

Colonial *and* Revolutionary Families *of* Pennsylvania

Genealogical and Personal Memoirs

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George Fox graduated from University of Pennsylvania in 1780. In 1784 he was made a member of the Philosophical Society; in 1789-91, 1812-28, he was a trustee of the university; and in 1800 represented the city in Assembly. In 1799 he was one of the directors of Bank of the United States, and probably in other years also.

Townsend Ward, in his "Second Street and Second Street Road and its Associations," gives the following account of "Champlot," home of George Fox, which lies half a mile from the York Road and near the present Fern Rock station on the Reading Railroad:

"Half a mile west of our route, is Champlot, a charming place, where the Fox family have long lived. In 1722 it became the property of James Portues by whose will, in 1743, it went to Joseph Fox, whose town house, 48 N. Third Street, now bears the two nos. 46 and 48 N. Third Street. * * * In 1782 his son Joseph M. Fox succeeded to the property, and on his death in 1784 it was inherited by his brother George, who held it until his death in 1828, when it went to his children. * * *

"On his travels abroad he (George Fox) was a long time in France, and there, in 1780, at the dinner-table at the chateau of the Count de Champlost, was seized with illness. He was removed at once to Paris, and after a time, died, as was supposed, and was consigned to the care of the Capuchins to be buried. A little warmth in his hands being perceptible, led to the application of restoratives by which he was revived. On his return he gave to this beautiful seat the name of the French place he had cause to remember so well."

George Fox was at one time owner of the largest part of the Franklin papers. (See introduction to Smyth's "Life of Benjamin Franklin," from which the following account is taken.) Franklin by his will bequeathed all his manuscripts and

papers to William Temple Franklin, his grandson, who had acted as his secretary in Paris, and who was very dear to him. He seems to have entertained an exaggerated notion of William Temple's abilities, and to have believed him capable of properly sorting, arranging and editing these multitudinous papers and giving them permanent literary form. But William Temple Franklin had neither literary faculty or historic sense; he was indolent and timid, and was aghast at the magnitude of the task before him. He culled out what he imagined to be the most important of the manuscripts and carried them to London with the apparent intention of devoting himself to his editorial task.

The papers left by him in Philadelphia, by far the greater part of the whole collection, he bequeathed to his friend George Fox, from whose son, Charles P. Fox, they came to The American Philosophical Society, where they are now carefully guarded. The announcement of the intention to make the society custodian of these historical documents was made in a letter from Charles P. Fox to John Vaughan, Librarian, September 17, 1840: "Upon conversing with my sisters respecting the papers of Dr. Franklin, bequeathed by William T. Franklin, Esq., to my father, we have concluded they cannot be better disposed of than by presenting them to the society of which he was the founder.

Not all of these papers, however, went to the American Philosophical Society, for after the bulk of them had been delivered some still remained for many years in a garret over the stable at Champlost. About 1862 Miss Fox, who was probably ignorant of their historical importance, gave orders that they should be sold for old paper; but fortunately Mrs. Holbrook, who was visiting Miss Fox at the time, saw the papers being carried out and remonstrated. They were brought back, all but one unlucky barrel, which had already gone to the mill. Miss Fox retained some and gave the rest—a generous trunkfull—to Mrs. Holbrook. From her they descended to her son, George O. Holbrook, from whom they were purchased, 1903, through the efforts of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, and deposited in the Library of University of Pennsylvania.