

Chalkley Hall  
Frankford, Pennsylvania.

HABS No. Pa. ~~110~~

110

HABS  
PA  
SI-PHILA  
62

*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*  
PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of Pennsylvania

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Ralph W. Lear, District Officer  
311-312 Dime Bank Bldg., Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS

HABS No. Pa. ~~232~~ <sup>110</sup>

HABS

PA.

51. PHILA

62.

CHALKLEY HALL  
Frankford, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Date of Erection

Two story wing erected in 1723; large main section,  
in 1776.

Present Owner

American Engineering Company, Plant #2, manufac-  
turers of Taylor Stokers.

Builder

Thomas Chalkley.

Number of Stories

Large section, three stories; wing- two story.

Present Condition

Poor.

Materials of Construction

Exterior, brick and stone. Pitch roofs, covered with  
slate. Flat roofs covered with tin. Interior, Plas-  
tered.

CHALKLEY HALL  
Frankford, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania.

Thomas Chalkley, from whom the house derives its name, was widely known in the early part of the eighteenth century as an eminent member and minister of the Society of Friends. He was the son of George and Rebecca Chalkley, born in Southwark, London, 3rd of 3rd month, 1675.

His celebrated Journal, which is chiefly religious, is a beautiful picture of faith and Christian experience, but unfortunately, for historians, it is mainly of the Minister of God, and tells us but little of the man himself, or of the house in which we are interested.

When a child of eight years, he went to school to Richard Scroyer in the suburbs of London, dressed in the plain clothes the children of Friends wore, and was actually beaten and stoned on the streets, and as he expresses it, "divers telling me that it were no more a sin to kill me, than it were to kill a dog."

Thomas Chalkley came to America as a young man, sailing from Gravesend 21st of 10th month, 1697, in the ship, Josiah. He arrived at the Capes of Virginia 31st of 1st month, 1698, after a stormy passage of over twelve weeks. He landed twelve miles up the Patuxent River, Maryland, at the house of Arthur Young, and after traveling in Maryland and Virginia, came to Philadelphia, in the same year. He then traveled through New York, New Jersey and the Eastern States, visiting Salem and Boston. His welcome in Boston, was as he tells us, "un Christianlike"

In 1699, he returned to England and while there, married Martha Betterton, he then being twenty-four years old, and she, twenty-one. After traveling in Ireland, they sailed for America again in the Josiah, and after another stormy passage of

Chalkley Hall,  
Frankford, Pennsylvania.

HABS No. Pa. <sup>110</sup>~~232~~  
Page 2.

eight weeks in which the ship was almost wrecked, arrived in Maryland where he remained the winter of 1700, with his wife and family and three servants, "following his calling".

In the spring of 1701, he came to Pennsylvania, where he had intended to settle, and at Philadelphia, bought a lot of ground upon the River Delaware and there "following his calling that summer". This could not have been the Chalkley Hall tract.

His wife died in 1710; and in 1714, he married Martha Brown, a widow who survived him. By his first wife he had five children, all of whom died before their mother. By his second wife, he had seven children of whom but one, a daughter, Rebecca survived him.

Thomas Chalkley was one of the greatest travelers of his time. Not only did he travel all over the Atlantic seaboard, then the only settled parts of American soil, preaching the gospel, but in the West Indies, England, Scotland, Ireland and Germany; and this, at a time, when traveling was not so comfortable. Most of Thomas Chalkley's travels were by sea, or on horse-back.

His Journal relates some interesting experiences: On his return from Bermuda on one of his voyages, provisions ran short and the crew began to murmur and told dismal tales of cannibalism and talked of casting lots to tell who should be killed for the others to eat. Noticing that the murmurings were directed at him, he told them that they need not cast lots "for I would gladly offer my life to do them good. I can truly say, on that occasion, at that time, my life was not dear to me, and that I was serious in my proposition; and I was leaning over the side of the vessel, and thoughtfully considering my proposal to the company, and looking in my mind to Him that made me, a very large dolphin came up towards the top or surface of the water, and looked me in the face; and I called the people to put a hook into the sea, and take him, for here is one come to redeem me (said I to them) and they put a hook into the sea and the fish readily took it, and they caught him. He was longer than

Chalkley Hall,  
Frankford, Pennsylvania.

HABS No. Pa. <sup>110</sup> 232  
Page 3.

myself; I think he was about six feet long, and the largest I ever saw. This plainly showed us that we ought not to distrust the Providence of the Almighty. The people were quieted by the Act of Providence, and murmured no more."\*\*

Whittier recalls this incident in "Snow Bound"-----  
"Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint, Gentlest of skippers,  
rare sea saint! Who, when the drsary calms prevailed, And  
water-butt and bread cask, failed, And cruel, hungry eyes  
pursued His portly pressnce mad for food, With dark hints mut-  
tered under breath, Of casting lots for life or death, Offrsd.  
if Heaven withheld suppliss, To be himself, the sacrifice.  
Then, suddenly, as if to save The good man from his living  
grave, A ripple on the water grew, A school of porpoise flash-  
ed into view. 'Take, sat,' he said, 'and be contsnt; These  
fishes in my stead are sent, By Him who gave the tangled ram  
To spare the child of Abraham'".

He does not appear to have lived at Frankford until 1723 when he removed from Philadelphia to his plantation at Frankford in order to be more retired and for health's sake. In 1724, he then living at Frankford, related that his enemiss stirred up some bad people against him, and to add to his troubles he lost several vessels valued at one thousand pounds, and at the same time, his new barn was burned.

He died 4th of 9th month, 1741, while on a visit to the Island of Tortola. The day befor his death, he then being enfeebled by illness, he preached to the peopls, concluding his srrmon with the words of the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I havs kept the faith, henceforth, there is laid up for me, a crown of righteousness." He was buried in the Friend's Burying Ground, Tottola. The Frankford Historical Society has a brick from his now crumb-ling tomb.

Thomas Chalkley bought his plantation in several tracts. In 1789, it is first called Chalkley Hall; it was then a tract of thrs hundred and forty acres and eighty eight perches, and extended along the road leading from Frankford Road to Point no Point (this is the present Wheat Sheaf Lane) and along the

Chalkley Hall,  
Frankford, Pennsylvania.

HABS No. Pa. <sup>117</sup>~~232~~  
Page 4.

Great Road leading from Philadelphia to Point no Point (the present Richmond Street) and extended to Frankford Creek. It also included a tract of two acres below or near the mansion house, laid out for a landing. The tract is now about thirty-five acres.

The original building on the plantation was the old brick house near the Pennsylvania Railroad which probably was there at the time of Chalkley's purchase in 1715, the deeds referring to a brick message.

The western part of Chalkley Hall was the home of Thomas Chalkley; the hall itself was built by Chalkley's son-in-law, Abel James, who married Rebecca Chalkley, between 1741 and 1789. The new building and the old building were at first connected by an overhead passage, the space below at first being open. This was built up at a later date. There has long been a story current in Frankford, believed by many, of an under-ground passage to Frankford Creek. This is doubtless a myth. There are two brick arched passage-ways in the cellar which were used as storage vaults for provisions.

The various owners of Chalkley Hall have been: Abel James and wife, 1741-1789; John Drinker, 1789; Frederick Pigon, 1789-1792; Lawrence John Ledger Le Senechal de Kercado, a refugee from San Domingo, 1792-1794; John Nicholson, 1794-1797; Joseph Potts and Joseph Kirkbride, 1797-1798; Samuel Allen, 1798-1814; Samuel York, 1814-1817. The property was bought by John Wetherill in 1871, and remained in his family until some time after 1914. It is now owned by the American Engineering Company, Plant #2, of Frankford. They are makers of Taylor Stokers, and the Hall is now being used for storage.

A newspaper correspondent, noting a reference to Thomas Chalkley in a column, in connection with the Quaker experiment in Tortola, asked why the old residence of this worthy Friend in Frankford was called "the famous Chalkley House", and also, as to whether it became famous during the life time of Chalkley's first wife, Martha Betterton Chalkley, who died in 1711, or after his second marriage in 1714 to Martha Spioer Chalkley, the widow of Joseph Brown, a Phila-

delphia merchant.

The house, which stands in the "Y" formation, where the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad, leading to the Delaware bridge across the Delaware branch, off from the New York division has been "famous" largely because of the poetic tribute which John Greenleaf Whittier paid to it's owner, and to the serenity and charm of this once rural estate. Of course, Whittier saw it in a different aspect from which Chalkley viewed it. The old stone mansion is in two parts; the large main section was erected in 1776, the two story wing and attic wing of smaller size to the left, built in 1723.

When Chalkley built the original section, it was merely a good, substantial country residence, which any prosperous farmer might have erected; yet, the length of it's days and the fame which Whittier helped to give it, justify those of the present day, in speaking of it as "the famous Chalkley House".

The poet, Whittier, who lived in Philadelphia, in 1838 was then the editor of the Pennsylvania Freeman. He visited Chalkley Hall in the summer of that year and the fine old mansion and beautiful grounds inspired his poem, "Chalkley Hall."----- "It's soft green meadows and it's upland glade, To me, is holy ground, Here, a deeper and serener charm, To all is given, And blessed memories of the faithful dead O'er wood and vale and meadow stream have shed, The holy hues of Heaven."

Thomas Chalkley's daughter, Rebecca, marrying Abel James, wealthy importer of Philadelphia, continued to reside in the Frankford house, which was enlarged and improved by James, and it was his son, Thomas Chalkley James, who became one of the noted physicians of Philadelphia, and a founder of the Pennsylvania Historical Society.

The style of the exterior architecture of Chalkley Hall is influenced by the Italian Renaissance.

Chalkley Hall,  
Frankford, Pennsylvania.

HABS No. Pa. <sup>110</sup>~~232~~  
Page 6.

All the detail on the interior has been removed, by persons interested in preserving it. There is only a very small portion of a stairway between the second and third floors, and the third floor and attic, which still remains.

The building is built of stone and brick. In most cases, the walls are sand stone, trimmed with granite. The pitch roofs are covered with slate, and the flat roofs with tin. The framing for the roofs was held together with wood pins.

The floor construction is wood. The interior is plastered throughout and the two story wing on the exterior is partly covered with stucco. What wood trim remains in this building, is, in most cases, painted.

Historic Information obtained from: Papers Read Before the Historical Society of Frankford, Vol 2. No. 5, "Chalkley Hall" by Robert T. Corson; Newspaper clipping: March 29, 1924.

*see also Pictorial Archives of Early American Architecture for further photos of house in original state.*

Author... *Better Tol. Marissey*  
Approved... *Ralph W. Pease*  
Date... *June, 1937*

*approved  
HW. July 29, 1937*



Addendum to:

Chalkley Hall  
Wheatsheaf Lane and Sepviva Street  
Philadelphia  
(formerly Frankford)  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-110

HABS  
PA  
110

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE	COUNTY	TOWN OR VICINITY
PENNSYLVANIA	PHILADELPHIA	PHILADELPHIA
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME)		HABS NO.
CHALKLEY HALL		PA-110
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
3869 Sepviva Street, at southwest corner of Wheatsheaf Lane		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)	ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
1723- original building (wing) ca. 1776- Main building		
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE)		
The original part (1723) of the structure was built for Thomas Chalkley, a merchant and Quaker proselytizer. The main section was built for Abel Jones, a merchant and Chalkley's son-in-law. The structure was vacated before 1907 and was demolished in 1954.		
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)		
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS)		
According to 1833 fire insurance survey: 3-story main house, plastered stone except for the front and east ends which were of Portland stone; 2-story wing, plastered stone.		
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE)		
3-story main building: 57'-8" (five-bay front) X 46'-11". See attached for a floor plan.		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE		
Central pavilion with giant Tuscan pilasters and pediment; stone Tuscan frontispiece; hipped and flat roofs; watertable; double-hung windows with cased frames and shutters.		
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)		
Main house: wainscoting, double- and single-faced architraves; side closets; paneled chimney breastwork; wood mantels; baseboards with moldings; open string stair with 2 balusters per step. 2-story wing: kitchen, paneled shutters; side closet; dresser with doors and drawers.		
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES		
In 1859, the main house was enlarged by the addition of a greenhouse on the east side and a library on the west side. Both were two stories high and included upper floor chambers. The bathroom in the greenhouse chamber included a bathtub with hot and cold water.		
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE		
Demolished 1954		
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE		
Following the house's demolition, its entrance door was installed in the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Some interior elements are kept at the William Penn Memorial Museum in Harrisburg, Pa.		
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.)		
Some of the above information is based on a fire insurance survey for this house, issued in 1833 by the Franklin Fire Insurance Company of Philadelphia. Other information is based on Richard Webster's <u>Philadelphia Preserved</u> , published in 1976 by Temple University Press.		
COMPILER, AFFILIATION	DATE	
Susan McCown, arch. historian, Historic American Buildings Survey	February 15, 1984	

CHAIRLEY HALL  
HABS No. PA-110 (page 2)

