

Gilbert Stuart, artist.
Library of Congress.

A Great Valley Legend Examined: Where Did Washington Really Sleep on September 15, 1777?

K. Varden Leasa

Four generations of my mother's family lived in a colonial mansion in East Whiteland Township.¹ It was my own first home and where I spent most of my childhood. From time to time someone would say "Washington slept here, you know," which I soon discovered was a standard eastern joke; nearly every old house and inn lay claim to this patriotic distinction. I also learned it was a well-accepted "fact"—indeed still is—that Malin Hall, the colonial mansion on the farm next to ours, had been George Washington's headquarters the night before the Battle of the Clouds—not our house.²

On the fifteenth and sixteenth of September 1777, East Whiteland Township was the epicenter of world history to an extent never seen there before or since. On September 16, the army of his Imperial Majesty George III of England on the one hand, and that of his rebelling American subjects under George Washington on the other, came face to face in the township. Only a drenching rainstorm of near-hurricane

proportions averted a major, possibly decisive, battle.

Most of the events of that day and week—of the British campaign to capture the Revolutionary capital of Philadelphia and the rebel response—are well known and well documented.³ But no documents have been found to support the commonly held belief that Malin Hall was Washington's headquarters the night before the brief Battle of the Clouds.⁴ In the nineteenth century, historians and long-time residents of the area had no doubt where Washington headquartered, and it wasn't in Malin Hall.⁵ In this paper I will argue that those people in the 1800's were right and explain how the erroneous stories—and there is more than one false headquarters claim—eclipsed the correct one in the public mind, and even in the best historical accounts, as well.

To determine conclusively where Washington slept the night of September 15, 1777 (and awoke on the 16th, the day of the battle), one must first and fore-

most be familiar with the genealogy of the Malin family. In fact, the revisionist history presented here rests heavily on a genealogical foundation, buttressed by county land, tax, and probate records.

My family's house will be remembered by older East Whiteland Township and Main Line residents as the Brackbill place. During the mid-twentieth century, my relatives ran a motel and farm market under the family name. When purchased by great-grandfather Cornelius Haldeman in 1907, the farm consisted of 42.5 acres and filled much of the space between Lancaster Pike to the south, Conestoga Road to the east, and Malin Road to the north and west [see map on page 59]. The beautiful mansion on this property, built in several sections between 1730 and 1765, was put to the torch by the East Whiteland Fire Company in 1977 for training purposes, exactly two hundred years after Washington slept there! The firemen acted at the request of investors who had purchased the property at auction from my family in 1969. They resorted to this pyro-spectacle in order to reduce their taxes as well as the costs of maintenance and repairs on the old buildings while they waited for the land to appreciate in value. The historic preservation movement was still in its infancy in the mid-1970s and arrived in East Whiteland too late to save this important and much beloved landmark.⁶

For those who never saw the house and its accompanying "plantation," I'll briefly (albeit inadequately) describe it. It was as secluded as a property located on the Lincoln Highway could be, set well back from the highway at the end of a long drive, shaded and guarded by a good number of large old trees: Sycamore Maple, walnut, cherry, spruce, oak, weeping willow—even a Kentucky Coffee Tree. Another drive of almost equal length connected the farmstead to Conestoga Road.⁷ There was a low, ancient-looking building attached L-shaped to the main house that served before the mid-1930s as a "summer kitchen," and thereafter as the primary kitchen. In my childhood, this was usually the busiest, most interesting place in the house. The mid-section of the mansion was a two-story stone structure, whose low ceilings suggested its antiquity. The west end of its first

floor was originally one huge stone-floored walk-in fireplace. In early records, this old section of the house (probably built before 1741 by Robert Powell) is called a "stone kitchen," and was used by my great-grandmother Fannie Haldeman until about 1935 as her main, three-season kitchen. The largest section of the house extended eastward from this "stone kitchen". Unlike almost all other eighteenth-century masonry houses in the area, this section was built of brick, not stone, and stuccoed over. There were fireplaces in seven rooms of the house: in four bedrooms upstairs; downstairs in "Grandma Haldeman's Dining Room"; the Parlor (or Living Room); and in the kitchen .



Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin House. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

The grounds were simple but idyllic. There were quite a few outbuildings (converted to tourist cabins by Milton Brackbill), a carriage house, a springhouse/cold cellar/washhouse, an old stone tenant house, and a large bank barn. Like the house, the barn was L-shaped, with a two-story chicken house. A creek, known in modern times as Little Valley Creek and in the 1700s as Jenkins Run (after the land's original William Penn grantee) ran through the estate, which also boasted grain fields, pastures, gardens, and an orchard. I suspect its size and beauty, as well as the privacy it offered—lying slightly off the public road—attracted the eye of Washington's advance party in September 1777. The largest, brick section of the house was then only about fifteen years old.

It's unfortunate that no one thoroughly researched the history of the Brackbill-Haldeman farm until the 1990's, after the house was gone. Cornelius Haldeman purchased his 42.5-acre farm from the Manor Real Estate and Trust Company on January 17, 1907. Haldeman bought less than half of what had been a few years earlier a 119-acre farm. Of the remaining 76 acres, the woodland was sold off separately and some of the farmland was sold to Haldeman's neighbor, Mrs. Caroline Malin Stephenson—last Malin family resident of Malin Hall. Looking back to the previous thirty years, it was owned by investors and real estate companies between 1899 and 1907. From 1879 to 1899, the 119 acres belonged to Captain William S. Underdown, USN, who was often away at sea, and who employed tenant farmers. From 1876 to 1879 it was owned and operated by Benjamin Crouthers, originally of Delaware County.⁸

Keep that last name in mind as you open the classic *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania*, by judge-historian J. Smith Futhey and genealogist Gilbert Cope. Writing in the late 1870s (publication date: 1881), their lengthy account of the Continental Army's movement westward on the Lancaster Road on September 15, 1777 winds up like this:

[Washington] proceeded to a point near the junction of the Lancaster and Swedes' Ford roads, in East Whiteland township, northwest of the Admiral Warren tavern, and encamped his forces between that point and the White Horse tavern, *having his headquarters at the residence of Joseph Malin, now belonging to Benjamin Carruthers.*⁹

That sentence really should convince the skeptics, or at least raise serious doubts in their minds. It could hardly be any clearer. And it's not the only source giving the name "Joseph Malin."¹⁰ Deed research proves that the farm and house purchased by Cornelius Haldeman in 1907 and owned by his daughter and her husband, Ruth and Milton Brackbill, until 1969, was the same place owned briefly in the previous century by Benjamin Crouthers (correct spelling of the surname). Two eminent historians, writing only a century after the actual historical events, reported that the house owned by Crouthers (in their time) was where Washington headquartered. And primary documents, such as General Washington's Itinerary and

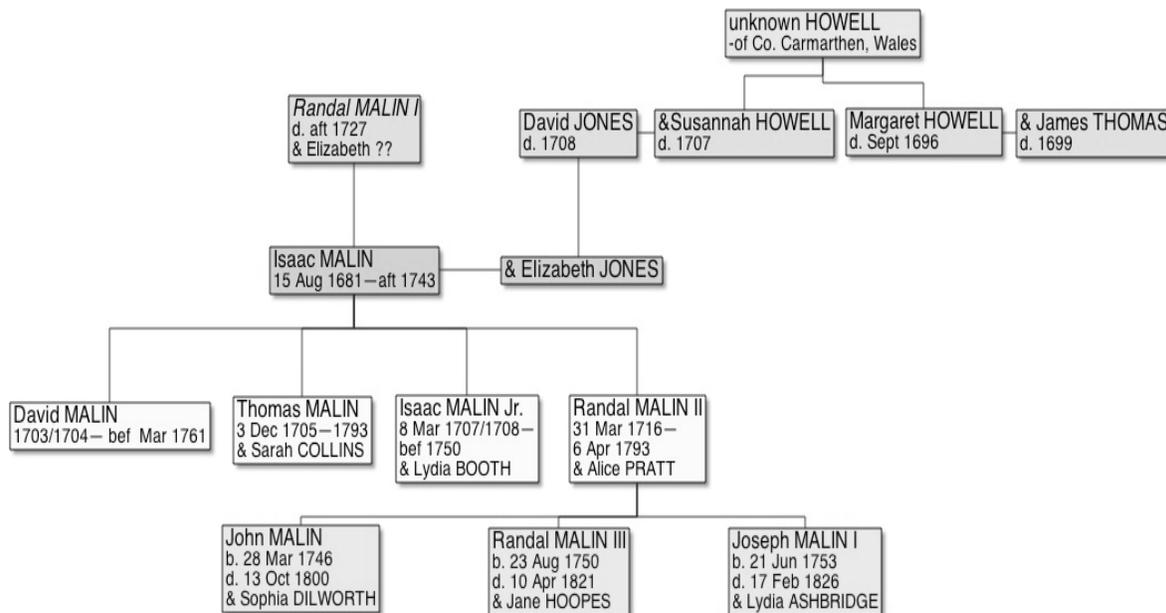
published expense account, support them [see notes 10 and 25].

But we must dot every "i," cross each "t", and leave no stone unturned, since my argument will surely be contested. Old "truths" die hard. As I suggested above, it's in genealogy that we find the coffin nail to permanently shut the lid on the century-old misconception that Malin Hall was Washington's headquarters. Let's take a look at Malin family genealogy and try to determine which adult male members of that family were homeowners in East Whiteland in 1777.

The Malin immigrant ancestors were Randal I and Elizabeth Malin, Quakers of Great Barrow or Hallimore Heath, east of the city of Chester in Cheshire, England. They purchased 250 acres from William Penn in 1681, and brought their family to Pennsylvania in 1682, around the same time as Penn's arrival.¹¹ They settled on Ridley Creek, Upper Providence Township, now in Delaware County. Son Isaac married (ca. 1703) Elizabeth, daughter of David and Susannah (Howell) Jones, Welsh Quakers who had also come to Pennsylvania.¹² David Jones was bequeathed land in (East) Whiteland Township in the will of his brother-in-law James Thomas. Jones received a 250-acre grant in present-day East Whiteland from James Thomas' sons in 1703. David Jones' son-in-law Isaac Malin then first settled this land about 1709. The Chester County Historical Society has one of Benjamin H. Smith's maps on which the earliest land purchases are superimposed on a contemporary road map. From that map it can be seen that Benjamin Crouthers' 119-acre farm of 1879 was just under half of this original Malin tract. James Thomas had bought the land from first purchaser William Jenkins in 1686. Jenkins had been granted 1000 acres in the Welsh Tract from William Penn in September 1681.¹³

Isaac Malin's two eldest sons (David and Thomas) settled in Virginia and Willistown Township, Chester County, respectively, but Isaac's 250 acre-estate was divided between his two youngest sons, Isaac Jr. and Randal II. Third son Isaac Jr. received the southern 150 acres, which then remained virtually intact until 1907, the heart of which became the Haldeman-Brackbill-Malin farm. Fourth son Randal II received the northern 100 acres, on which Malin Hall and a third Malin mansion, the Malin-George House, were built. Isaac Jr. sold his property in 1735 and for nearly forty years his tract was outside the Malin family.

Simplified MALIN Descendant Chart
Showing Connections to the Jones and Howell Families



The original MALIN Homestead in East Whiteland Township passed from James THOMAS (d. 1699) to his brother-in-law David JONES (d. 1708) to Jones' son-in-law Isaac MALIN.

From 1735 on, the only branch of the Malin family to participate in the inheritance of the East Whiteland Malin properties was that of Randal II, son of Isaac Sr.

Randal Malin II (1716-1793) and wife Alice Pratt (d. 1770) had three sons, each of whom inherited one of the three sister-mansions built by the family in the early- to mid-1700s—all three within sight of one another along the Old Lancaster Road. In order to make three farms of sufficient size, Randal II added to his 100-acre patrimony with several contiguous land purchases. One of these, in March 1774, brought the 150-acre tract (now 136 acres) sold in 1735 by Randal II's brother Isaac Jr. back into the family.¹⁴

Randal II's eldest son, John Malin, married Sophia Dilworth. In 1777, John and Sophia were residents of the mansion at the intersection of the Lancaster, Swedes' Ford and Malin roads. Sons James and John left no heirs. Daughter Alice married Joseph George,

and when her sons inherited the Malin residence it became known as the Malin-George house. It may be older than Malin Hall. Jane L. S. Davidson, former County Historic Preservation Officer, has estimated it was built between 1734 and 1743, and says Isaac Sr. built it.¹⁵

Randal II's second son, Randal III, received Malin Hall (built ca. 1743, according to Jane Davidson¹⁶) by deed from his father in 1785.¹⁷ The East Whiteland Tax List for 1777 shows John Malin situated on his farm (Malin-George) and Joseph on his (Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin). Randal Malin II was still the owner of the Malin Hall farm, with son Randal III (who lived with him) taxed as an "inmate", a person—usually married or widowed and head of a family—who resides within the household of another. This is not surprising, since Randal II probably built Malin Hall and we know it became Randal III's farm later.¹⁸

So there are three candidates for Washington's host in 1777: Randal II (in Malin Hall), his oldest son



Malin-George House. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

John (in the Malin-George house), and his youngest son Joseph (in the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin house). You already know the winner! But I'll say it one more time, loud and clear: Futhey and Cope in the *History of Chester County* got it right. Washington made his headquarters at the house of *Joseph Malin*, not Randal or John.¹⁹ In March 1774, Joseph's father, Randal II, purchased the farm that had been his older brother's share of their father Isaac's estate.²⁰ Since we know Joseph became legal owner of this farm in 1785, clearly Randal II had purchased the future Haldeman-Brackbill-Malin farm for his youngest son.²¹ On October 31, 1776, Joseph Malin married Lydia Ashbridge, daughter of George Ashbridge and Rebecca Garrett of Milltown (now Downingtown), and they probably set up housekeeping in the Haldeman-Brackbill-Malin house in the fall of 1776 or spring 1777, at the latest.

Joseph first appears on the East Whiteland Township tax list in 1777 taxed on 120 acres of land, as well as one horse, two cattle and seven sheep.²² His entry on that tax list carries the notation "PLD," shorthand for "plundered." Joseph's claimed loss to the British army under General Howe during the

British march through East Whiteland on September 18, 1777 consisted of his only horse – a mare worth £15.²³

An interesting sidelight to our story is that Joseph and Lydia Malin's first child, George, was born on August 21, 1777. This baby, who would grow up to succeed his father on the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin farm, was less than a month old when a more famous "George" spent the night with his family.²⁴ I wonder if Washington paid

attention to infants—even if they bore his name—and whether the General's sleep was disturbed that night by a baby's cries? The historical record is silent on the question of tears. But outside the heavens were surely crying! Intermittent rain had begun before sunset on the 15th and the heavy rainstorm of the following day must have meant a lot of mud tracked through Lydia Malin's beautiful house.²⁵

We are still left with the question why, in light of all this information, Malin Hall's claim was accepted for

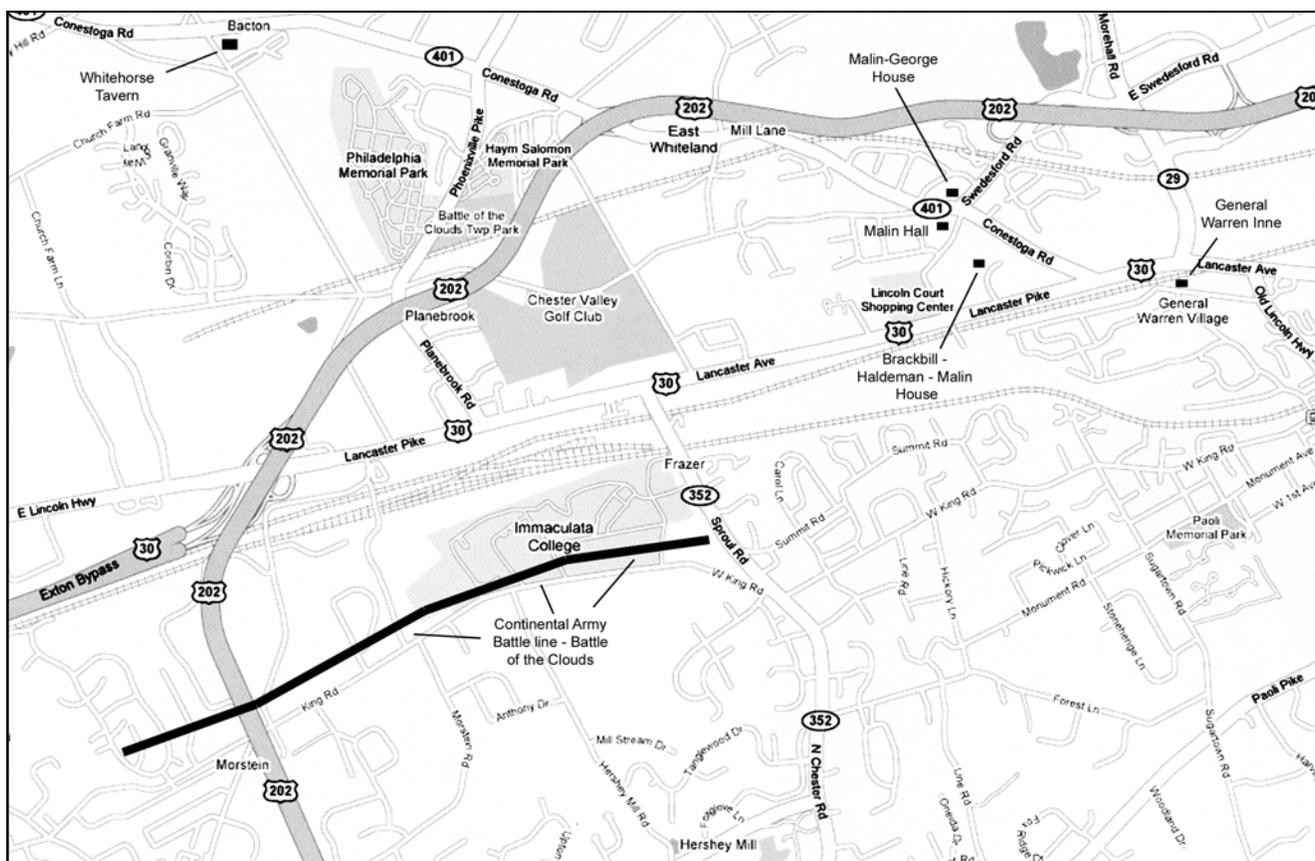


Malin Hall. *Photo courtesy of the author.*

over a century by almost everyone as Washington's Headquarters.²⁶ The claim was certainly credible, supported by the august presence of the mansion in full view of the public, its well-to-do owner/promoters, and the absence of any challenge or contradiction. Over time, this claim took root in the public mind, with no historian standing up to question it.²⁷ One can hardly blame the wealthy outsiders who purchased Malin Hall after the last Malin owner died in 1915 for "blowing their own horn." But isn't it remarkable that through all those years, so far as I am aware, no dissenting voice was heard?

For seventy-five years after 1777, Joseph Malin's farm (and the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin House) re-

mained in the Malin family. These Malins and a few of the later owners in the nineteenth century were Quaker. The Haldemans and Brackbills—twentieth-century owners—were members of the Mennonite Church. The Malins, Haldemans, and Brackbills were consistently pacifist and not much interested in spotlighting their home as a shrine of military history. But consistent truth-telling is also a Mennonite and Quaker virtue. So when my aunts or grandparents told us children that George Washington had slept in the very house we were desecrating with wild horseplay, we had no reason not to believe them. And now, I hope, neither do you!



Map of East Whiteland Township showing the locations of the three Malin houses, all of which have laid claim to being Washington's Headquarters on September 15 and 16, 1777, before the Battle of the Clouds. *Map courtesy of Mike Bertram.*

NOTES

1. My maternal grandparents were Milton and Ruth (Haldeman) Brackbill, who owned this house from Oct 14, 1938 to Dec 19, 1969. Milton was a minister in the Mennonite Church and they operated a motel ("Brackbill's Motel") on the farm. Ruth was a daughter of Cornelius and Fannie Haldeman, who purchased the property— originally 42.5-acres—in January 1907.
2. Almost every reference to Malin Hall since 1912 states that it was the headquarters site. One example is J. Gilmore Wilson, *A Brief History of East Whiteland Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania* (The Frazer Press, 1965, unpaginated): "Washington encamped near Malin Hall and took up his headquarters in the western wing of that building." The only twentieth century work that comes close to correctly identifying the headquarters is a genealogy: Judy Gambert, *Randal Malin: A Quaker from Cheshire England to Chester County, PA* (Utica, KY: McDowell Publications, 1997).
3. Especially in the recent works of Thomas J. McGuire: *Battle of Paoli* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000) and *The Philadelphia Campaign, Volume 1: Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* (same publisher, 2006).
4. See news clipping collection of Chester County Historical Society: "East Whiteland Twp. Lands/Malin Hall." Although its last Malin residents may have started it, the Malin Hall headquarters claim got a big boost under the ownership of Dr. and Mrs. Gustave Van Lennep in the 1930s and 40s, when their home was a Chester County Day attraction in 1941 and was written up in such periodicals as *Country Life* (May 1930) and the *American Collector* (*The Magazine for Antique Collectors and Dealers*, Aug. 1941). In October 1941 for its Chester County Day coverage the *Daily Local News* (West Chester, PA) published a photo of Malin Hall with a caption making all of the following historical claims: It was built in 1688. It was Washington's Headquarters in September 1777. And it served as a stop on the Underground Railroad. The only claim missing is that the Hall was General Howe's headquarters after Washington moved on! I have found no documentary support for any of these claims.
5. J. Smith Futey and Gilbert Cope, *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, with Genealogical and Biographical Sketches* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), p. 82.
6. A small group of Brackbill family members stood by in tears and disbelief as the house burned to the ground. Investors Shea, Eadeh, and Siana purchased the Brackbill farm (reduced to 17.59 acres after many small-acreage sales by the Brackbills) on Dec. 19, 1969. In June 2000 the three investors (plus a fourth named Raum) sold the property to Main Line I Associates, L.P. In 2003 this concern (under the name O'Neill Properties Group) built the first of three office buildings on the old farm, known initially as the Deerfield Corporate Center, but today as the Malvern Executive Center.
7. It's interesting to note that before 1795, the latter drive would have been the one and only lane, connecting the farm to the Old Lancaster Road (Route 401 today). About 1793 the new, hard-surfaced Philadelphia-Lancaster Turnpike opened, necessitating the second driveway to access this new thoroughfare, running south of the house. The twenty-first Milestone on the Turnpike was located just west of the driveway on the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin farm. This milestone will be replaced and rededicated in August 2008.
8. See *Appendix: Historic Chain of Title to the Tract of Land on Which the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin House Stood From About 1735 to 1777*
9. Italics mine; Futey and Cope, p. 82.
10. See e.g., William S. Baker, *Itinerary of General Washington from June 15, 1775 to December 23, 1783* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1892), pp. 89-90; Charles H. Browning, *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania: Welsh Quaker Emigration to Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1912), p. 464. On the Internet see the University of Virginia: *The Papers of George Washington: Washington's Revolutionary War Itinerary and the Location of His Headquarters, 1775-1783*, : <http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/revolution/itinerary/1777.html>
11. The sole published work on the Malin family is Judy Gambert, *Randal Malin: A Quaker from Cheshire England to Chester County, PA* (Utica, KY: McDowell Publications, 1997). Ring-binder edition at Chester County Historical Society.
12. See 1696 will of Margaret, "relict" of Francis Howell, abstracted in Charles H. Browning, *Welsh Tract of Pennsylvania: The Early Settlers (Extracted from the Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania)* (Westminster, MD: Willow Bend Books, 2000) pp. 202-03. She was born Margaret Mortimer. Her husband Francis was one of six Howell siblings to come to Pennsylvania, of whom Susannah (wife of Isaac Jones) was the youngest.
13. When Robert Powell, who owned the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin house and farm from 1735 to 1765, sold it to Isaac Whitelock of Lancaster, he retained 14 acres of the 150-acre farm, which he then sold in 1773 to Amish neighbor Christian Zug. In this deed of 10 February 1773 (Chester County Deed X-102) is a complete recitation of the land's ownership history to that date, accounting beautifully for a number of eighteenth-century unrecorded deeds. "Whereas William Penn Esq., late Proprietary of the said Province (PA), by his Indentures of Lease and Release bearing date the Twenty fourth and Twenty fifth Days of October A.D. 1681 ... did grant and convey unto William Jenkins, then of the town of Tenby in the County of Pembroke, Emasculator, the Quantity of one Thousand Acres to be allotted and laid out in this said Province ... and whereas the said William Jenkins, by his Indenture bearing the Date the Thirtieth Day of October A.D. 1686 ... did grant and convey Two Hundred and Fifty Acres of the said land unto James Thomas of Llanboyden in the County of Carmarthen, Husbandman ... which said Two Hundred and Fifty Acres of Land by Virtue of a General Warrant from then said Proprietary Dated the Thirteenth Day of March A.D. 1684 for the Laying out of the Welsh Tract were Surveyed and layed out to the said James Thomas in the Township Whiteland aforesaid in the Great

Valley or Duffryn Mawr, and whereas the said James Thomas ... made his Last Will and Testament Dated the Eighth Day of April A.D. 1699 and thereby did Devise in These Words to wit: I do devise and Bequeath unto my son Nathan the Quantity of Two Hundred acres of Land taken up in Duffryn Mawr. Item: I do give unto my Brother in Law David Jones the Quantity of Fifty Acres of Land taken at Duffryn Mawr adjoining unto the aforesaid Two Hundred Acres bequeathed unto my son Nathan, provided he the said David or any of his children will come into this country ... and the said testator soon after died, and whereas it was doubted whether the said Nathan and David had each of them any more than an Estate for Life in the Said Land ..., therefore to prevent all Questions and Debates Concerning the same, James Thomas, Son and Heir of the said James Thomas deceased and the said Nathan Thomas, by their Indenture Acknowledged in Court at Chester bearing date the nineteenth day of January A.D. 1703 ... did grant, release and confirm the said Two Hundred Acres and Fifty acres of Land unto the Said David Jones ... and whereas the Said David Jones afterwards died Intestate seized of the said Lands aforesaid ... the same Descended to his two Daughters, Susanna and Elizabeth, the said Elizabeth intermarried with Isaac Malin, and whereas the said Susanna Jones on the Twentieth Day of January A.D. 1709 ... did grant, release and convey all her Right, Interest and Claim to the aforesaid Two Hundred and Fifty acres of Land unto the aforesaid Isaac Malin and Elizabeth his wife, [and as stated in Deed Book L, vol. 11, page 262: "... the said Elizabeth being since decd., the estate of inheritance of the said land came to Isaac Malin by survivorship"] and whereas Isaac Malin and Jane his wife by their Indenture bearing Date Twentieth of February A.D. 1733 ... did grant, release and confirm One Hundred and Fifty acres of Land by Metes and Bounds in the Same Indenture specified, being part of the aforesaid Two Hundred and Fifty acres unto Isaac Malin the Younger ... and when the said Isaac Malin the younger and Lydia his Wife by their Indenture Executed bearing Date the Second day of April A.D. 1735 ... did grant, release, convey and confirm all the aforesaid One Hundred and Fifty Acres of Land and Premises unto the above said Robert Powell ... [etc. etc.]”

14. Isaac and Sarah Whitelock to Randal Malin II, 136 acres. Unrecorded Deed. Recited in Chester County Deed B-2, page 319.
15. Isaac Malin House, Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form—Data Sheet, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation, 1991.
16. Malin Hall, PHRS Form, 1991.
17. Chester County Deed dated “24 Fifth Month (May) 1785,” Book E-2, p. 332.
18. 1777 Tax List, Chester County, Pennsylvania. Chester County Archives (full bibliographic information in Note 22 below). This is the first year two of the sons of Randal Malin II were taxed on the farms Randal II would deed over to them in 1785.
19. The houses of both Randal II and John have laid claim to being the Headquarters site. The Malin Hall claim (Randal II) has been made most forthrightly and often since the early twentieth century. That house passed out of the Malin family in 1915. The Malin-George house and farm (John) left the family even earlier. The only one of John and Sophia (Dilworth) Malin’s six children to leave adult heirs was Alice George (and neither of her two sons married). Two of John Malin’s daughters lived in the house until their deaths and one—Susanna—left a story or two about their house and its use by soldiers during the Revolution. But Susanna was only born in May 1777 and could have had no personal memory of the War. The Continental Army in September 1777 was camped alongside the road all the way from Paoli to White Horse (Planebrook). Not surprisingly, all the well-built and well-stocked houses along this road were used to house officers, and it would be natural for stories about this brief (one-night) quartering of officers to get distorted over the years. The house of Joseph Malin’s second son, Joseph II, was identified prominently in the 1870s as the Headquarters site, even though it wasn’t built until 1814 (to judge by a large jump in Joseph II’s tax bite that year). (“The Massacre of Paoli. Historical Address of J. Smith Futhey, of West Chester, Pa. Delivered on the Centennial Anniversary of that event at the Dedication of the Monument to the Memory of those who fell on the night of September 20, 1777,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1877): 297.) Judge Futhey learned the truth of the matter in time for the *History of Chester County* on which he collaborated several years later. I suspect his co-author Gilbert Cope, who has been called the Father of Pennsylvania genealogy, deserves the credit for rightly identifying the Headquarters site.
20. See Note 14.
21. Chester County Deed B-2-319, 24 May 1785, from “Randal Malin, the father” to “Joseph Malin, the son.”
22. Joseph Malin entry. The “Five-Shilling” Tax of 1777, Pennsylvania’s first “State” tax. Page 365. Chester County Board of County Commissioners: State Taxes S1a-S4, 1777-1780. Microfilm Roll LR253.1, Chester County Archives, West Chester, PA.
23. “A Register of Damages Sustained by the Inhabitants of Chester County by the Troops and Adherents of the King of Great Britain During the American Revolution,” compiled by Dr. Henry Pleasants, original typescript, Rare Books Collection, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA. [Joseph is herein identified as “Joseph Malins, Tanner.”]
24. Joseph and Lydia Malin named their firstborn after Lydia’s father, George Ashbridge (1733-1785), a Quaker farmer and elder in the Goshen Monthly Meeting who lived near Milltown (Downingtown). If Washington had a big ego, he may have thought the boy was named for him! From this time on George became a common name in the Malin family—perhaps in honor of both George Ashbridge AND George Washington!
25. Washington scholar John C. Fitzpatrick, commenting on Washington’s expense account entries, wrote: “The next day [Sept. 16] the Continental Army engaged the enemy near White Horse Tavern, when a heavy rain set in and rendered the ammunition useless. The Continentals then marched to Yellow Springs, five miles to the northward, and the expense account shows that Mr. Malin was paid on September 16 £ 7 10s. [approx. \$195] for the use of his house ‘and

trouble—(rainy day).” [Those last four words are from the actual expense account in Washington’s own words.] Quoted in Marvin Kitman, *George Washington’s Expense Account* (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 225-26. Thomas McGuire, *Battle of Paoli* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), p. 31 mentions that rain had already begun on September 15.

26. I’d like to state clearly that, although a mistake was made, there are no villains in this story. I’ve already shown (see Note 19) how easy it was for Malin Hall to be incorrectly seen as Washington’s headquarters. There were four reasons for this. First, the historical events covered only a day or two. Second, all three Malin mansions surely quartered Continental Army officers. Third, Malin Hall carried the Malin Name and was right in plain view, whereas the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin House was last owned by a Malin in 1865. And fourth, the later Mennonite residents of the actual headquarters weren’t interested in staking their own claim to what was actually a military shrine.
27. The generally accepted story may have given some historians pause, however. In his excellent book, *The Battle of Paoli*, Thomas McGuire states that Washington’s Headquarters was at “Randall Malin’s house.” (p. 28). McGuire’s research showed him that Randal—not Joseph—was the resident of Malin Hall. I imagine that McGuire, having not infrequently encountered errors in the original documents, assumed the name “Joseph” in the early records was simply a mistake.

APPENDIX

Historic Chain of Title to the Tract of Land on Which the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin House Stood From About 1735 to 1977

- 1681: William Penn to William Jenkins, land grant, 1000 acres (see Note 13).
1686: William Jenkins to James Thomas Sr., deed, 250 acres (see Note 13).
1699: James Thomas Sr. to sons Nathan and James Jr. and to his brother-in-law David Jones, (Philadelphia Will A. 456.) [“On resurvey of their father’s land it was found to contain 300 acres and a warrant for that amount was issued by William Penn on 2.7mo. 1701, apparently to sons James Thomas Jr. and Nathan Thomas.” Charles H. Browning, *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania: Welsh Quaker Emigration to Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1912), 33-34.] (see also Note 13)
1703: Nathan and James Thomas Jr. to David Jones, deed, 250 acres (see Note 13).
1708: On David Jones’ death intestate, (Philadelphia Intestate estate record not searched) tract descended to his daughters Susanna and Elizabeth, 250 acres (see Note 13).
1709: Susanna Jones released to sister Elizabeth and husband Isaac Malin, deed, 250 acres (see Note 13).
1733: Isaac and Jane Malin to Isaac Malin Jr., 150 acres (Unrecorded Deed. Recited in Ches. Co. Deed X-102 [p. 103] —see Note 13).
1735: Isaac Jr. and Lydia Malin to Robert Powell, 150 acres (Unrecorded Deed. Recited in Ches. Co. Deed X-102 [p. 103] —see Note 13).
ca 1760: Robert Powell to John Pearson, 136 acres (“the instrument of writing in part executed between them”—i.e., the deed was never finalized) (described/recited in the following deed).
1765: Robert Powell to Isaac Whit(e)lock, 136 acres (John Pearson releasing his interest) (Ches. Co. Deed Y-21). [John Pearson probably built the large, brick part of the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin house. His taxes rose steeply from 1760 to 1762 and in a sort of codicil to the main deed (from Powell to Whitelock) he releases all his interest in the farm to Robert Powell. Pearson specifically relinquishes “... all manner of Right, Title, Interest and Claim of and with a certain Tract *Brick* Messuage Tenement and Plantation and Tract of Land ... whereon I now dwell.” This is documentary proof that this house was completely built before 1765!]
1774: Isaac and Sarah Whitelock to Randal Malin II, 136 acres. (Unrecorded Deed. Recited in the following deed)
1785: Randal Malin Sr. to Joseph Malin, 136 acres (“and 26 perches”) (Ches. Co. Deed B-2, page 319).
1827: estate of Joseph Malin Sr. to George Malin, 100 acres. Deed of Partition (Ches. Co. Deed A-4, p. 25).
1865: by will, George Malin to the husband of his deceased adopted daughter/niece Margaret, James G. McCollin, 98 acres (Ches. Co. Will Book 22, p. 259).
1867: James G. McCollin to Levi G. Griffiths, 95 acres. (Ches. Co. Deed C-7, vol. 150, p. 456).
1875: Levi G. Griffith to Joseph W. Hawley, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed O-8, vol. 186, p. 130).
1876: Joseph W. Hawley to Benjamin & Anna M. Crouthers, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed T-8, vol. 191, p. 168).
1879: Benj. Crouthers et ux to William S. Underdown, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed A-9, vol. 198, p. 250).

1899: Wm. S. Underdown to Chas. H. Phelps, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed T-11, p. 207).

1899: Charles Phelps to Geo. C. Shafer, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed B-12, vol. 274, p. 10).

1899: Geo. C. Shafer to Basil Fisher, 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed B-12, vol. 274, p. 11).

1906: widow of Basil Fisher (d. 1903) petitions Ches. Co. Orphans Court to sell. Wayne Title and Trust (trustee) to Manor Real Estate and Trust Co., 119 acres (Ches. Co. Deed V-12, vol. 293, p. 557).

1907: Manor Real Estate & Trust Co. to Cornelius R. Haldeman, 42.5 acres (Ches. Co. Deed E-13, vol. 302, p. 485).

1938: Cornelius R. and Fannie A. Haldeman to Milton and Ruth H. Brackbill, 39 acres, 8 perches (Ches. Co. Deed D-20, p. 239).

The Malin Houses and the Underground Railroad

Not long after the death of Caroline Malin Stephenson—last Malin owner and resident of Malin Hall—the following appeared in the Daily Local News:¹

Malin Residence at Malvern Sold

The estate of Caroline Malin Stephenson has sold to Marion B. Quick, of Detroit, a residence and 14 acres near Malvern, known as Malin Hall, which has been in the Malin family since 1687 [sic]. The residence sold is one of the finest examples of Colonial architecture in the Chester Valley. For years preceding the Civil War it was owned by Randall Malin II, a prominent member of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and was used as one of the underground stations in aiding the flight of slaves to Northern States. A secret chamber, used for the concealment of fugitive slaves, is to be seen in the residence.

If you search the historical accounts of the Underground Railroad in southeastern Pennsylvania, most notably, *History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania* (R. C. Smedley, Stackpole Books, 2005—originally published by the Office of the Journal, Lancaster, PA, in 1883), you will not find any mention of Malin Hall as a stop on the Underground Railroad, nor will you find any Malins mentioned as active in this movement.

In Christopher Densmore's Introduction to the 2005 re-publication of Smedley's classic, he writes that: "Popular legends of the Underground Railroad tell of secret rooms, tunnels, and codes. Stories of this sort are associated with locations in Chester County, but all appear to date from the twentieth century, long after those who were actively involved had passed from the scene. Hiding places mentioned by Smedley include barns and springhouses, and in a few cases of close pursuit, fugitives hid in nearby wheat fields, woods, and cornshocks until the danger had passed." (p. xiii)

Looking back a half-century before the Underground Railroad began operating we find that in the 1790's, Randal Malin III (resident of Malin Hall) is listed on the "roll of honor" of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, as were both his brothers, John and Joseph. All three brothers were Quakers in good standing, and thus in principle opposed to slavery. (Randal III donated the land on which the Whiteland Friends Meeting was built in 1816.) But Smedley points out that although most of those active in helping slaves to freedom through the "Underground Railroad" were Friends (Quakers), yet most of that religious society "took no part in the labors, and with few exceptions, refused the use of their meeting-houses for anti-slavery lectures (p. 34). He points out the main routes and the individual "conductors" who lived along them. These routes bypassed East Whiteland to the north and the east, although Smedley does note that there were others "who occasionally gave willing aid when required, but whose residences were not so located as to give them advantages whereby they could expedite travel to the safety of the fugitive." (p. 34)

Just as all three Malin residences in East Whiteland surely served as officers' quarters in September 1777 (though only one could be "Headquarters"), they may all three have served occasionally as Underground Railroad "stations," even though we have no solid evidence that they actually did. Yet I'd like to suggest that if any one of these houses was really used in this way, it would more likely have been the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin house than Malin Hall, for a very interesting reason.

You may recall the infant son of Joseph and Lydia (Ashbridge) Malin, who was only three weeks old when Washington stayed in their home overnight. This eldest son, George, grew up and took over his father's tannery [see "Inventory" sidebar]. On Joseph I's death in 1826, George and his two brothers, Joseph II and Randal, divided their father's lands, just as their grandfather Randal II, divided his among his three sons in the 1770's. George got most of the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin farm. A committed Friend to the end of his life, George married Margaret Garrett, daughter of Thomas Garrett Sr. and his second wife, Sarah Price. Margaret (Garrett) Malin's younger brother was perhaps the most active and reknowned conductor on the Underground Railroad—Thomas Garrett Jr. of Wilmington, Delaware.



By Courtesy of The Historical Society of Delaware
THOMAS GARRETT

"No one did more to help fugitive slaves than Thomas Garrett. Through his house in Wilmington, Delaware, passed more than 2700 runaway slaves on the way to freedom." —from preface to *Station Master on the Underground Railroad: the Life and Letters of Thomas Garrett*, by James A. McGowan (Moylan, PA. the Whimsie Press, 1977). Garrett himself wrote in 1856: "... my slave list is 2,038. Still they go ..."

George and Margaret Malin (owners of the Brackbill-Haldeman-Malin house and farm from 1827-1865) had no children of their own. So when Thomas Garrett Jr.'s first wife, Mary Sharpless, died in July 1828, the Malins adopted her infant daughter, who already bore the name of Margaret Malin Garrett (for her aunt and now her foster/adopted mother). Although the Malins raised Margaret "junior" as their daughter, Thomas Garrett retained close ties to this child.² If Thomas Garrett needed an occasional refuge off the main "line" for escaping slaves, to whom would he more likely turn than to his own sister? But I have no more proof of this possibility than the Malins of Malin Hall had that their "secret chamber" was something designed or used to conceal runaway slaves.



Margaret Mallin
Garrett

- 1) Daily Local News, 15 June 1915 (CCHS clipping file / Malvern Streets)
- 2) McGowan in *Underground Railroad* ... (p. 150) includes a letter to Margaret and her husband James McCollin from "your father, Thos. Garrett," dated "10th mo. 20th, 1862, written in a loving, familiar tone. Margaret McCollin died the following August at age 36 and is buried at Whiteland Friends (along with three of her five children).

Estate Inventory of Joseph Malin I

Joseph Malin I, host of George Washington in September 1777, died in his East Whiteland mansion in February 1826, at the age of 72. He was buried in the graveyard of the Whiteland Friends Meeting on Malin Road. The inventory of Joseph's estate was taken by Joseph Rhoads, John Pratt and James Malin on March 11, 1826.

Estate inventories are valuable, often-overlooked sources of genealogical and historical information and Joseph's is no exception. Through it we learn that he had retained a financial interest in the tannery run on his

farm by his oldest son George. The first item in the inventory is “The one third of the Stock in the Tannery” and amounts to the significant sum of \$1,280.47. George probably held the remainder of the stock (although it’s possible others were involved).

Most farmers retire before age 72; yet Joseph hadn’t turned everything over to his sons. His assets included: “Horses and Cows” valued @ \$327; “Hay in the Mows” @ \$65; “Grain in the Garner” @ \$91.10; “Grain in the Ground” @ \$48; Swine @ \$26; “Articles of farming Utensils etc.” @ \$131.42; and carriages, sleighs & harness @ \$79. His silver watch was valued @ \$6 and he owned \$20 worth of books.

But for people like the Brackbills and Haldemans, who lived in Joseph’s house a century later, what’s really interesting is the way his appraisers categorized his household furnishings. Except for his clothing and what was in the kitchen (“Kitchen furniture,” “Silver plate,” “China and Crokery Ware,” “Knives and Forks”) household objects are identified by the room in the house where they were kept—each room being given a descriptive name, which, to those who know the house well, will invoke a host of pleasant memories!

Quoting directly from this 1826 probate document, we read:

“Furniture and Articles in the best room upstairs”	-----	\$95.65
“ “ “ in the little room upstairs”	-----	106.20
“ “ “ in the room over the parlour”	-----	56.05
“ “ “ in the Girls room”	-----	21.70 ½
“ “ “ in the Storeroom (or is it Stoveroom?)”	-----	34.12 ½
“ “ “ in the small room next to the parlour”	---	17.20
“ “ “ in the parlour”	-----	67.37 ½
“ “ “ in the lodging room down Stairs”	-----	39.00
“Articles in the Pantry”	-----	19.50
“ in the Boys Room”	-----	20.82 ½
“ in Boys Garrett”	-----	11.37 ½
“ in Garrett”	-----	23.80
“ in the Cellar”	-----	54.00.

About the Author

Kenneth Varden Leasa was born in 1948, the son of W. Kenneth and Betty (Brackbill) Leasa, and grew up on the Brackbill farm he writes about in this issue of the *Quarterly*. He attended East Whiteland (later Kathryn D. Markley) Elementary School, General Wayne Junior High, and received his high school diploma in 1966 from Great Valley High School, in the first graduating class to go from ninth through twelfth grades there. His family is closely associated with the Frazer Mennonite Church, begun in 1910 by his great-grandparents, Cornelius and Fannie (Shirk) Haldeman, with two other families. Varden’s maternal grandfather was Milton Brackbill, minister and evangelist in this church from 1933 to 1982. Varden and his wife remain active members at Frazer Mennonite.

Varden attended college in Kansas and California, earning a B. A. in Political Science from California State University, Los Angeles, in 1971 and an M. A. from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1975. He met and married his wife Marie M. Moy in California in 1969. They have two daughters. They returned to Chester County, Pennsylvania, in 1975, where he worked for 25 years for Clews and Strawbridge Inc., an automobile dealer in Frazer. His hobbies are family and local history, bicycling, traveling, and foreign language study. He has studied and taught Pennsylvania German at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, where he also volunteers in a number of other capacities. In December 2007, Varden received a B. A. in German (with a Russian minor) from West Chester University. He recently began graduate study in German at Millersville University. This is his first contribution to the *Quarterly*.