

The History of Glenhardie

In 1682 a group of Welsh Quakers, escaping from persecution, arrived in this area seeking a new place to live and farm. William Penn sold them 64,000 acres of land that is now, generally, known as Tredyffrin Township, for which they paid 10 cents an acre. They named the area "Tredyffrin" from the Welsh "Tre" meaning town, "Dyffrin" meaning valley. Thus Tredyffrin or Valleytown.

One of the first known settlers was Lewis Walker who, having been granted several thousand acres, built a home in the area in back of the Friends' Cemetery on Eagle School Road, just outside our gate. In later years it was owned and occupied by Charles Hires, of Hires Root Beer, and his family. The mansion remained until about a year ago when it was razed to make room for the office buildings that extend along Swedesford Road west of Eagle School Road. Many of us saw the ruins of the mansion before it was torn down and never knew its historical past.

In the Friends' Cemetery a number of the Walker family are buried and, as we shall see, this family played an important part in the growth and development of the area.

The first known settlement was Howellville, still with us and located at the intersection of Swedesford Rd. and Rte. 252. As the area developed, more settlers arrived. Among them were Anglicans, Welsh Baptists, and Welsh Presbyterians, all seeking a new life in America. Initially, the Quakers were disturbed as they had hoped for a "community wherein all quarrels, crimes, and disputes might be tried by officers, magistrates, and juries of the Welsh language". Eventually, the fear of attack by the British and the events preceding the war all conspired to bring the settlers together, forming a very strong and united community.

Farming was the principal pursuit. The harvest of corn, wheat, and cattle grew and it was through the "family" that this was possible. As one observer noted, "Quakerism endured through the interaction of the family, school, and meeting". Quaker schools (there were three) were a full year in length except for two weeks of the Yearly Meeting and the annual harvest.

In 1718 an event took place that would have a profound effect not only on the coming Revolution, but also on the heritage of some of our most precious historical sites. In that year the first known forge was founded called the Mount Joy Forge. In 1757 John Potts, a Quaker industrialist, developed Valley Forge. He later added a grist mill and, using a shallow draft boat, shipped goods to and from Philadelphia via the Schuylkill River at a point called Port Kennedy, near the Valley Forge Sheraton. Potts became the most prosperous merchant in the area, and his heirs, Isaac and David Potts, inherited a good part of what is now Valley Forge Park. Isaac Potts' daughter married William Dewees, who was the son of the sheriff of Philadelphia and Potts conveyed house and property to them. The house later became George Washington's Headquarters at Valley Forge. Potts later purchased the land where our clubhouse now stands, but we will list the owners at another place in our history.

In 1702 a grant of land was given to one John Kinsey, and this is the site of our clubhouse and barn. In 1703 Kinsey sold the property to John Roberts who in turn sold it to Thomas Godfrey in 1728. Godfrey gave the property to his son William in 1755, and then Isaac Potts acquired it. Potts conveyed it to William Dewees (his son-in-law) in 1773.

Dewees was having financial problems and the property was sold at sheriff's sale to Thomas Waters (Waters' daughter was married to Dewees's son) "by virtue of writ Vend. Ex" issued in suit of Thomas Waters' judgment for 1500 pounds.

Finally, in 1799 Thomas Dewees sold the property to John Miller, and we must believe that this was the beginning of the buildings now on our land. Over the Pro Shop door there is a stone (about twenty feet up) with the date 1801 on it. Miller bought the property in 1799 and owned it until his death in 1813. His wife owned the property until 1815, thus it's likely that Miller built the barn, and shortly after built the original part of what is now the clubhouse. We are unable to determine what is the original part, and what was added through the years.

As the Revolutionary War approached, the farms and forges we have discussed here became significant. They supplied the Continental Army with food and arms, and the blend of cultures that had settled here seemed to have provided an almost fierce determination to fight for this new freedom.

The Quakers, though opposed to war, nonetheless supplied the army with their needs and also supported the troops in other ways. In fact, some of the leading members of the community ultimately served in key political and military capacities.

"The Revolutionary War"

As the War approached, the settlers seemed to come together even though the Quakers still were at odds with other settlers over how to defend against attacks from the British Army on private property. The seeds of patriotism had been firmly implanted, however, and the community grew stronger as the war grew closer.

A battalion of soldiers from our area right here was formed and known as the 4th Battalion. Its commander was Col. Montgomery, with a Capt. Mac Dowell and Lts. Turner and Hayes training and leading their troops. One of its first missions was to march to the New York area (approx. 125 miles) to take part in battles there, then return to Valley Forge. The trip took 6 days.

At that time the battle line was generally from a point near the covered bridge on Rte. 252 extending east along a line just north of our area to a point in the Port Kennedy area.

Here in Glenhardie, Helen Miller had sold the land to Hananiah Walker and although split up and resold from time to time, it generally remained in the Walker family until 1920, when John R. K. Scott purchased it from Jessie Walker. We will discuss that in our next chapter. During the period after the war and through most of the 19th century, there was little change here, though many of the residents fought and died in the Civil War. One amusing note: in 1840 a religious sect known as "The Battle Axers" settled here under the direction of Theophilus Gates and his Chief Votary, Hannah Williamson. The philosophy was one of community possession including the sharing of all properties, wives, husbands, with a common ownership of all. They were disbanded after four years by law. And now, we come to "Glenhardie".

"Glenhardie"

John R. K. Scott was well known in the area as a brilliant lawyer and a skilled restorer of fine homes. He purchased his first farm in 1912, which was located on Gulph Rd. west of Richards Rd. The house he restored and the one that the family occupied still stands and can be recognized by the white colonial pillars. The land originally owned by Abijah Stevens during the Revolutionary War was given to his daughter who had married a soldier from the Encampment, named Woodman. Her house still stands on Guthrie (County Line) Rd. with its cut stone entrance. In 1920, Scott purchased the land we now know as Glenhardie, from Jessie Walker, and immediately set about to restore and upgrade the mansion, now our clubhouse. He gutted the interior without changing the exterior, removed some of the five staircases, and built the handsome staircase we now have. The dining room was once a sitting room, the game room a library, the bar was the pantry and the kitchen was in its present place. The rooms upstairs were living quarters for the family and staff. Scott established a dairy farm, had 125 Guernseys, and sold the milk to the Philadelphia Dairy in Ardmore. Scott felt that the area would someday be a fine residential section, and in 1925 engaged an engineer, who lined potential street areas with tress that showed a network of roads throughout Glenhardie. Some of these lanes can still be seen (near the 7th tee on the course for example). This plotted land was later used by Richard Fox when he purchased the property and built the Glenhardie Apartments. Scott also envisioned a "boulevard" from Valley Forge to Philadelphia and that is why the first section of the turnpike ended at nearby King of Prussia when it was built prior to World War II. His "boulevard" became the Schuylkill Expressway.

Basically the estate remained the same until it was sold to five different developers. Richard Fox purchased the section south of the turnpike and east of Glenhardie, including the clubhouse. The Glenhardie Community as envisioned by Mr. Fox would reflect total community living within the atmosphere of Valley Forge tradition. With this in mind he designed and constructed 20 buildings in three geographical sections. Each building was given the name of a Revolutionary War hero, and great care was taken in the layout and construction to retain trees and other ground cover. The result is our present privacy and award winning attractiveness. There are 449 units in the 20 buildings including townhouses, and widely varied floor plans to accommodate individual requirements. The work was finally finished in 1969, but in the meantime the country club was already active. The club charter was obtained in 1967, and while waiting to get a liquor license, the new tenants set up a program of covered dish dinners and B.Y.O.B. Now we go on to that club and the people that worked so hard to make it a place for all of us to enjoy, as we now do.

"Glenhardie, The Club"

The first president of the club was John McGuire, the vice president was Richard Butera, John Mealey was secretary-treasurer and Beverly Bushey and Violet McGowen were directors with Beverly Bushey chairing a Social Committee. In February 1968 Dr. and Mrs. Paul Lloyd joined the Glenhardie Country Club and have been active members since. We are deeply indebted to them for much of the material presented here.

The club officially opened Memorial Day 1968. Following the ribbon cutting by Mr. Fox there was a full day of activity on the golf course, the tennis courts, the pool, and games for everyone, with an all-day buffet, live music, and much to see and do.

A Golf and Greens Committee was formed with Dr. Lloyd, Gerry Prescott, Doug Fox, Ken Wescom, and Marie and Bill Gillespie working to set up a good golf program. Ladies golf was started, junior golf initiated, tennis matches set up, swim lessons were given to all, and swim teams formed. Activities planned included bus trips to Liberty Bell Park and other spots, and father and son dinners. Glenhardie became a part of everyone's life. Note of interest: no women were allowed to sit at the bar, and positively no children allowed in the bar room at any time. A golf pro from Paxon Hollow was hired, Jim Lydon, and the golf program rapidly grew.

Over the years many have made contributions to the club's being. We cannot list everyone, but [click here](#) to see the list of presidents, those who led us, and for whom we have the most respect and gratitude: