Let This Voice Be Heard: 18th Century Abolitionists
Briefing on the Abolitionist Symposium to be Held March 8 & 9, 2013
Wilmington Friends Meeting 401 N West Street, Wilmington, De 19801

Abstract:
In recent years, many Delawareans have become increasingly interested in Thomas Garrett and the First State’s important role on the Underground Railroad. Few know, however, that almost a full century before Thomas Garrett was born, Wilmington area residents were already active in the abolition movement. This conference brings together historians from across the nation to explore what happened before the Underground Railroad.

“Let This Voice Be Heard: 18th Century Abolitionists” will be a symposium bringing together local, state, and nationally-recognized historians with the general public to learn about and discuss the 18th century abolition movement, which was triggered before the American Revolution by thoughts of “liberty, freedom, and justice for all.”

Through a series of scholarly presentations by nationally recognized historians, we will explore the connections between 18th century Delaware abolitionists such as David Ferris, Daniel Byrnes to Anthony Benezet, John Churchman, Warner Mifflin, and prominent Quaker leader, John Woolman. The 18th-century is often called “ the Age of Enlightenment.” Enlightenment thinkers asserted that all human beings had natural rights. The American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789-1799), both fought against oppressive rulers, transformed this Enlightenment assertion into a call for universal liberty and freedom. These revolt inspired other slaves and free blacks to action, and convinced religiously motivated whites that only peaceful emancipation could prevent more bloodshed.

2013 is the 300th anniversary of educator Anthony Benezet, a one-time Wilmington resident, who became one of America’s leading pioneers in the 18th century movement towards racial equality. In honor of Anthony Benezet, registered Delaware school teachers will receive 6 continuing education credit hours for attending this event.

REGISTRATION FORM

Name(s)

Mailing Address (Street or Box)

Town  State  Zip

School teacher wishing Delaware Continuing Ed credits?

Yes. I plan to participate in the event(s) on Friday March 8, 2013
$20 per person. Friday evening reception at the Hale Byrnes House,

Yes. I plan to participate in the event(s) Saturday, March 9, 2013.
$25 per person Saturday Symposium at Wilmington Friends Meeting 9 AM-4:00 PM includes food, beverage and supplies. 401 North West Street (at the corner of 4th and West Streets)
Wilmington, Delaware 19801-2137

$45 Total fee for both events

$__________Amount enclosed

My check for _______ is enclosed.
Name__________________________________________________

Preferred E-Mail address

Phone on morning of symposium

Note: (Delaware school teachers please check Delaware Teachers’ Center website for details on how you can receive continuing education credits and subsidy for attending these events.)
AGENDA

MARCH 8 & 9, 2013

WELCOMING RECEPTION - FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2013

7:30 pm-10 pm    Reception — Historic Hale Byrnes House, (Take Exit 4-B from I-95) 606 Stanton-Christiana Road, Newark, DE 19713

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SATURDAY, MARCH 9, 2013

8:30AM — 9:00AM:  REGISTRATION AND COFFEE
9:00AM — 11:00 AM:  SESSION 1

Kim Burdick, Project Director,  Hale-Byrnes House
OPENING REMARKS

Christopher Densmore, Swarthmore
TAKING THE LONG VIEW OF ABOLITION: QUAKERS CONFRONT SLAVERY AND ABOLITION, 1657-1940

James Proud, Esq., Philadelphia
JOHN WOOLMAN

Martha Paxson Grundy, Cleveland Heights, Ohio
DAVID FERRIS: ARGUMENTS AGAINST QUAKER SLAVE-HOLDING

11:00 AM-11:20 AM:  COFFEE BREAK
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11:20 AM — 12:30AM: SESSION 2

Michael McDowell, Delaware Society for Preservation of Antiquities
WARNER MIFFLIN: QUAKER REFORMER AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY CROSSLROADS (ACTIVE 1774 TO 1798)

Catherine Short and Kay Wood Bailey, Facilitators: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS / PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

12:30AM —2:00 LUNCH

Maurice Jackson, Keynote Speaker, Georgetown University
LET THIS VOICE BE HEARD: ANTHONY BENEZET

2:00 PM —3:00 PM: SESSION 3

Julie Winch, Professor of History, University of Massachusetts Boston
BIRTHRIGHT OF THE HUMAN RACE: JAMES FORTEN AND THE ANTI-SLAVERY CAUSE

Catherine Short and Kay Wood Bailey, Facilitators:
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS / PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

Coffee Break
Panel Discussion #: 15 4:00 PM

Christopher Densmore, Martha Paxson Grundy, Maurice Jackson
PANEL DISCUSSION and WRAP UP.
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Synopsis of Talks

Christopher Densmore

TAKING THE LONG VIEW OF ABOLITION:
QUAKERS CONFRONT SLAVERY AND ABOLITION, 1657-1940

The long history of the abolition of slavery in North America is not a simple conflict between abolitionists and enslavers, and it did not begin with William Lloyd Garrison in 1831.

Quakers, though rightly credited as pioneers in the abolition movement, did not reach unity about slavery until the 1750s, and did not complete the work of emancipation among their own religious body until the 1780s. It was more than ninety years from the Germantown Petition of 1688 to the end of slavery among Quakers. It was more than eighty years from 1780, the end of slave ownership among Quakers and Pennsylvania’s Gradual Emancipation Act, to the legal end of slavery in the American Civil War. Quakers and other abolitionists were also aware that the single fact of enslavement or freedom did not fully address the issues of the political, economic and legal status of those freed. Just as the abolitionist movement did not begin in 1831, it did not end with the Civil War, but continued as a concern for the economic, educational, legal and social position of nominally free African Americans in the United States.

Christopher Densmore is the Curator of Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. His professional experience includes: Cornell University, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, Assistant, 1974; University Archives, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1974-1991 (Acting Director, 1995-98; University Archivist, 1998-2001); Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Curator, 2001-present. His organizational service includes (Current): Friends Historical Association (Board); Pennsylvania Abolition Society (Vice President); Conference of Quaker Historians and Archivists (Steering Committee), Records Services Group, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (member). Chris has written and spoken extensively on both American Indian and Quaker History.

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James Proud

JOHN WOOLMAN

Although it is hard to imagine, white society did not see slavery as a moral or philosophical problem until a small number of outspoken individuals made it a problem. Beginning in the 1750s members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, took the lead in challenging the institution. The most important Quaker anti-slavery activists were New Jersey Friend John Woolman, the author of the pamphlet Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes (1754), and Philadelphia Friend Anthony Benezet. During the mid-18th century Woolman traveled widely in British North America, appealing to Friends to free their slaves. Woolman and other anti-slavery Friends were unique in basing their opposition to slavery on their sympathy for enslaved African Americans.

James Proud, Esq. Philadelphia, PA 19144 graduated from Yale Law School, LL.B. and was also ordained in the Episcopal Church. While practicing law in Manhattan he served on Sundays in diocesan parishes and missions and, additionally, taught courses in the Old Testament in the Institute of Theology at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. After moving to Philadelphia he served over nine years as vicar of St. David’s, Manayunk before retiring on 31 December 2006. His attention was first drawn to Quaker studies upon learning of family connections with the 18th c Society of Friends in NJ. That interest led to writing the article “A Note on John Woolman’s Paternal Ancestors” published in Quaker History, Vol. 96 No. 2 (Fall 2007) and to researching and editing the book John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist’s Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera published by Inner Light Books (2010). Dr. Proud is presently working on a book tracing the vision of a ‘holy experiment’ forward through the Pemberton family’s meeting clerkships in colonial Pennsylvania and backward through Penn and Fox.
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Martha Paxson Grundy

DAVID FERRIS: ARGUMENTS AGAINST QUAKER SLAVE-HOLDING

David Ferris (1707-1779) was a well-known early Wilmington Quaker settler. As a Friends' minister he visited Quaker slave-holders, laboring to persuade them to freely manumit their enslaved people and provide them with the means to support themselves and their families. The arguments that Ferris used were a combination of the spiritual and moral harm hurting the oppressors along with compassion for the suffering of those held in bondage. He buttressed his arguments with scripture, implicitly negating use of the Bible to justify slavery. Unlike the work of later abolitionists using similar arguments against southern slave masters, by the end of the eighteenth century Ferris and the other anti-slavery Quakers had succeeded in persuading Friends to end their slave-holding.

Martha Paxson Grundy, Cleveland Heights, Ohio, graduated from Ursinus College in 1960, earned an MA in American History at Penn State in 1963, and a PhD in the same subject from Case Western Reserve University in 1990. In addition to editing and annotating the memoir of David Ferris (2001) she has written or contributed chapters to several other books about Quakers, such as The Evolution of a Quaker Community: Middletown Meeting, Bucks County, Pennsylvania 1750-1850 (Edwin Mellen Press, 2007), “The Quaker Background of Emma Brown Malone”, in David L. Johns, ed., Hope and a Future (Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1993), and Early Friends & Ministry, with an Introduction by Beckey Phipps (Boston, MA: Beacon Hill Friends House Quaker Issues, 2009). She has been actively involved with the Religious Society of Friends at the local, regional, and national level for many years.

Maurice Jackson, Keynote Speaker

LET THIS VOICE BE HEARD: ANTHONY BENEZET

Anthony Benezet was born in St. Quentin Picardy, France on January 31, 1713. His father Jean-Etienne Benezet and his mother Judith were Protestant Huguenots. The Huguenots had experienced a period of semi-religious freedom, lasting from the promulgation of the Edict of Nantes, under Henry IV in 1598, until the revocation of the Edict by Louis XIV in 1685, which led to renewed persecution by Catholics. His parents braved a generation of intensifying religious persecution, during which they were forced to join the Roman Catholic Church, into which Anthony was baptized the day after he was born. The Benezet family fled France for the Netherlands in 1715, then went to England and finally settled in Philadelphia in 1731. In 1735 Benezet was naturalized as a British citizen in Philadelphia and around that time joined the Society of Friends (Quakers).

Benezet became a schoolteacher and in 1742 he took charge of the Friend’s English School (renamed the William Penn Charter School) and helped found a school for Quaker girls. In 1750 he began to teach Black children, primarily in his home, and soon founded the School for Black People, also known as the African School for Blacks or the Free African School. Benezet’s
students included Absalom Jones, the first priest of African descent in the Protestant Episcopal Church and James Forten, the sail-maker and entrepreneur. Richard Allen, the founder of African Methodist Episcopal Church, also greatly appreciated Benezet’s work as teacher and abolitionist.

Benezet applied Quaker principles to his work with the enslaved Africans, including the belief that all people were born equal in God’s sight, the policy of nonviolence, and the disapproval of excessive material acquisitions and consumption. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who were against the slave trade, but went little further, Benezet fought to end slavery and proclaimed the complete equality of enslaved Africans. Benezet who was influenced by Benjamin Lay and John Woolman had a tremendous influence on Benjamin Franklin, who credited his pamphlets and petition efforts with the decision of the Virginia House of Burgesses to petition the King for an end to the slave trade in 1772. Benezet wrote many hundreds of letters, corresponding with American religious leaders such as George Whitefield and Moses Brown and secular revolutionary leaders Franklin, Benjamin Rush, and Patrick Henry about slavery and the slave trade. His most important works on Africa were *A Short Account of that part of Africa* (1762) and *Some Historical Observations of Guinea* (1771) which were distributed in the tens of thousands.

Thousands of Benezet’s pamphlets were distributed to abolition societies and members of the British Parliament. The correspondence between Benezet and the pioneer British abolitionist, Granville Sharp (whose grandfather John had been Dean of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York, the second highest position in the Church of England) proved to be one of the first links to the transnational fight against slavery and the slave trade.

**Maurice Jackson** is Associate Professor of History and African American Studies and Affiliated Professor of Performing Arts (Jazz) at Georgetown University. He is also a Fellow at the GU Center for Social Justice. He teaches Atlantic, African American, Washington DC and Jazz history.


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**Michael McDowell**

**WARNER MIFFLIN: QUAKER REFORMER AT THE ANTI-SLAVERY CROSSROADS**  
(ACTIVE 1774 TO 1798)

Born into a slaveholding Quaker family on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, Warner Mifflin became one of the leading opponents of slavery and of the oppression of African Americans during the nation’s founding era. This presentation will highlight the transformative personal choice made by Mifflin to liberate the African Americans he held in bondage, as well as his tireless activism aimed at convincing his country to do the same. To this end, Mifflin played a leading role in petitioning and lobbying the U.S. Congress and various state legislatures, including Delaware, urging these bodies to abolish the slave trade, end slavery, and enact other measures to assist African Americans. Mifflin was internationally recognized for his anti-slavery commitment, and by the end of his life was credited with assisting "hundreds if not thousands" of African Americans to obtain freedom. The direction taken by the nation with regard to slavery and the treatment of African Americans during this juncture of history had far reaching consequences for the future.

**Michael McDowell** is pursuing long-time interests in Delaware history and in eighteenth century Quakers, especially the abolitionist Warner Mifflin and the naturalist artist William Bartram, and has spent several years researching and writing about them. Mike enjoys connecting the dots that reconstruct causal and family relationships through detailed research. Mike has given presentations on his interests, including a talk on Mifflin’s life following the dedication of a state historical marker for Mifflin in Magnolia, and has published articles in the Delaware Conservationist and the Bartram Broadside.

Mike serves on the Board of The Delaware Society for the Preservation of Antiquities/Hale Byrnes House, is a member of the Delaware Historical Society, the Friends Historical Association, the Society of the Natural History of Delaware, the Bartram Trail Conference, and served on the board of the White Clay Watershed Association during its...
successful collaborative effort to have the watershed designated a part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Mike earned a BS in Entomology and Applied Ecology from the University of Delaware, and has worked for the USDA’s Beneficial Insects Research Lab. Currently employed by DNREC’s Division of Air Quality, he enjoys playing jazz and other music in his spare time.

JULIE WINCH

BIRTHRIGHT OF THE HUMAN RACE: JAMES FORTEN AND THE ANTISLAVERY CAUSE

African American businessman James Forten, who spent most of his long life (1766-1842) in Philadelphia, never experienced slavery first-hand. His parents were free and so was he. He was educated at the Friends’ African School, fought as a Patriot privateer during the Revolutionary War, and eventually returned home to apprentice with a white sail-maker who taught him his trade and then took him into partnership. James Forten’s rise from teenage apprentice to master-craftsman and ultimately to wealthy entrepreneur is pure Horatio Alger. In material terms he did very well indeed. He could have decided that the antislavery struggle had little relevance to him and that involving himself in anything controversial would be bad for business. That was not the stance that James Forten took, though. Reasoning that the cause of liberty was everyone’s cause, and that his privileged position made it his duty to speak out, he worked tirelessly not only within the African American community but with scores of white reformers in a joint endeavor to end slavery and secure civil rights for all Americans.

Julie Winch grew up just outside London. She received her B.A. in History (1975) from Cambridge University, before going on to London University and studying for an M.A. in American Studies (1976). After teaching for a year, she won a scholarship to study at Bryn Mawr College, where she earned an M.A. (1977) and a Ph.D. (1982) in American history. She taught at Bryn Mawr for a year, and then moved to Providence, Rhode Island, to teach at Rhode Island College (1983-85). She has been a member of the faculty at the University of Massachusetts, Boston since 1985.

Prof. Winch has been consulted for various history outreach projects, most recently the President’s House site in Philadelphia, and she was one of the historians who participated in the making of the PBS series Africans in America. She has been the recipient of two National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships, and she has held fellowships and research awards at Mystic Seaport, the American Antiquarian Society, the John Carter Brown Library, and Yale University’s Beinecke Library.

Prof. Winch is currently working on two book-length projects. Under contract to Oxford University Press, Reflections on Freedom explores the lives of free people of color in the
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period from the Declaration of Independence to the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. In a departure from her main area of scholarly interest, Prof. Winch is also working on a project tentatively titled Cheese Wars, or Blessed Are the Cheese-makers, an account of the Mammoth Cheese.

Kim Burdick, Project Director, is the Curator of the Historic Hale Byrnes House. She is a Cooperstown Graduate with an MA in American Folk Culture and Museum Studies and an MPA in Agency Management from the College of Urban Affairs, University of Delaware. She is Chairman Emeritus of the Delaware Humanities Council and is also a member of the DHF’s Speakers Bureau. Founder & Chairman of the American Revolution Round Table of Delaware, life member of American Friends of Lafayette, and National Chairman Emeritus of the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route (now W3R-NHT), Kim is the first woman to have been elected to the Board of Delaware’s George Washington Society. Kim teaches History at two local community colleges, one in Pennsylvania, the other in Wilmington. For information on Kim Burdick's Delaware Humanities Forum Speaker’s Bureau talk, "Seized in September," the story of what happened to New Castle County residents as competing armies occupied New Castle County, please see www.dhf.org.

Why is the Hale Byrnes House Sponsoring This Symposium?

Daniel Byrnes, for whom this historic site is named, was the Clerk of Wilmington Friends Meeting at the time of the American Revolution. In 1775, while living in this house, Byrnes produced one of America’s first Abolitionist tracts. For more information on Daniel Byrnes see, “Always Your Friend,” on the History page at www.halebyrnes.org
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**Who:** The Historic Hale Byrnes House and Quaker Hill Preservation Foundation cordially invite the public to attend a day-long symposium with nationally-known scholars and local historians who will be discussing the abolition movement in the Revolutionary War era. (More below)

**What:  Let This Voice Be Heard: 18th Century Abolitionists**

Symposium about the abolitionist movement that was taking place before the days of Underground Railroad.

**When:** The symposium will be held on Saturday, March 9th, 2013 from 9:00 am-4:00 pm

**Where:** Wilmington Friends Meeting, 401 N West Street, Wilmington, DE 19801

http://www.wilmingtondefriendsmeeting.org/

**Why:** This symposium commemorates the 300th Anniversary of Anthony Benezet, a local French-Huguenot and his colleagues, who were among the first voices to remind the Revolutionary War generation that “Freedom and Equality For All,” should include ALL peoples living in America, including those held in bondage.

**How:** RSVPs are required due to space limitations. The $25 registration fee includes lunch and coffee breaks and a copy of one of speaker’s books, “Resistance and Obedience to God: Memoirs of David Ferris (1707-1779) by Martha Paxson Grundy. [program attendees who wish to eat off-site are not required to pay the registration fee and may purchase this book separately).

Registered Delaware teachers may receive 6 continuing education credit hours for participating in this symposium. Please see Delaware Teachers’ Center website for details. To receive continuing ed credits, teachers should indicate their school on their registration form.

**To Register:** Please send your check to Treasurer. DSPA/Hale Byrnes House at 606 Stanton-Christiana Road, Newark, DE 19713. $25 includes lunch & coffee breaks and related supplies on Saturday.

If you wish to attend the Reception for the speakers the evening before, Friday, March 8, please indicate and include an additional $20.)

and also:

**What:** The public is also invited to an evening reception honoring these speakers which will be held the night before.

**Where:** Hale-Byrnes House, 606 Stanton-Christiana Road, Newark, De 19713, located just off Exit 4B of I-95, (Next door to White Clay Medical Center on old Route 7 North near Shones and Bell’s Supply).

www.halebyrnes.org

**When:** Friday evening, March 8, from 7:30 pm. $20 includes refreshments. To register for both events, please see above.