were adamant that slavery should be abolished and were equally clear that they would never fight in war. They refused to swear oaths, to pay tithes to support the church, or doff their hats to supposed superiors.

With such beliefs, persecution was both inevitable and draconian. As a result, from the 1680's onwards, many Quakers chose to leave Britain and start a new life in America. Many of them joined William Penn who was then trying to create an ideal society in what became Pennsylvania.

What that meant, of course, was that many of the more dynamic and forward-thinking Quakers left their native lands. This was particularly the case in Wales. According to the Encyclopaedia of Wales: “The Quaker cause in Wales fared so poorly in the 18th century that even its supporters referred to themselves as the ‘remnant’.”

So now I know that the Quaker movement flourished in Wales, and that starting in the 1680's, many Welsh Quakers immigrated to Pennsylvania where William Penn was creating a society for all to have religious freedoms.

As part of all this, my 7th-great grandfather, Robert Owen, immigrated from Wales with his family in 1690.

The Welsh Tract

As I read more about the immigration of Welsh Quakers to Pennsylvania, I learned that there was an entire area of Penn's lands that was reserved for these immigrants – and it was called the Welsh Tract.

Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia article:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welsh_Tract

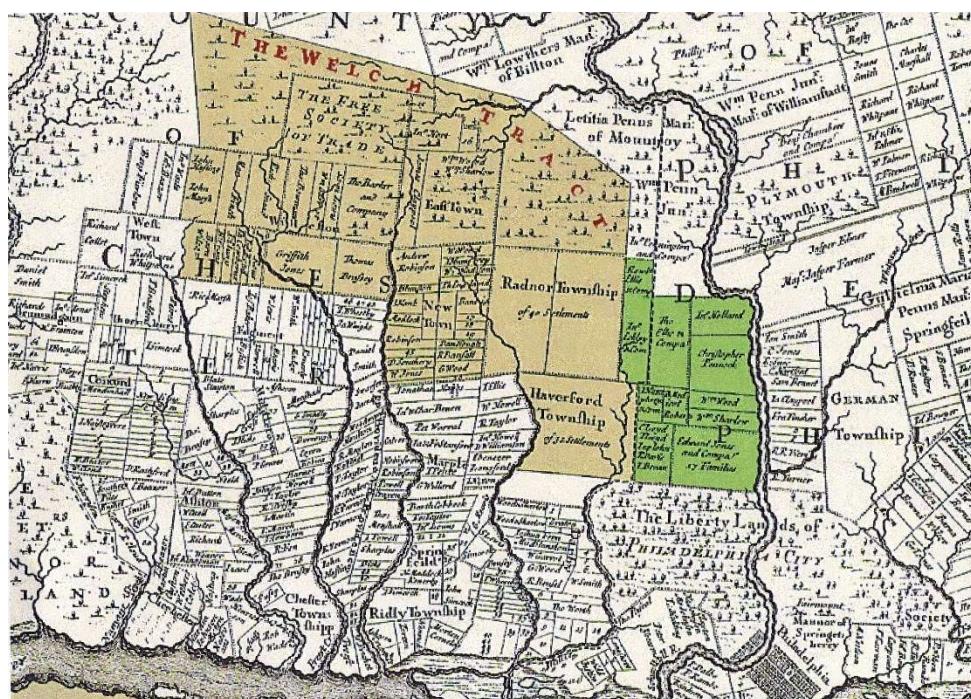
The Welsh Tract, also called the Welsh Barony, was a portion of the U.S. state of Pennsylvania settled largely by Welsh-speaking Quakers. It is located to the west of Philadelphia. The original settlers, led by John Roberts, negotiated with William Penn in 1684 to constitute the Tract as a separate county whose local government would use the Welsh language.

In the late 17th century, there was significant Welsh immigration to Pennsylvania for religious and cultural reasons. In about 1681, a group of Welsh Quakers met with William Penn to secure a grant of land in which they could conduct their affairs in their own language. The parties agreed on a tract covering 40,000 acres, to be constituted as a separate county whose people and government could conduct their affairs in Welsh.

The Welsh Tract's boundaries were established in 1687, but notwithstanding the prior agreement, by the 1690's the land had already been partitioned among different counties, despite appeals from the Welsh settlers, and the Tract never gained self-government.

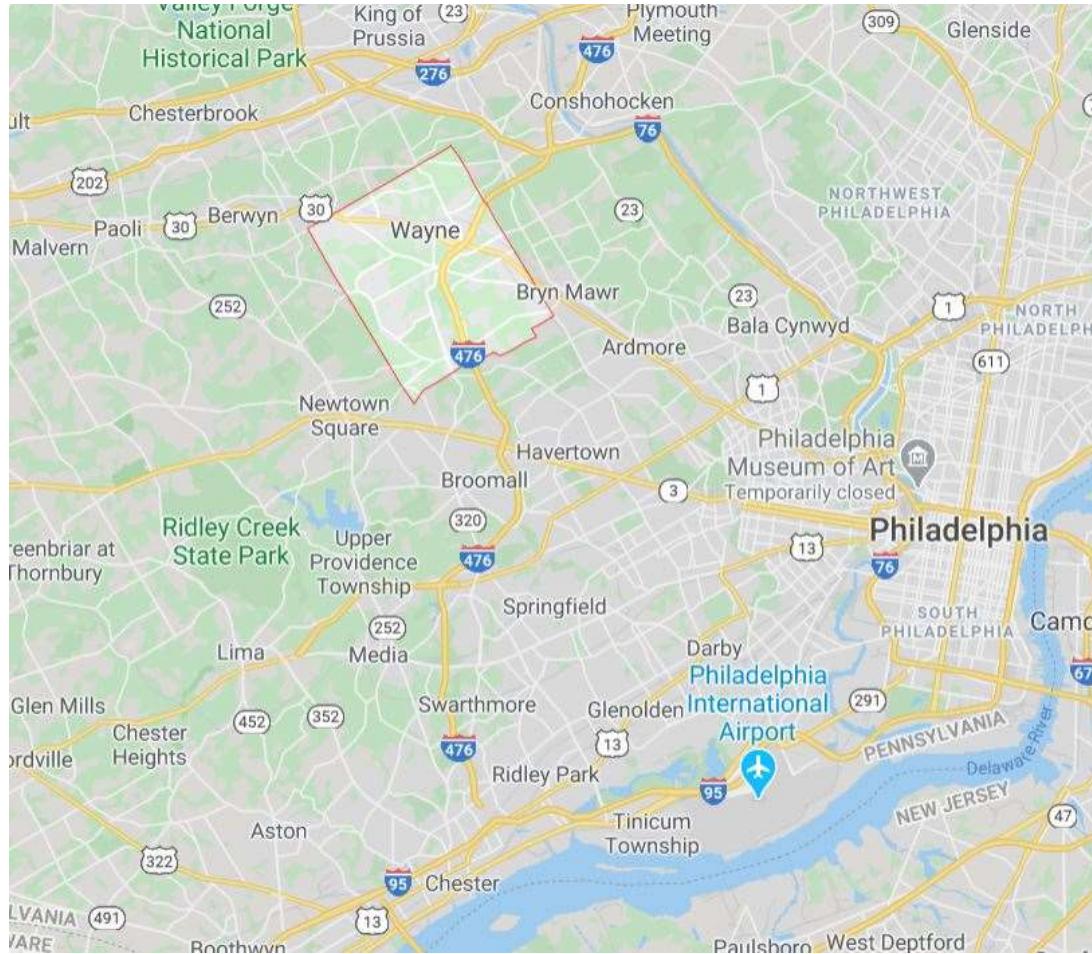
The area is now part of Montgomery, Chester, and Delaware counties. Many towns in the area still bear Welsh names. Some, such as North Wales, Lower Gwynedd, Lower Merion, Upper Merion, Narberth, Bala Cynwyd, Radnor, Berwyn, and Haverford Township, are named after places in Wales. Others, such as Tredyffrin and Uwchlan, have independent Welsh names.

Here is a map from 1687, showing the Welsh Tract in brown:



Holme's 1687 map of Pennsylvania. "The Welch Tract" appears to the left of center.

This map is somewhat confusing, in that the Delaware River is at the bottom of the map, and the Schuylkill River is running vertically in the right-center of the map – and this means that north is NOT up in this map. Compare that with a Google map:



Radnor Township appears in both maps (light green in the Google map).

I now know that the immigration of my Quaker ancestor Robert Owen was part of an organized effort to create a Welsh community, the Welsh Tract, in Pennsylvania, where the immigrants could experience religious freedom.

Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania

In looking at the Welsh immigrants who came to Pennsylvania with William Penn, I found a book *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania*, by Charles H. Browning. This book was published in 1912. Amazing that a copy from the University of Virginia Library in Charlottesville has been digitized by Google and is available online at:

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Welsh_Settlement_of_Pennsylvania/i_cMAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0

I downloaded the PDF – the book is 631 pages long!! Here is the Table of Contents:

CONTENTS.

Arranging Welsh settlement	11- 29
Welsh land companies	33- 42
Thomas and Jones' land patent	45- 59
Merion adventurers	63- 78
Families and lands of first arrivals	79- 92
Families and lands of second arrivals	95-138
Lloyd and Davies' land patent	141-161
John Bevan's land patent	163-173
John and Wynne's land patent	175-193
Lewis David's land patent	195-203
Richard Thomas' land patent	207-212
Richard David's land patent	213-248
Welsh planters and servants	249-276
Welsh Friends' pedigrees	279-302
Annals of the Welsh settlers	305-324
Welsh Tract affairs	327-416
Welsh Tract townships	419-493
Merion, Haverford and Radnor	497-589
Appendix	591-597
Index	599

Here is the first page of text:

WELSH SETTLEMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA

FRIENDS IN WALES

In Pennsylvania, there is no more ancient public building preserved, that is so intimately associated with the settlement of the State, in its provincial period, than the Merion Meeting House, a stone-built house of God. It is one of the very few remaining links suggesting the days of William Penn, and it is the oldest.

The march of public improvement and progress is passing, leaving it the same House, growing older, but not decaying, of hallowed memories, which was the first permanent place for public religious meetings of the first settlers of the region in which it stands, ever an interesting relict of days long passed, of early colonial, or provincial times and customs of the greatest of the American commonwealths.

Its oldest part, completed in the year 1695, as its date-stone tells, the possible successor of a more modest and unpretentious Meeting House, stands as a firm, rock-built, permanent land-mark, in Lower Merion township, Montgomery county, at the intersection of Montgomery avenue, and Meeting House Road, a short distance from the city line.

"Twas on one of those

"Fair First-day mornings,
Steeped in summer calm,"

that I made my first visit to this Friends' Meeting. Any day it is worth more than the time you will spend on a visit

Robert Owen is featured prominently in this book – here is his entry in the index:

Owen. Robert. 21, 25,
70, 75, 76, 80, 83, 96,
97, 99, 101, 102, 104,
105, 109, 111, 116, 118,
120, 121, 132, 138, 146,
149, 151, 152, 154, 157,
176, 180, 220, 221, 227,
235, 246, 257, 263, 280,
283, 285, 287, 291, 317,
318, 319, 383, 384, 385,
391, 392, 447, 498, 503,
528, 532, 537, 539, 549,
558, 577, 593, 594

[612]

Here is an interesting entry that mentions Robert Owen:

WELSH SETTLEMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA

Jonathan Jones married at the Merion Meeting Gainor Owen, b. 26. 8mo. 1688, daughter of Robert Owen, of Merion.

This union of scions of two of the most important families of the Welsh Tract, naturally brought to the wedding a great concourse of English and Welsh Friends, as may be judged by the signers of their extant marriage certificate, which is of longer form than now used, beginning:— “Whereas, Jonathan Jones, son of Edward Jones, of Merion, in ye Welsh Tract, Chyrgeon, and Gainor Owen, daughter of Robert Owen, late of ye same place, yeoman, deceased, having declared their intention of marriage with each other before several Monthly Meetings of ye people of God called ‘Quakers, in ye Welsh Tract aforsayd,’ etc., “Now these are to certifie to all whom it may concern, that for ye full accomplishment of their said intentions this 4th day of ye 8th mo in ye year 1705, they ye sayd Jonathan Jones & Gainor Owen appeared in the publick meeting of the said People, and others met together, at the public meeting place at Merion aforsayd & ye Jonathan’ Jones taking ye sayd Gainor Owen by ye hand did in solemn manner openly declare that he took her to be his wife, promising to be unto her a faithful and loving husband until death separate them & then and there in ye sayd assembly ye sayd Gainor Owen did in like manner declare that she took ye sayd Jonathan Jones to be her husband & promising,” etc., The names of the signers are given elsewhere.

They had eleven children, of these:—Mary, m. Benjamin Hayes; Edward Jones, d. unm.; Rebecca, m. John Roberts, Jr., of “Pencoyd”; Owen Jones, (m. Susanna Evans,)* who

*Owen Jones, 1711-1793, a provincial treasurer of Pennsylvania, and a “Tory,” m. 30. 3mo. 1740, Susanna, daughter of Hugh and Lowry Evans, of Merion, had Jane, m. Caleb Foulke; Lowry, m. Daniel Wister; Owen, 1745-1825, d. s. p., Susanna, m. John Nancarro; Hannah, m. Amos Foulke; Rebecca, m. John Jones, d. s. p., Sarah, m. Samuel Rutter, and Jonathan, 1762-1821-2, father of Col. Owen Jones,

[76]

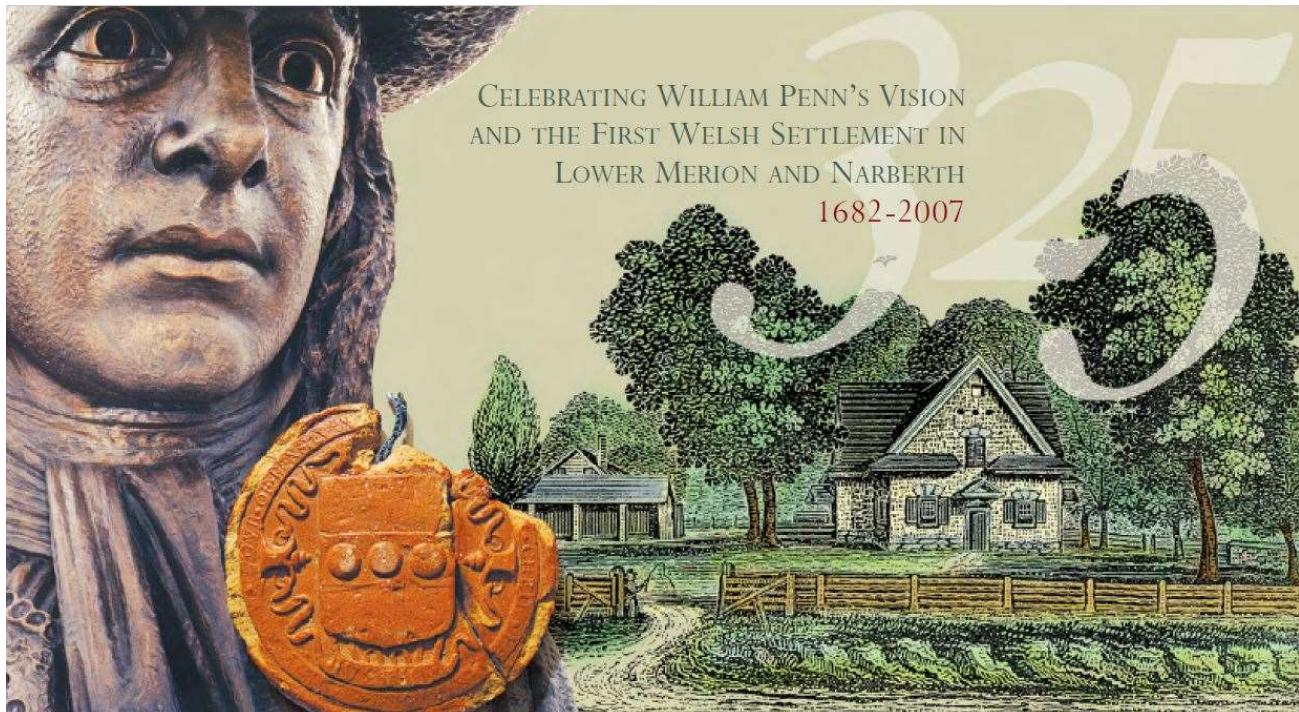
This text is about the wedding of Robert Owen's daughter Gainor Owen, who was born in Wales in 1688. It included "This union of scions of two of the most important families of the Welsh Tract, naturally brought to the wedding a great concourse of English and Welsh friends...." This wedding took place in 1705, after Robert Owen's death.

The First Welsh Settlement in Lower Merion and Narberth

In 2007, the Lower Merion Historical Society celebrated the 325th anniversary of the first Welsh settlement in Pennsylvania – which happened to be in Lower Merion Township. The Society produced a wonderful document for this event, which is available online in PDF format at:

http://www.lowermerionhistory.org/texts/325_for_web_small.pdf

Here are a few screenshots:



In August 1682, the Welsh Quakers arrived in what is now Lower Merion and Narberth. They were seeking a home in the New World, which they had christened *The Welsh Tract*. These *Merioneth Adventurers* from the County of Merionethshire in the North of Wales, were part of William Penn's vision of the *Holy Experiment* in which the persecuted peoples of the Old World could find refuge in a land of promise and new beginnings.

Aha! Now I get it. The initial immigrants came from the County of Merionethshire in the north of Wales. They named the new area in Pennsylvania Merion (and at some point, it became Lower Merion, and yes, ten miles to the northwest is Upper Marion – must be upper and lower on the Schuylkill river). And they were called the Merioneth Adventurers.

Here is another screenshot from the Lower Merion Historical Society's document:

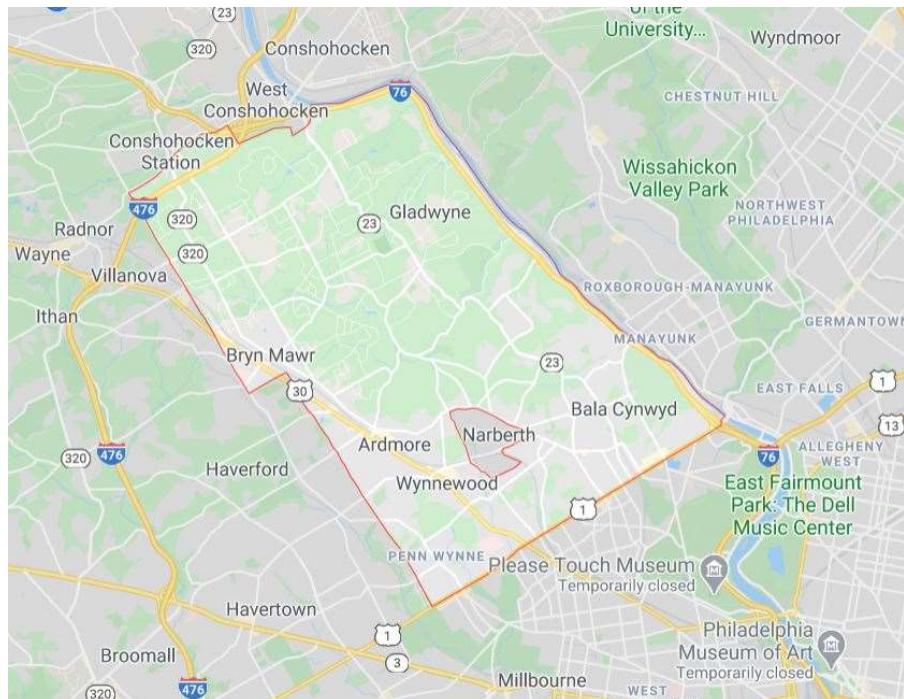
The Merioneth Adventurers

Two months before William Penn's arrival, in August 1682, the first Welsh immigrants arrived from the County of Merionethshire in the North of Wales. These *Merioneth Adventurers* came to Pennsylvania on the ship *Lyon*. It came up the Schuylkill River as far as possible, at which point the passengers left the vessel and walked to Pencoyd, on the west bank of the river between present day City Avenue and Righters Ferry Road in Bala Cynwyd.

These early settlers wrote home to their friends expounding on the natural resources of their new homeland. In a letter from Dr. Edward Jones to John ap Thomas, Dr. Jones described their 5,000 acre purchase from Penn in these words. "I hope it will please thee, and the rest who are concerned, for it hath most rare timber. I have not seen the like in all these parts, there is water enough besides. The end of each lot will be on a river, as large or larger than the Dye at Bala, it is called Skool Kill River."



Here is a Google map showing Lower Merion Township, as well as the town of Narberth:



Lower Merion Township abuts the Schuylkill River. As mentioned previously, Narberth is the name of a town in Wales:



The document celebrating the 325th anniversary including the following reproduction of a mural entitled *Penn's Vision*. This is one of thirteen murals that comprise the frieze *The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual* in the Governor's Reception Room of the Pennsylvania State Capitol.



And these murals were painted by Violet K. Oakley:

Below: *Penn's Vision* is one of thirteen murals painted by Violet Oakley as part of the frieze *The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual* in the Governor's Reception Room of the Pennsylvania State Capitol. According to Oakley, Penn's desire was to "bring out of captivity all those who were oppressed for conscience sake, whatever their creed or belief."

Violet Oakley and Her Murals

I'll end this chapter with some interesting material about Violet K. Oakley from Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violet_Oakley

Violet Oakley (1874-1961) was an American artist. She was the first American woman to receive a public mural commission. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, she was renowned as a pathbreaker in mural decoration, a field that had been exclusively practiced by men. Oakley excelled at murals and stained-glass designs that addressed themes from history and literature in Renaissance-revival styles.

Oakley's political beliefs were shaped by the Quaker William Penn (1644-1718), whose ideals she represented in her murals at the Pennsylvania State Capitol.

On 14 June 2014, Miss Oakley was featured in the first gay-themed tour of Green-Wood Cemetery, where she is interred in the Oakley family plot. Her life partner, Edith Emerson, was a painter and, at one time, a student of

Oakley's. In 1916, Emerson moved into Oakley's Mount Airy home (a neighborhood of Philadelphia), Cogslea, where Oakley had formed a communal household with three other women artists, calling themselves the Red Rose Girls.¹ Emerson and Oakley's relationship endured until Oakley's death and Emerson subsequently established a foundation to memorialize Oakley's life and legacy. The foundation dissolved in 1988 and its assets were donated to the Smithsonian Museum.

Oakley painted a series of 43 murals in the Pennsylvania State Capitol Building in Harrisburg for the Governors Grand Reception Room, the Senate and the Supreme Court. Oakley was originally commissioned in 1902 only for the murals in the Governor's Grand Reception Room, which she titled "The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual." In the reception room murals, Oakley depicts the story of William Penn and the founding of Pennsylvania. She conducted extensive research on the subject, even traveling to England. The series of murals were unveiled in the new Capitol Building in November 1906, shortly after the dedication of the building. When Edwin Austin Abbey died in 1911, Violet Oakley was offered the job of creating the murals for the Senate and Supreme Court Chambers, a 16-year project.



Violet K. Oakley (1874-1961)

A wonderful feature about Miss Oakley's art is online at:

<https://woodmereartmuseum.org/the-violet-oakley-experience>

Unfortunately, I can't find any genealogical connection to her; her paternal grandfather George F. Oakley (1793–1869) immigrated to America from England in 1820.

¹ Cogslea after their four surnames (Cozens, Oakley, Green and Smith).

Summary

In this narrative, I went back on one of my ancestral lines on Geni.com to my 6th-great grandfather, John Owen (1692-1752), and to his father Robert Owen (1657-1697). Robert Owen immigrated to America from Wales with his family in 1690.

Robert Owen was a Welsh Quaker who was persecuted for his religious beliefs in Wales. He came to America to build a new life in the Welsh Tract, which was part of William Penn's lands northwest of Philadelphia.

To put Robert Owen's life into perspective, I discussed the Quaker movement in Wales, the Welsh Tract, the Merioneth Adventurers from Merionethshire County in the north of Wales, and the founding of Lower Merion Township northwest of Philadelphia.

Finally, I covered the artist, Violet K. Oakley, who painted thirteen murals that comprise the frieze *The Founding of the State of Liberty Spiritual* in the Governor's Reception Room of the Pennsylvania State Capitol.

At the end of all this, all I can say is thank goodness for Geni.com, Wikipedia.org, and Google Maps!