

## *A Quaker from Ireland in America, 1734-1735*

EDITED BY HENRY J. CADBURY

WHETHER or not the Quakers of the British Isles visited America in the colonial period out of proportion to their numbers,<sup>1</sup> they did more often than other visitors leave a record to posterity. These records when included in their life Journals were published soon after their death. Other accounts have had to wait until modern times for publication.<sup>2</sup> Not all are of equal interest. Some travellers reported in detail and not merely about their fellow Quakers and the meetings which they visited. A good many of them submitted their report to the Yearly Meeting which had sponsored their American travels with a minute. Such reports were naturally selective in contents.

One such account, which is given here, is of Joseph Gill of Dublin, who was in America from September 6, 1734, to November 1, 1735. It is preserved in a manuscript in Friends Library, Euston Road, London. It is endorsed "Ent[re]d," which means that the Secretary of the Yearly

<sup>1</sup> Lists of visitors for many parts of America are extant in manuscript. For printed lists for Pennsylvania up to 1770 see Isaac Sharpless in Rufus M. Jones, *Quakers in the American Colonies* (London, 1911), pp. 540-543, derived I think from Robert Proud; for Nantucket up to 1846, Lydia S. Hinchman, *Early Settlers of Nantucket* (Philadelphia, 1926), 317-330; for America in general to 1793, the Friends Historical Society *Journal*, X, 117 ff. with notes of identification. A fuller list for all America for the short period between 1656 and 1663 is collected by F. B. Tolles, "The Atlantic Community of the Early Friends" in the Friends Historical Society, *Journal*, Supplement 24, 1952, pp. 35-38.

<sup>2</sup> See "John Farmer's First American Journey 1711-1714," in American Antiquarian Society, *Proceedings*, LIII, 79 note. To the items there listed add "Samuel Hopwood's Travels in America 1741-44," Friends Historical Association *Bulletin*, XXXIX, pp. 91-99.

Meeting had included it in the records. It is published here with permission. Probably the part of the report of most general interest is the contemporary outsider's account of the Great Awakening in Northampton, Massachusetts, and neighborhood.

Joseph Gill, according to Quaker records,<sup>3</sup> was born in Cumberland in 1674 and brought up as a Friend. He settled in Dublin in 1702 but travelled frequently in the ministry visiting Friends in Ireland and England, as well as in America in the journey here recorded. He died in 1741. He married three times: about 1702, Isabel Robinson from near Carlisle, who died in 1714; Anna Durrance from near Carlisle, in 1716, who died in 1736; and Elizabeth Baker of Frenchay in 1739, who survived him. About 1709 he deliberately reduced his business duties and from 1711 on he spent much time in religious service.

Of his American visit it was calculated that he travelled 5,572 miles and was at 382 meetings.

Our friend Joseph Gill gives account that after the Yearly Meeting<sup>4</sup> here in the year 1734 he went unto Bristol and on the 7th day of the 5th Month he embarked there for America and landed at Philadelphia the 6th of 7 mo just in time to reach the Yearly Meeting for Pennsylvania and the Jarseys held at Burlington where there was a very large appearance of Friends, and the meetings of worship much favoured with the overshadowing of Divine goodness and those for business with peace and concord.

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers in Ireland*, by Thomas Wight, continued by John Ruttty (Dublin, 1751), pp. 332-334. *A Collection of Testimonies concerning Several Ministers of the Gospel among the Quakers, Deceased* (London, 1760), pp. 155-6; Mary Leadbeater, *Biographical Notices of Members of the Society of Friends who were Resident in Ireland* (London, 1823), pp. 204-212. There is a MS Journal of part of his life in Friends Record Room, Eustace Street, Dublin, but it does not extend beyond 1724.

<sup>4</sup> This is probably London Yearly Meeting, not Dublin. Gill frequently visited that meeting (thirteen times from 1712 to 1741, inclusive), and the present document appears to have been in its custody.

After which he travelled to the back parts of Philadelphia County and West Jarsie and returned back by way of Philadelphia and Chester County to the Eastern Shore of Maryland visiting the Meetings of Friends in that part of the Province and was at their Quarterly meeting and had several meetings where no Friends dwell; and so passed into Virginia as low as any meetings were, but found a declension on this shore and divers meetings lost and others very small. From hence he passed by the main shore through part of Maryland to the Lower Counties of Pensilvania to Chester County where there is a large body of Friends and meetings large and thick, Friends in a prosperous way, coming up in the management of the discipline of the Church and a great number of ministers of both sexes, which still increase. After he had spent the winter in this Province and West Jersey and been at divers Quarterly Meetings he passed the great river Susquehanna in the 12 month into the Western shore of Maryland, travelled down through that province visiting the meetings of Friends into Virginia and entered North Carolina the latter end of the first month where he found many sober and well inclined Friends and several young ministers at their Quarterly Meeting and had divers meeting where no settled meeting were, and especially one at Edentown the chief town in the Province to good satisfaction, the people here and in Virginia flocking to meetings to hear Truth declared and some are convinced.

He returned out of Carolina to the Yearly Meeting at Nance-mund and back again to William Duff's<sup>5</sup> near the great river Potomack, having visited all the setled meetings and had divers other meetings among people of other professions, especially in Williamsburgh, their chief city and seat of the Governor and at York and Hampton, where the people gladly heard the testimony of Truth and gave no opposition, being accompanied by the said William Duff and Samuel Jordan. They took a journey backwards having several meetings in their way where no Friends

<sup>5</sup> William Duff is mentioned by earlier and later visitors like John Fothergill, 1721, Samuel Bownas, 1726-28, Thomas Chalkley, 1737, Edmund Peckover, 1742. So is Samuel Jordan.

dwelt. They passed the Blue Mountains and visited some new settlements in the branches of the said river Potomack and found divers meetings and Friends in a thriving way and divers young ministers that had lately appeared among them to his great satisfaction, was instrumental to get a men's meeting settled among them.<sup>6</sup>

From thence repassing the Blue Mountains he came to a meeting in Maryland called Manockessy (Monocacy) from whence they travelled two days through the woods eastward and came to Susquehanna River and so into Pensilvania again and passing readily to Philadelphia where he was on a First Day, hastened on his journey in company of many Friends through the Jerseys to the Yearly Meeting at Flushing in Long Island<sup>7</sup> which was very large. The meetings for worship was held under divine influence of gospel power, and the affairs carried on in love and condescension. Here he met with his beloved friend Edward Tyley<sup>8</sup> whom he left on this island and hastened to the Yearly Meeting in Road Island which also was very large even to his admiration beyond what he had been in or seen before. From thence he passed through some parts of Newengland and embarked for the island of Nantucket and was at their Yearly Meeting on that island, from whence after 3 or 4 days having found a very large meeting of Friends and had divers comfortable seasons with them, he embarked and landing again on the main he travelled through

<sup>6</sup> Mary Leadbeater, *loc. cit.*, p. 210, adds from a source not known the following information: "He [Joseph Gill] speaks of four brothers, sons to John Mills, who, one after another, appeared in the ministry in a part of the country then called a wilderness (in Virginia, near the chief branch of the Potomack river); where Joseph Gill advised the few settlers to obtain liberty from the quarterly meeting to establish a monthly meeting. He was troubled at the great preparation for a marriage entertainment, and the crowds which assembled to partake of it; telling the assembly how contrary this was to the doctrine and design of Christianity which led into moderation and temperance on all occasions, refusing the invitation to stay at the house."

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Stanton was at this Yearly Meeting and mentions seeing Joseph Gill there, *Friends Library*, XII, 150.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Tylee, from near Bristol, England, is mentioned in lists of Quaker ministers visiting America or Ireland about this time. The spelling Tyler is also found.

Sandwich,<sup>9</sup> Plymouth and several other towns to Boston having but one meeting on the way and another very open and satisfactory one in the town, to which came divers of the inhabitants who were sober and attentive.

From thence he hastened into the province of Newhampshire and was at their Quarterly Meeting at Hampton and after he had visited all the meetings of Friends in that province had divers others in towns where no meetings were settled,—to good satisfaction, he returned to Boston where he found great openness and some convincement, had three large and good meetings on a first day to which the inhabitants flocked, especially the last in the evening. He found the people there very civil and courteous and the Friends and their principles and doctrine in good esteem.

From thence he passed westward and to the Yearly Meeting at Providence and thence eastward towards the Cape Cod Bay and having visited all the meetings in Newengland he came to Newport in Road Island again, where he had two large meetings and passing through Cannanicat [Cononicut] Island came to the Yearly Meeting of Naraganset at Kingstown which was large and the testimony of Truth flowed forth to the people. To this meeting came many Indians and their King. From this place he travelled westwards about 3 days journey to visit a people dwelling backwards by the River Conecticut who were under great exercise of mind and a visitation from the Lord that had much reformed them and brought them out of many evil and vain practices to meet together both on First Days after their worship was over and on week days in companies in several private houses to pray and perform acts of worship, especially in a town called Northampton where the Spirit was the chief subject of conversation or? their spiritual exercises for they called it a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit of God upon them such as had not been known nor heard of at any time or place since the Apostles' days. He being accompanied by Samuel Aldrid [Aldrich] a minister and other two

<sup>9</sup>The date of Gill's visit to Sandwich (or Rhode Island) is given in a MS Register kept by Paul Wing of Sandwich as 3rd 6 mo 1735. This like Gill's dates is of course O.S.

Friends they visited these exercised people from house to house, had many disputes and arguments with some in Northampton and several other towns and had some meetings among them to good satisfaction exhorting them to keep to that good spirit that had begun a good work in them and not go before its motion into any act of worship nor think because they had known something of its conviction the work was done as their priests made them believe that they were converted and could not totally fall away. This and many other errors they exposed which many of them seemed to be satisfied with. After they had laboured among them five or 6 days the other Friend returned home and he with one of the Friends that accompanied them came to Newhartford leaving the work to the Lord. And from thence he traveled two days through the woods to New Milford<sup>10</sup> where a convincement had been some years ago and a meeting gathered but a spirit of Ranterism getting the ascendant of a leading man among them was likely to hinder their joining with or coming under the care of the Quarterly Meeting. He labored with them to make them sensible of their error, had two meetings with them. From thence he travelled into New York Government had several meeting near and at Westchester and came to the Quarterly Meeting in Long Island which was large and comfortable and had large and open meetings in the city of New York. Having visited all the meetings in those parts, came into East Jarsey and to Eggharbors and Cape May and then to the Quarterly Meeting for West Jarsey at Haddonfield and to the Yearly Meeting at Philadelphia in the 7th month, which was very large, and the meetings of worship much favoured with the extendings of divine love and the affairs of the Church carried on in the meetings of business under the influence of divine wisdom in peace and condescension. After which he was at divers Quarterly meetings and other General and Monthly Meetings.

<sup>10</sup> There was a conversion of a number of young people at New Milford in 1727. They joined the Presbyterian Church, but tended to a more Quakerly position and became a separate Friends Meeting. See *Memoirs of the Life of David Ferris* (Philadelphia, 1855), pp. 25, etc. Cf. Nelson R. Burr, "The Quakers in Connecticut," *Friends Historical Association Bulletin*, XXXI, 18.

And taking leave of Friends in Pensylvania he came to the Yearly Meeting of Maryland at Choptank to which people of all professions flock like a fair. After which crossing the Bay of Chesapeek he spent about to [two?] weeks time at and about West River and near South River embarked on the 1st day of the 9th month and landed at Deal out of the Downs the 1st [?] day of the 11 month 1735/6 and came through Canterbury and London and down to Chester and to Holyhead and arrived at Dublin the 22 of the same month.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.