

Our Recording Clerks

Continued from vol. xxvii. p. 9

No. 6. JACOB POST, 1757-1757

JACOB POST was born in London, in 1700/01, in Red Lion Court, son of Benjamin Post, timberseller, and of Elizabeth, his wife. He was brought up to his father's trade, and in 1730 he married Mary Blenman, of London. One Jacob and two Johns died in infancy. Their mother died in 1737, aged forty-two, at Tottenham, a few months after her son Edward was born. The father married again, in 1741, Mary Row, of London and was father of another John, born 1745, apparently the only surviving son; he was grandfather of Frederick James Post, of whom a memorial volume was printed in 1838. Jacob Post died in 1757 of fever and was buried at Whitechapel.

About 1755, at about the age of fifty, Jacob Post joined the Office staff, possibly in succession to John Fudge, who appears to have been in the Society's employ, and who was paid £1 5s. for one Quarter's Salary in 1753.

The Meeting for Sufferings recorded, 4 iv. 1755 :

“ This Meeting having under consideration the Making of Jacob Post Satisfaction for his Attendance as Assistant Clerk to this Meeting by reason of the Indisposition of Benj. Bourne, appoints . . . to consider the affair, and confer with Jacob Post thereon.” Next month Post “ brought in his bill for his salary to the 25th of Third Month last, amounting to Thirty-eight Pounds 17/9.”

In Tenth Month, 1757, the Meeting decided

“ to consider what may be reasonable to allow Jacob Post [now clerk] for his extra service at the last Y.M. in making sundry extracts, etc., over and above the Common Business of said Meeting—y^e committee reports that they can find but one instance of any such Charge in the time of Benja Bourne for business of the like nature. They are therefore of opinion that the sum of £2 10s. od. be now allowed to Jacob Post, but that it may not be any precedent upon Future occasions.”

Jacob Post wrote the heading for the Meeting to be held 28 x. 1757, but was deceased before many days had passed and the minutes of the said Meeting were entered in another hand. A bill for one month's salary, £4 3s. 4d., was made out to the executrix of Jacob Post.

No. 7. ROBERT BELL, 1757-1759

Of the seventh holder of the clerkship, Robert Bell, little appears apart from his official position. In 1753 he signed a document emanating from Devonshire House Monthly Meeting, he being then about forty-five years of age. The minute caused by the death of Jacob Post, 11 xi. 1757, required the Meeting for Sufferings to consider at its next meeting

“ the choice of a proper person to succeed him as clerk of the Meeting. In the mean time Robert Bell is desired to do the necessary business of this meeting ” ;
and a week later :

“ The Meeting taking into their consideration the choice of a clerk to succeed Jacob Post, deceased, and Robert Bell offering himself for that service, he was chosen accordingly. John Fothergill or Jacob Hagen, Jr., is desired to carry a copy of the above minute to the next Quarterly Meeting.”

The position carried a salary of £50 per ann.

Next year, in Eighth Month, the clerk applied for assistance. This was considered by a committee which also had before it a letter from William Weston, who applied for the post of assistant clerk.

“ It seems proper to us that William Weston be paid for his service out of the Salarys allow'd by this and the 6 Weeks Meeting, and the Meeting of 12, fifty Pounds p annum and that the remaining Fourty Pounds p an. Salary and all the perquisites shall belong to Robert Bell. . . . Friends confer together and agree how to devide between them in the best and most convenient manner the work which is to be done.”

But ten months after this arrangement was minuted, the Meeting for Sufferings, held 22 vi. 1759, was informed that

“ it did not suit Robert Bell to continue in our business and that he proposes to lay it down at the End of next Quarter.”

Thus, after only some six years of service, two of them in the principal office, R. Bell resigns the clerkship, but is called in later to assist. He died from consumption at the age of sixty-eight, 15 iv. 1776 and was buried at Bunhill Fields.

[In Joseph Smith's *Catalogue of Friends' Books* there are recorded several works, issued anonymously, but stated on the authority of our great bibliographer to have been written by a certain R. Bell. In a note to these Smith writes: "There was a Robert Bell who was Clerk (I believe) of the Meeting for Sufferings about the period this author lived, whether he is the same as the writer of these tracts I have yet to learn" (and so have we). Copies of the four writings referred to are in **D**. The dates of issue are 1746, 1747, 1749.]

No. 8. WILLIAM WESTON, 1759-1773

We have now to record the life of a Friend who was a prominent Minister as well as the Society's clerk. In the Testimony issued by Gracechurch Street Monthly Meeting, London, we read:

"He came into the Society after the middle stage of life. After seeking amongst divers Professions and being dissatisfied in his Mind, he came to an Evening Meeting at Gracechurch Street, where, thro' the Ministry of some Friends, his State was opened and he was convinced." He joined Friends, became a Minister, and visited Meetings in Kent and Sussex, saluting "the Little Flock at Rochester" with a letter in 1760. There is a letter in **D**, written to Mary Jackson, of The Old Vine Vaults, Lothbury, London, without date, referring to family visits in company with Sophia Hume and "Molly" Pryor.

The resignation of Robert Bell caused the following minute to be recorded by the Meeting for Sufferings, on a report from a committee:

"This Committee being of opinion that William Weston is by this time so well acquainted with the nature of the Business . . . as to be worthy of a tryal, & therefore agree to recommend him to the Meeting."

William Weston, having been in a subordinate position for about a year, is now, 1759, approaching the age of sixty, installed as principal officer, and he held the office for

fourteen years, "which trust he discharged with Fidelity and Care."

Four years later the Yearly Meeting authorised the Meeting for Sufferings "to provide a proper person as an assistant to William Weston, to be paid out of the Clerk's salary thus increased," viz. an increase paid by the Quarterly Meeting of £10 and by the Meeting for Sufferings of £20. This resulted in the appointment in 1763 of Thomas Gould, Junior, "a young man from Skipton," as assistant clerk at £30 per ann., which lasted for ten years, when William Weston informed the Meeting for Sufferings that, being rendered unable to transact the business thereof through want of health, therefore requested leave to resign,

"To which this Meeting consents, and, in consideration of his long and diligent services, desires the following Friends to consider what Allowance may be proper to make him. And the said Friends are also desired to enquire for a person to be joined with Thomas Gould in the room of William Weston as clerk to this and the other Meetings in the City." An annual retiring allowance of £40 was granted W. Weston and he retired to Rochester, in Kent, where he died on the 14th of April, 1774, aged about seventy. His wife Mary died in 1776, aged sixty-four.

Prior to his retirement William Weston was absent at times owing to ill-health and Joseph Storrs was engaged in May, 1772, to assist the assistant, for a payment of eight guineas.

No. 9. THOMAS GOULD, 1773-1783

In 1773, at the age of thirty-three, Thomas Gould, after serving ten years as assistant, was appointed clerk to the Yearly and other Meetings in London, at a salary of £70, "together with the usual perquisites at marriages; and when any additional help may be wanted of writing to keep the business of the Society constantly and regularly transacted, Thos. Gould to be at the Expence of an assistant as the occasions may make it needful. And in order that the whole business of the Society may be duly and methodically done, we propose that Robert Bell, being well acquainted with the Discipline of the Society, may be desired to attend the Meetings for Business to assist the Clerk, Thos. Gould, in

forming of minutes, and also to superintend the whole business of the Society, that every branch of it may be regularly executed, and for his care therein to be allowed per an £30,"

which would make it appear that T. Gould, after ten years' experience, was not sufficiently capable to execute the duties of the office, but a subsequent statement contradicts this. The next month it was agreed to erase the words: "together with the usual perquisites at marriages."

In Sixth Month, 1776, the Meeting for Sufferings approved the opinion of a committee that

"Thomas Gould, having for a considerable time past had the whole burden of the Business . . . his salary should be increased from £70 to £100, he finding at his own expence all needful assistance, that every thing belonging to his office may be kept in proper order and that the assistant which he may employ should be a reputable Friend. Agreed to, with addition that the assistant should be approved by this Meeting."

Thomas Gould departed this life in 1783, at the early age of forty-three, "of a decline." No connection has yet appeared between our clerk and others of the name Gould, who appear in the London Registers.

No. 10. JOHN ADY, 1783-1811

John Ady, of Cannon Street, London, haberdasher of hats, and Citizen and Long Bow String Maker, son of John and Elizabeth Ady, married Martha Crabb, in 1769 and had issue. Martha Ady died in 1794 aged fifty-three years, and at the end of the following year John Ady married Ann Hill. Two children only of the first marriage reached manhood—Joseph, and John Crabb, and two sons of the second marriage—Charles, an accountant, and Robert Hill, a truss-maker.

On the death of Thomas Gould a committee of the Meeting for Sufferings considered the question of a successor and its recommendation was approved, 24 x. 1783, that John Ady be appointed to the "vacant office of Clerk on condition that he relinquish his Trade and reside in the house in Nagshead Court."

In 1801, Ady applied for an assistant and James Pace was appointed at a salary of £30 per annum.

Apparently the proviso that the clerk should not engage in any business had not been complied with, for we read, 6 iii. 1807 :

“ This Meeting being of the judgment that it is incompatible with the duties of the clerk to the Office on these premises to be engaged in trade, directs that the person holding that situation shall not in future be allowed to do so.”

The Clerk expressed his unwillingness to abide by the decision and “ a proposal was made to him either to forego any other businesses or [? and] to receive an addition to his salary of £13 per an., or to retire from the offices he now fills for the Society with an annuity of £50 for life. He now makes choice of the latter.”

But Ady soon altered his mind and expressed himself willing to comply with the terms, and hence was retained in the office.

James Pace was succeeded by John Allcard as assistant to the clerk.

And now comes the darkest feature in the history of the Society's principal officers.

In an account of Yearly Meeting, 1811, written anonymously by William Hargreaves, preserved in **D**, we read :

“ 11th Sitting. Rec^d the report of the Committee for auditing the accounts. The balance in hand is upwards of £700. It appeared by the report that J.A. had defrauded this fund of upwards of £164, which was considered to have arisen from friends of seven Q. Meetings remitting to him in lieu of their respective Correspondents. Report says he has also intruded upon the money belonging Ackworth and that in the whole he is upwards of £500 deficient in his account.

“ How unfavourably this conduct corresponds with his intentions of publishing a tract explanatory of some of our religious Principles, it being generally understood he has something prepared for inspection, tending as he conceives to elucidate some of the sentiments adopted by our Religious Society. He is at present upon record by Devonshire house Mo. Meeting, and is like to be set without the camp at their next meeting.”

A special sitting of the Meeting for Sufferings was held 12 ii. 1811, and there is a long minute on the subject of the defalcations, concluding thus :

" This Meeting, considering that after such a breach of confidence he cannot with propriety be retained in its service, concludes to dismiss him."

A notification of this action was prepared by three Friends constituting a sub-committee for Ackworth School, and printed and circulated, with a renewal of the advice to remit money to the treasurer, Wilson Birkbeck.

For some years prior to his fall, Ady was engaged in the preparation of a book, which, when published in 1807, bore the title : *The Harmony of the Divine Will and the Heavenly Doctrines of the Old and New Testaments . . . compiled from the Sacred Writings, by John Ady.* The work runs to 350 pages and consists of extracts from the life of Christ with harmonious references from the Old Testament in the margins.

One copy in **D** contains critical comments by its owner, Morris Birkbeck, about 1808.

John Ady was disowned by Devonshire House Monthly Meeting in 1811. He took up the business of a stationer in Houndsditch. He died 17 xi. 1812. In the record of his death in the Friends' book of burials there is no " N.M." against his name.

To be continued

Extract from the "Life and Letters of Elizabeth L. Comstock," 1895

" We hear of many young Friends taking up arms for the North. One day three young soldiers were conversing together in Maryland when one of them used the plain language accidentally. ' It seems to me you are a Quaker,' said another. ' Yes,' he said, ' I am a son of Dr. Tobey.' (Dr. T. is the clerk of New England Yearly Meeting.) ' Well,' said the second, ' you have heard of Sybil Jones, I guess, she is my mother.' Their surprise had scarcely subsided, when the third announced himself as the son of William Henry Chase, an eminent minister at Union Springs, and a leading man on the committee of our Yearly Meeting School " (p. 109, quoted in Cox, *Quakerism in New York City*, 1930).