

Rochester School

(Vol. XVII. pp. 1-19, 90-93)

Francis C. Clayton writes :

I can fill in a few more details about this school.

My grandfather, Hollis Clayton (1766-1830), was at the school in 1777. He was a boarder but was not at that time a member of the Society of Friends. According to Thomas Marsh's letter (xvii. 90), the school can then have only been opened about two years. There is a print of a curious Diary in **D**, for part of that year, kept by my grandfather's cousin, John Allen, of Ratcliff, from which I ascertained this fact [see below].

In 1787, my grandfather's youngest brother, John, was at the school. See illustration for specimen of his penmanship, about quarter size of original.

In 1887, I received an amusing letter from Frederick Wheeler, of Rochester (1805-1893), about the early history of the school. He wrote :

William Rickman, of Rochester, was recommended by certificate of Horslydown M.M. to Rochester M.M. in 1786 (signed by John Ady and thirty-three other Friends). It recites that W.R. had lately come from " Westbury on Long Island, in the Government of New York, and that there appeared nothing as to debts and engagements to prevent " etc.

Tradition suggests that W.R. was a schoolmaster on the other side of the Atlantic,¹ and effected, as occasion required, a tingling on the backs of his young clients there. I can find no clue to the dates of his recommencing *this* useful ministry after his arrival at Rochester, but his name soon appears as taking a useful share in transacting the affairs of the Church. I was under his care at Boley Hill, but do not remember that I ever had the advantage of this corporal discipline, or I might have turned out better, that is, not quite so bad.

I have read through twenty-one years of Rochester M.M. minutes and have gleaned some information from them which may be of interest. W. Rickman was largely engaged in the ministry. A certificate was granted to him for a religious visit so far back at 1806, and between

¹ For a biographical note on William Rickman, see xiii. 140.
The cost of the illustrations has been met privately.

Boarding School
Boley Hill
Rochester

Honorable Parents

Learning and good Education are
better than riches

Mark the perfect man, and behold the up-
right; for the end of that man is peace.

John Clayton scribe.

[#]
15 of 5 Mo. 1787 aged 13 Years

the years 1823 and 1834 no less than twenty certificates were granted him including one to France. He was acknowledged a Minister in 1793.

The Town Clerk of Rochester informs me that the old Rate Books have disappeared long ago, but that William Rickman appears as one of the Parliamentary voters in 1832, and, for the last time, in 1838-9. I was in hopes of finding from an inspection of the Rate Books if and when the tenancy of Boley Hill changed.

Robert Styles followed William Rickman. See vol. xvii. p. 18, n. 2.

Richard Lambert Weston's name appears on the Registers so far back as 1804. He was a convinced Friend and came from Newbury, Berks. I noticed in the M.M. books that in 1813 he was appointed as companion to William Forster, of Tottenham, on a religious visit to Berkshire and Wiltshire Q.Ms. In 1822 some extraordinarily beautiful specimens of penmanship were executed at the school by the late Arthur Albright (which are now in the possession of his daughter, R. A. A. King), and the exercises in arithmetic are more wonderful still for they include practice in "Fellowship," "Allegation Medial," and "Direct Position." I have enquired of the Head Master of one of our large Public Schools what all these sub-divisions in arithmetic meant and he said it was the custom a century ago to make them and he mentioned several still more extraordinary names.

In 1833, the school was discontinued and was followed by a girls' school, kept by two of William Rickman's daughters.

As a final word I will quote from *A Week's Tramp in Dickens Land*, by Hughes (London, 1891):

"Near Minor Canon Row, to the right of Boley Hill is the 'paved Quaker Settlement,' a sedate row of about a dozen houses up in a shady corner."

The periods during which the four headmasters directed the school are, approximately:

William Alexander, 1775—1785.

William Rickman, 1786—*post* 1805.

Robert Styles, *ante* 1815—1820.

Richard L. Weston, 1820—1833.

The mill-owner named Horsnail referred to xvii. 11, 12, was probably Robert Horsnail, Junior. He married Eliza Samuda. He was an "angel" of the Irvingite Church and his wife belonged to the same Church.

The diary of John Allen (1757-1808) referred to above was printed under the editorship of Clement Young Sturge in 1905, as *Leaves from the Past*. The following entries refer to William Alexander and Rochester School :

1777.

- 5 mo. 16. This afternoon William Alexander came to town with Hollis [Clayton]. They both lodged at our house.
19. Father went to Grace church Meeting this Afternoon where the business [of Yearly Meeting] is Transacted every year; the Females to Devonshire House Meeting which is their Synod. They returned with the Addition of Ann Fleet & W^m Alexander's wife about eight o'Clock.
20. Rained hard for most of the Night . . . to meeting this fore-noon & was accompanied there with Friend Alexander. His great Coat was wet through, being but thin.
24. William Alexander & Wife & Ann Fleet departed from our Mansion this Morn^g with a design to return Home.
- 6 mo. 8. Went with Cousin Hollis to take his leave before he goes to School.
9. Went with Cousin Hollis to London Bridge to meet the Rochester Coach . . . and put him in.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Friends Historical Society was held in London on the 19th April. Ernest E. Taylor, retiring president, delivered the presidential address, his subject being "The First Publishers of Truth, a Study from the Economic Standpoint."

Charles Francis Jenkins, of Philadelphia, Pa., was elected president and L. Violet Hodgkin, of Falmouth, vice-president.