

Ann Whitall and the Battle of Red Bank, 1777

“ **W**HEN the war of the Revolution at last broke out, the Americans built a series of forts on the Delaware to protect Philadelphia from the British Fleet . . . Now it happened that one of these forts, Fort Mercer, was placed on the farm of Red Bank, so near to the Whitall house that Ann Whitall must have seen the work going on—with what grim reflections we can imagine—from her windows . . . During the battle which raged about her house Ann Whitall sat upstairs, spinning. As a Quaker, she of course utterly disapproved of fighting. . . . So there she sat, calmly spinning, in the midst of the cannon-balls ; quite refusing to move, and probably not even looking out of the window. And it was only, at last, when a shell burst through the walls and partitions behind her back that she reluctantly and leisurely took up her wheel and went down to continue her spinning in the cellar.

“ But when the battle was over, and the Hessians retreated, she came up to take care of the wounded who filled her house. We are told that she scolded the Hessians for coming to America to butcher people, but also that she was active and vigorous and kindly in nursing them ; and indeed, it was an unrivalled opportunity to gratify her love of herbs and prescriptions. Count Donop died in her house. . . . The gallant young German noble thus found his grave on this New Jersey farm. . . . Their orchard was cut down and their barns destroyed. . . . The only reference in Ann Whitall’s Diary to these events is the note that in 1777 the ‘gugments’ predicted by the aged woman preacher ‘Eals Holl’ [Alice Hall] had come upon them. And it seems that in her stern soul she believed this rage of musketry and cannon, these shells bursting through the house, and men-of-war exploding almost under her windows, were a judgment on them ; troops being sent from Germany and France, and war ships brought by

Heaven across the ocean, to punish her family and other Friends for sleeping in meeting and for Sunday skating and fishing."

The above is taken from an article by Logan Pearsall Smith which appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* of July, 1901, entitled: "Two Generations of Quakers. An Old Diary." He describes the Diary as "a little old book, shabby, and yellow and worn at the edges . . . every corner closely filled with small, old, faded writing." It was the Diary of Ann Whitall, *née* Cooper, (d. 1797), wife of James Whitall (1717-1808) of Red Bank, New Jersey, and appears to have covered the years 1760, 1761, and 1762, with an addendum written in 1780. Of the Diarist, L. P. S. writes: "She was a soul of the old, stormy kind; her spirit lived not so much in New Jersey as in the Jerusalem whose wickedness was denounced by the prophets . . . She would predict with grim satisfaction judgments from Heaven."

Ann Whitall and the Battle of Red Bank, 1777, is referred to at length in *John M. Whitall*, 1879, quoting Lossing's *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* and Watson's *Annals of Philadelphia*. On the authority of her grandson, we read in *John M. Whitall* that Ann Whitall "saw the lower limbs of a thief going upstairs. She followed him up immediately, found him under the bed, ordered him out, led him by the collar down stairs and slapped his face, and bid him be gone" (page 11).

Meeting Records

AT THE MEETING HOUSE, BULL STREET, BIRMINGHAM

Campden and Stow Monthly Meeting,	1724-1779.
Old South Warwickshire ,,	1748-1790.
Shipston Monthly Meeting,	1758- 1790.
South Warwickshire Monthly Meeting,	1790 to date.
Shipston and Brailes Preparative Meeting,	1790-1854.
Shipston and Armscott Accounts,	1680-1701.
Campden Women's Monthly Meeting,	1754-1790.
South Warwickshire Women's M.M.,	1790-1831.
Shipston Women's Preparative Meeting,	1820-1857.