



*Fabian Bachrach*

CHARLES FRANCIS JENKINS

# *Charles Francis Jenkins*

*1865-1951*

**C**HARLES F. JENKINS led a long and busy life: he was an editor and publisher for nearly seventy years, a member and president of the Buck Hill Falls Company for fifty years, a member and president of the Board of Managers of Swarthmore College for forty years, and an active participant in the American Friends Service Committee and other important Quaker activities. He was, in addition, a horticulturist, founder of the Hemlock Arboretum at his home in Germantown, an important collector of books and manuscripts, a writer of distinction in both prose and verse, and a fine businessman who always kept his feet on the ground.

Charles Jenkins was all this and more, but he was first of all a historian. That is why it is so fitting that he should have been for nearly sixty years a member of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania and should have died in office as its president. He was a member at one time or another of eight or ten historical societies, but he probably would have said himself that the presidency of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania was the most valued recognition of his interest in historical studies that he received. Charles Jenkins' own books are concerned with Quaker history, with the history of Philadelphia, and with the lives of Lafayette and Button Gwinnett, the almost unknown signer of the Declaration of Independence. All of his activities, even as a collector, were creative. He collected hemlocks (incidentally, all known species are represented in his Hemlock Arboretum), and he was active in having the hemlock adopted as the state tree of Pennsylvania. His home in Germantown, "Far Country," is adorned by two interesting walks: one composed

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of stones brought from places connected with the signers of the Declaration of Independence; one of stones from spots notable in world history, like the Great Wall of China and the town of Santa Fe in Spain where, during the siege of Granada, Ferdinand and Isabella received Columbus and gave him authorization to sail out to the western world on his first voyage of discovery. The stones look to the casual observer like any other stones, but not after Charles F. Jenkins' explanation of their history and significance. He was so fundamentally a historian that he could not build a casual walk without building into it something of the history and meaning of the past.

Charles Francis Jenkins was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania, on December 17, 1865, and lived successively in Wilmington, Delaware, and West Chester, Pennsylvania, where he completed his formal schooling and began work for the *Farm Journal*, which had been established a few years before by his uncle, Wilmer Atkinson. Charles Jenkins was not a college man; he was that better and rarer type—a man with solid, scholarly interests and the intellectual initiative which enabled him to follow them out by himself. He was never afraid to do a thing because it had not been done before. The *Farm Journal* was a fine example. This magazine guaranteed to its readers the honesty of its advertising. Its policy was not to see how much money it could make, but rather how much good it could do, and Charles Jenkins helped to lay the foundations for the phenomenal circulation and influence of the magazine today.

Charles Jenkins was devoted to Buck Hill Falls, and that most charming of all summer resorts owes more to him than to anyone else—its charm, its Quakerism, its emphasis on all the good things of life, including the good of the spirit. Every week for fifty years the *Friends' Intelligencer* ran on the upper left hand corner of its back page an advertisement of Buck Hill Falls, written, but not signed, by Charles Jenkins. These notices were short accounts of the doings at Buck Hill, of the varied charm of the different seasons of the year,

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of notable conferences and other events in the life of the colony. Every notice was concluded by a quotation, usually from an English or American poet, and one can only say that the notices themselves were such as any poet might have been glad to sign. Many subscribers to the *Intelligencer* formed the habit of turning first to the back page to see what Buck Hill had to say. Only gradually did it become known that Charles Jenkins was the author of these advertisements, and then the question was, What does Charles Jenkins have to tell us this week? Since Charles Jenkins' death no advertisement for Buck Hill has appeared in the *Intelligencer*. This is only a Quaker way of saying that Charles Francis Jenkins has left a gap in this respect, as in so many others, which no one can fill.

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