

A Long Island Marriage Puzzle

The celebrated case of marriage of William Ashwell and Ann Ridge which was "stated and maintained Legal at a tryal at Nottingham Assizes ye eight of ye sixt month called August 1661,"¹ is the first document "copied by Isaac Horner, 1685," in the earliest record of marriages of Quakers on Long Island. It is followed by the account of a like case tried in the Richmond spiritual court, 1673, and by the following:—

"In Maryland their was twoo friends married y^e maiestrates Questioned their marriage and brought them in to trouble a bout it & at last it came before Assembly & Counsell as alsoe y^e Governor they were much puzled about it & friends haveing gone together according to y^e practice of y^e holy men in y^e scriptures of truth and law of god they lying y^e matter before y^e meetings all things being cleare a meeting was appointed on purpose for y^e taking one an other, & haveing a Certifycate, they being much puzled, both y^e Assemble Counsell Governor & maiestrates at last Referred y^e matter to an old ffryer a Papist a ffather as they Called him, And his answer was to them y^t if y^t was not a Lawfull marriage their was not one in y^e world, Here y^e Papists are made to Confess to y^e truth of this marriage Contrary to y^e commande of y^e church of Rome this was a bout y^e yeare 1670."

The earliest recorded marriage certificate of Quakers in this Colony, in 1663, immediately follows the above account in the record. The case of William Ashwell was cited in 1680 by John Bowne and Henry Willis when prosecution was attempted against them for allowing their daughters to be married without a licence. It was the only known case in America in which Quakers were called to account for neglecting the licence, which was never fully enforced, and fell into disuse.

New York.

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¹ The case is given in *The Journal of George Fox*, tercent. ed., p. 198, without names of parties concerned.

"1761. January 15. Last Sunday Evening [Jan. 11] departed this Life, after a week's Illness of a Pleurisy, Mrs. Sarah Hill, one of the People called Quakers, wife of Mr. Joseph Hill [Williamsburg] . . ."

"1761. October 29. Sunday last [Oct. 25], Died at his Plantation, near Town, Mr. Joseph Hill, an eminent Planter, and one of the People called Quakers, who by an honest Industry accumulated a very good Estate."

Taken from the *Maryland Gazette*, reprinted in the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, June, 1923.