

Chapter Five

From Philadelphia to Millbrook

From *The Peerless Smiths* by Dixon B. Smith

John Hart was a Quaker who emigrated Witney, Oxfordshire, England to Philadelphia in 1682. Around 1850 descendants of John Hart settled in Millbrook Township, Peoria County, Illinois This chapter follows one hundred seventy years and six generations of Harts from their arrival in Philadelphia to their settlement in Millbrook.

Pennsylvania was granted to William Penn by Charles II to repay debts owed to William's father, Admiral Sir William Penn. It was a proprietary colony and had more freedom than crown colonies. William Penn offered complete religious liberty and easy terms for land which resulted in thousands of immigrants to Pennsylvania, mostly Quakers, from England, Wales, Germany, France and Holland.

John Hart was born in 1651, the son of Christian Hart and Mary Bleckley. His name appears in the Witney Society of Friends meeting records starting in 1675. When William Penn announced he was starting a new colony, John Hart decided to seek his fortune in the new world. He purchased from Penn one thousand acres of land to be located in the new colony after Hart's arrival. John and his sister Mary left Witney early in 1682. It is a family legend that John and his sister arrived in Philadelphia two months before Penn who arrived in October 1682.¹

On his arrival, John Hart settled on five hundred acres on the Poquessing in Byberry Township. He also was granted five hundred acres in Warminster Township, Bucks County. In September 1683 John Hart married Susannah Rush who was the daughter of William and Aurelia Rush. John Rush, the father of William, commanded a troop of horse in Cromwell's army. Friends monthly meeting records show John and Susannah were engaged to be married in 1681 prior to leaving England.²

John Hart was active in Colony government and in the Society of Friends. He was elected a member of the first Assembly from the county of Philadelphia, and his name is on the first charter of government, dated February 25, 1683, which Penn granted the colonists. He was a leading Quaker until the George Keith schism of 1691. He took sides with Keith against Penn and left the Friends along with Keith, Rush, and many other families. In 1697 John joined the Pennypack Baptist Church. Some time between 1693 and 1698 he sold his Byberry estate and moved to Warminster Township, where he died in 1714.

John and Susannah had five children – John, Thomas, Joseph, Josiah and Mary. John (1684-1763) married Eleanor Crispin who was granddaughter of William Crispin an officer under Admiral Penn and first cousin to William Penn. John was justice of the peace, high sheriff and coroner. In 1750 he erected the stone Warminster family mansion which today is in splendid condition, the home of Donald Brennan and Dorothy Rose-Brennan at 1145 Charter Road, Warminster, Pennsylvania. One of his sons, Colonel Joseph Hart, was very prominent in the Revolutionary War, and another Oliver Hart was the pastor of the First Baptist Church of

¹ *The Warminster Harts*, Gen. William Watts Hart Davis, Doylestown, Pa., 1902.

² *Ibid.*

Charleston, South Carolina, for thirty years.

Joseph Hart married Elizabeth Coreen. Nothing is known of Josiah Hart. Mary Hart died in 1721, unmarried.

Thomas Hart

Thomas Hart, the second son of John Hart (1651-1714) and Susannah Rush, was born in 1686 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. His date and place of death are unknown. He married Ester Myles in and they were known to have had at least three children. These were sons James, Miles, and Thomas.

Thomas Hart lived his youth in Bucks County Pennsylvania. His father died in Byberry Township, Philadelphia County, when Thomas was twenty-eight years old. His older brother probably inherited the bulk of the family estate and perhaps Thomas decided it was time to move on. He was in Orange County, Virginia when he agreed with Jose Hite to buy one thousand acres on the Elk Branch on the "Wagon Road from Potomack to Opeckon", and an additional five hundred acres two miles to the north. In November 1735 James Wood surveyed 1,300 acres on Elk Brach and this was the total of Thomas Hart's land, not the 1,500 acres originally agreed. There are three present day communities covered by this plot, Duffield in the center, Skeetersville on the east, and Shenandoah Junction on the southwest. Thomas Hart gave power of attorney to his son Thomas Jr. in September 1754 because he intended to move to North Carolina. This was at the start of the French and Indian War and several Indian war parties were raiding in the area. Nothing is known of what happened to Thomas Hart after 1854.

James Hart

Direct evidence is lacking, but circumstantial evidence is strong that James Hart was a son of Thomas Hart. James Hart married Rebecca Finney, a family friend, about 1735.

The North Carolina government in the 1760s was very oppressive. Imported goods, property and legal papers were exorbitantly taxed. The governor's deputies seized cattle and horses and grossly unvalued them for unpaid taxes. In 1767 Joseph Maddock and other Quakers applied for grants of land in the frontier territory of Georgia. They received them February 7, 1769. Among them were two hundred fifty acre grants made to James Hart and Thomas Hart. Samuel Hart and Peter Hart, single men, were granted one hundred acres.³ Joseph Maddock and Jonathan Sell led forty families by oxcart and horse on the three hundred mile trip from North Carolina to Wrightsborough in late 1769.⁴ An additional one hundred acres were granted to Samuel in 1772 and to Peter in 1774.⁵ This indicates they were married after the original grants.

³ *Wrightsborough 1768, Wrightsboro 1799, McDuffie County, Georgia 1870*, Compiled by Dorothy M. Jones, Wrightsboro Quaker Community Foundation, Inc.

⁴ *The Story of Wrightsboro 1768-1964*, Mrs. Pearl Baker, Wrightsboro Restoration Foundation, Thomson, Georgia, 1965.

⁵ *Wrightsborough 1768*.

Samuel Hart

Samuel Hart, the son of James Hart and Rebecca Finney, was born in 1746. He settled in Wrightsborough when twenty-three years old and lived there for eighteen years until he died in 1787. He married Ester Lowe in 1771 and they had seven children. In addition to two hundred acres of land, Samuel owned Wrightsborough town lot # 52.⁶

When Samuel died in June 1787 at age forty-one, he left his wife Ester to support five children - Isaac, William, Rebecca, Thomas and Finney, ages six months to fourteen years. Two other children, James eleven and Grace two, had died within one month of each other the prior fall. In August 1788 at the Monthly Meeting of Wrightsborough Friends, Ester "Requested To be joined in Membership with Us, which hath been Some time Under The Care of Women Friends, and They having Signified Their Unity Therewith; with which Request this Meeting Likewise hath Unity and Receives her Into Membership according To her desire With her Small Children Namely Isaac, William, Rebecca, Thomas and Fenny for Whom She hath Likewise Requested."⁷

In December 1789 Ester Hart married Amos Green. In February 1790 "The Friends appointed To Settle the Matter between Heirs of Samuel Hart deceased and Amos Green Report They have Compl'd with Their appointment."⁸

Wrightsborough was located about twenty miles west of Augusta in a virgin forest of trees with six to eight foot diameter trunks. "After taking possession of their lands, the first thing the Quakers had to do was cut the trees to build a shelter and make a clearing in the woods. This done, they 'girdled' the rest of the trees on the land intended for farming, and planted their seed around the stumps in holes dug with a hoe. The earliest types of crude shelters were sapling 'lean-tos', shingled with slabs of bark or white-oak shakes. These were purely temporary in nature, and the next step was to build a log cabin for winter occupancy while they waited for lumber to be cut and seasoned for their permanent homes. Log cabins would be utilized then as sheds or stables."⁹

Many of the creeks in Wrightsborough Township are named for the families living on them. Creek names include Hart's, Carson's, William's and Maddock's. The stream that formed the east and southeast boundaries of the village is Middle Creek

The early years were rough due to Indian troubles. Many of the grantees did not settle on their land within the prescribed period. And about one-third of the population left for the safety of Augusta or Savannah. However by the late summer of 1773 the situation had improved. Most returned and about twenty good houses had been built in Wrightsborough.

The Quakers were determined to give their children the best possible education, even though no public school system existed. The children were taught by an elder gathering in the larger homes or in the meeting house. Books were few, but highly valued.

The Quakers of Wrightsborough did not fare well during the Revolutionary War as their religious beliefs forbade them military duty. Americans thought them loyalists because they would not fight the British and the British thought they were rebels because they would not join them. The Americans held Georgia from 1776-1777 and the British 1778-1782. The British, marching up from

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Quaker Records in Georgia*, Robert Scott Davis Jr. Compiler.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Wrightsborough 1768*

Florida, captured Savannah in December 1778 and Augusta in early 1779. During the winter of 1780-1781, Wrightsborough was raided by Patriots who killed nearly fifty people thought loyal to Britain. Several companies of militia were then appointed for the defense of Wrightsborough against the "Liberty Boys". Lt. Samuel Hart was officer of one company patrolling northward of town.¹⁰ Interesting; while his cousin Col. Joseph Hart was fighting the British in the north, Lt. Samuel Hart was defending for them in the south.

Samuel Hart's oldest son Isaac was born in 1773 and married Sarah Buffington in Warren County, Georgia, in 1796. William, born in 1777, married Elizabeth Twiggs Lowe in 1804 and died in 1818. Rebecca, born in 1779, married Eli Dixon. We shall hear more about Thomas and Phineas later.

Thomas Hart

Thomas Hart, the son of Samuel Hart and Ester Lowe, was born in 1782. He married Mary Gregg, who was born in 1787 of unknown parents. Thomas was one of the early settlers in Preble County, Ohio.

Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1793 and this quickly changed the farming in the south. Planters increased cotton production which required more slaves to cultivate, and harvest. Slavery was against Quaker beliefs and they became more and more outspoken and unpopular in Georgia. Thus in the early 1800s began a Quaker migration from Wrightsborough which was complete by 1806, most going to Ohio and Indiana. One of group of forty families crossed the Ohio at Cincinnati June 12, 1805. We have no records, but perhaps the Harts were in this group.

Thomas and his brother Finney settled in Preble County, Ohio. The Preble County 1811 Tax Lists show Thomas Hart owning Section 17, Israel Township. Israel Township is in the southwest corner of Preble County. Finney Hart, assignee of his brother Thomas Hart, entered one hundred sixty acres of land in Dixon Township, Preble County, Ohio, February 17, 1812. This was the southeast quarter Section 3.¹¹ Dixon is on the north border of Israel Township.

Preble County is thirty miles north of Cincinnati on the Indiana border. Israel Township is in its southwest corner; Dixon Township is on Israel's northern border. The first settler of Dixon Township was Eli Dixon in 1804 and for whom the township was named when it was formed in 1812. Eli was from Georgia and married Rebecca Hart, the sister of Thomas and Phineas Hart.

Dixon Township has gentle rolling hills in the east and is flat and boggy in the west. It had many forests of beech wood and oak and still is prime agricultural land. At the time Eli Dixon arrived, there were many Indians passing through the area but most were not hostile. Wandering bands of Shawnees, Delawares, Miamis and Pottawatomies then regarded Preble County as a neutral hunting ground. The last Indians there were five families of Delawares who spent the winter of 1813-1814 on Four Mile Creek. They were friendly and were welcomed as a safe guard against hostile Indians.¹² Their camp was four miles west of Phineas Hart's farm on Section 12 of Dixon Township.

Another early settler of Preble County from Georgia was Robert Quinn and his family. He was originally from Maryland, spent a short time in Virginia, where his first child Jane was born, then

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ U. S. Land Entries, Volume 75, Page 302.

¹² *History of Preble County, Ohio*, H. Z. Williams & Bro., 1881, page 18, 322.

moved to Wrightsborough, Georgia, in 1789. They moved to Ohio in 1805, first living near Germantown, five miles east of Preble County, then the next year moving ten miles to one and a half miles south of West Alexandria. In 1807 they settled on the South East Quarter, Section 31, Twin Township, Preble County¹³. This land is only seven miles northeast of Phineas Hart's in Dixon Township. Jane Quinn married Phineas in 1814.

Thomas and Mary had eight children, all born in Ohio. They were Silas (born 1810), Samuel (1811), William (1814), twins James and John (1819), Rebecca (1821), Isaac (1824), Joseph (1828) and Mary Ann (1832). Twins John died at three and James at nineteen.

In February 1837 Thomas Hart and his wife Mary deeded to their sons Samuel and William Hart for \$2000 the northeast quarter of Section 12, Dixon Township.¹⁴ In November 1839, Samuel sold his interest in this property to William for \$2000.¹⁵

Thomas Hart died in 1841 in Preble County as did his wife Mary in 1848. When Thomas died, he had no valid will. This presented a huge legal problem then, just as it would now. The oldest son, Silas, was appointed administrator of the estate. Final settlement was not until 1860, nineteen years after the death of Thomas. It is not clear why the proceedings dragged out so long. The goods and chattel were appraised in February 1842 at \$2498.12. This included a \$700 note dated October 2, 1837, on sons Samuel and William due in two years. There were two notes on Jacob Fox for \$785, and there was \$450 cash on hand in paper money. In addition there was the farm of one-quarter section (160 acres). In the final outcome the note was forgiven to Samuel and William, Silas was paid administration fees of \$138.84, Isaac and Joseph shared the farm, and Rebecca and Mary Ann shared the remainder of \$608.73. It appears attorneys and taxes got most of the estate.

William and Samuel left Preble County and settled in Millbrook Township, Peoria County, Illinois before 1850. The 1850 Illinois Census shows William and Samuel living adjacent to one another in Millbrook. According to the birthplaces of his children listed in the Census, he came to Illinois after 1840 but before 1844. William sold part of his Dixon Township farm (South Half Northeast Quarter Section 12) in November 1846,¹⁶ and the other part in October 1849.¹⁷

Phineas Hart followed his nephews William and Samuel, to Millbrook in 1849. Finney purchased his first land in Millbrook (West Half of Northwest quarter, Section 20, Millbrook) on May 28, 1849.

Silas Hart never left Preble County. In 1832 he married Hannah Eslinger. Silas died in 1869 and Hannah in 1890. They had nine children, seven boys and two girls – John E., Thomas J., Isaac N., Rebecca, Alexander, Finney M., Mary Ellen and Joseph Rhue. In 1881 all of the boys were still living. Also at that time, Hannah Hart was living with her son, Alexander. Alexander Hart was the proprietor of the oldest tile factory in Preble County.¹⁸

The 1850 Ohio Census for Preble County shows Isaac, Joseph and Mary Hart living together. Nearby were their brother Silas and his family.

In April 1875 Joseph Rhue Hart moved to Brimfield, Peoria County, Illinois. In 1878 he married

¹³ Op. Cit., page 157, 317.

¹⁴ Preble County Deed Book 25, page 439.

¹⁵ Op. Cit., Book 27, page 72.

¹⁶ Op. Cit., Book 35, page 485.

¹⁷ Op. Cit., Book 38, page 493.

¹⁸ *History of Preble County, Ohio*, H. Z. Williams and Bros., 1881, page 167.

Bellemina Eva Forney. In about 1884 they moved to Dunlap, and ten years later to Princeville, where Joseph was a masonry contractor and town sheriff. He died in Princeville in 1922. While not a Millbrook Hart, Joseph lived in adjacent townships and had plenty of contact with his brethren from Preble County.

So ends the one hundred seventy year, five generation journey of Harts from Philadelphia to Millbrook.