

## An Old Botanic Garden

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THE third of Pennsylvania's Botanic Gardens, and the one that is now in the best state of preservation, is that at "Harmony Grove," planted by John Jackson (1747-1821), a contemporary and friend of Humphry Marshall, the botanist (1722-1801).

John Bartram (1699-1777) began planting his garden in 1728; Humphry Marshall, his cousin, influenced by Bartram, began his in 1773; and John Jackson about the time he inherited Harmony Grove in 1785.

To the last named Dr. William Darlington, in his *Memorials of Bartram and Marshall*<sup>1</sup>, thus refers (p. 549n):

John Jackson, of Londongrove Township, Chester County, was one of the very few contemporaries of Humphry Marshall, who sympathized cordially with his pursuits. He commenced a garden soon after that at Marshallton was established, and made a valuable collection of rare and ornamental plants, which is still preserved in good condition by his son, William Jackson, Esq. John Jackson was a very successful cultivator of curious plants, a respectable botanist, and one of the most gentle and amiable of men.

"Harmony Grove" is situated in the western end of the Toughkenamon valley on the Harmony road near the town of West Grove. Its earlier history is well worth repeating:

Isaac Jackson, an Irish Friend became greatly interested in America, to which his elder daughter<sup>2</sup> had emigrated, and although past sixty years of age, it became impressed on his mind that he too should emigrate, or, as the old family memoir states, Isaac and wife had the subject of their emigration "under weighty consideration for several years," and "while they were under exercise and concern of mind and desirous that best wisdom might direct, Isaac had a dream or vision to this import, that having landed in America he traveled a considerable distance back into the country till he came to a valley between two hills. Through this valley ran a pretty stream of water. This prospect and situation of the place

<sup>1</sup> Printed in 1849 (copy in D.).

<sup>2</sup> Rebecca, married Jeremiah Starr and settled in Pa.

seemed pleasant, and in his dream he thought his family must settle there, though a wilderness unimproved."<sup>3</sup> And also that his family should possess this land for many generations.

Of this family tradition Bayard Taylor probably tells in his poem, "The Holly Tree," to which he perhaps added the romance :

And a vision came as he slept one day in a holly's shade,  
An angel sat in its boughs and showed him a goodly land,  
With hills that fell to a brook, and forests on either hand,  
And said, "Thou shalt wed thy love, and this shall belong to you,  
For the earth has ever a home for a tender heart and true."

Even so it came to pass, as the angels promised then,  
He wedded and wandered forth with the earliest friends of Penn,  
And the home foreshown he found, with all that a home endears,  
A nest of plenty and peace for a hundred and eighty years.

Tradition says that, fully convinced, possibly by the dream, that it was right for him to come to America, he at once prepared to emigrate with his family, and in due time (September, 1725) arrived at the home of his daughter in London Grove township, and that when he related his dream to her family, "was informed of such a place near. He soon went to see it, which to his admiration so resembled what he had a foresight of that it was a cause of joy and thankfulness."

This tract of 400 acres was the only unsettled land in the neighborhood at this time, and Isaac hastened to become the owner of this, to him, promised land. In the valley close to the spring, as was common in those days, he builded his house, at first a log house that was later joined to a substantial stone wing; and since then, two brick additions have been built, where formerly the log house stood. The house is large, low and rambling, with little architectural merit, and does not compare favorably with Bartram's house, but the treasures of the grounds to the lover of trees and plants far outnumber those in Bartram's garden, where few, if any, of the original trees are standing.

Isaac Jackson willed 300 acres of his homestead to his eldest son, William, who at his death in 1785 willed

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Futhey & Cope's *History of Chester County*, 1881, p. 610 (copy in D.).

it to his son, John, the botanist, who from this time on devoted much of his time to his garden. The original garden consisted of an acre and a half surrounding the house in the valley. His son later planted the hillside grove.<sup>4</sup>

In the heart of the grove is the spring, and here formerly stood a spring house, above which was the seed house and office, for John Jackson carried on an extensive correspondence with the learned men of this country and of Europe, and sent and received here his packets of rare or curious seeds. Only part of the walls of the old building are now standing, and they are richly colored with the mossy growths of a century. The spring with its little outlet is tributary to White Clay Creek, and finds its way finally into the waters of the Delaware.

One does not often have the advantage of knowing the age of a growing tree, so that it is more than interesting to know what nature can do in one hundred and twenty-nine years. The trees, however, have become too crowded for perfect development, and have more the appearance of forest trees, while the shrubbery and lesser plants and vines, now growing wild, give just a hint of what a tropical jungle might be. In their sheltered valley they have fortunately escaped the ravages of storms, a few have died, and others need the helping hand of the tree surgeon to prolong their life or remove signs of decay, but they are in the main wonderfully preserved and beautiful.

Fronting the house are a row of veterans (possibly planted by the emigrant) somewhat maimed, great maples, a sycamore stretching stark arms heavenward, and a honey locust with a girth of more than 13 feet (all measurements about 4 feet above ground).

The grove is rich indeed in great nut trees of many kinds, that must have gladdened the hearts of generations of little folks, and their "goodies" added to the charm of home on winter evenings when they gathered around the great open fires on the hearth.

There is a group of picturesque mahogany trees now laden with their great brown beans.

<sup>4</sup> John Jackson married Mary, daughter of Joel and Hannah Harlan. His son was William (1789-1864). See *Hist. of Chester Co.*, pp. 610, 611.

Our nurseryman, I notice, speaks of the sweet gum as being a tree of slow growth and "medium size," but the noble one growing here sends up a smooth unbroken trunk far into the air whose girth is over 14 feet.

The great ginkgo, a noble tree, measures almost 10 feet in circumference.

Near the spring is the fine holly tree (girth  $6\frac{1}{2}$  feet) that Bayard Taylor describes as having come with the family from over the sea :

A hundred and eighty years it had grown where it first was set,  
And its thorny leaves were thick and the trunk was sturdy yet,

and it is still symmetrical and beautiful.

Among the evergreens are many well-known friends of great size. A cedar whose progenitor probably came from Lebanon's slope. The yews are of two varieties, the English yew, and one with a very small leaf.

One larch has a circumference of 12 feet, a cypress of 12 feet, while a bald cypress growing near the outlet of the spring has a girth of  $22\frac{1}{2}$  feet and through the moist ground about it pushes up its numerous "knees" to a distance of 30 feet from its base.

Little wonder that to the old settler it was "the promised land."

ELLA KENT BARNARD.

*West Grove, Pa.*

27 v. 1724.

It is observed that the custome of Tea in y<sup>e</sup> p<sup>re</sup>sent use of it in y<sup>e</sup> ffamilys of some ffreinds by invitations and vissitations, is too much a Worldly custome, by w<sup>ch</sup> our young people & children make vissitts also one to another tending to their hurt & looseing the sence & simplicity of truth, by giveing way to unnecessary discourses & talk when they are together ; w<sup>h</sup> thing y<sup>e</sup> Elders of our halfe years meeting some years past, became so sencible of, that w<sup>th</sup> grieffe of minde, they re<sup>pr</sup>esented it to y<sup>e</sup> three provinces as a hurtfull thing creeping into Friends familys and Earnestly recomend it to y<sup>e</sup> care of concerned ffriends to put a stop to it, Not but y<sup>t</sup> the creature in it selfe may be usefull to some weak people or such others as may find benefit by it in the ordinary use thereof and not as Gennerally & customarily by y<sup>e</sup> people of y<sup>e</sup> world as too many of ffriends & their Children has got into the costly & Unnecessery Examples thereof.—From the Minute Book of the Men's Meeting at Cork.