

## **The Intellectual Genealogy Of The Science and Art Club of Germantown**

What you are going to hear from me are the answers to the questions: How and why, 125 years ago, did this club come into being. Some might assume that the club popped into being *ipso facto*, following the template set in Greek mythology about the births of Aphrodite or Athena. Aphrodite, the former, was a beautiful but seductively pernicious soul, who sprung the sea foam. If we recall the Sandro Botticelli painting of Ares and Aphrodite, we know that this goddess could not have been our matriarch: too racy.

Well what about Athena, she was the Goddess of Wisdom. Athena was born fully-armed from the forehead of her father Zeus - according to one story; this is because he swallowed her mother, Métis, while she was pregnant with Athena. Though Athena's realm is that of wisdom (how apropos for our club), her pedigree doesn't seem to one that we, the Science and Art Club could accept ... does it? Too far fetched. No, might I suggest that our patriarch, if we were to have one, comes not from the warm Aegean but from the colder climes of Germany. And who might that man be?

I suggest Daniel Francis Pastorius ... Betty Randall tells about him in her history of Germantown .....

When Pastorius, a well traveled scholar, had heard about Penn's visits to the Rhineland in 16-71 and 16-77 to recruit a group of religious and affluent Pietists, he [Pastorius] decided to associate himself with the group. But plans with the Frankfurt Land Company [the vehicle for land granting] did not materialize. Instead, Pastorius became the leader of thirteen ... families, *who wished to escape religious intolerance, and settle where they could lead a quiet and god-fearing life, free from religious controversy and with the promise of liberty. That place [where they came] was to be Germantown, PA.*

Those are the basics; here are some more facts. ... HOWEVER

Before we move along, let's arm ourselves with a bit of enlightening Scripture: Christ's parable about the seeds. One seed fell along the road only to perished; another fell among the brambles ... it sprouted, but being

choked out, withered then died; the third seed fell on rich soil to flourish and be fruitful.

Now returning to friend, Pastorius, ... we know that he was a compatriot of William Penn whose enlighten ideas brought Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, in particular, into being. However, he, Penn, was an absentee landlord. He could talk the talk but let others do the walk. Pastorius, on the other hand, put his ideas and words into action. He was an idealist whose notions about man's potential could be seen as utopian ... Pastorius was an idealist. His academic credentials far outshone any other of his American contemporaries. His respect for learning is witnessed by his nurturing of Christopher Dock, an educator whose theories were far more of our time than his own. Pastorius and a handful of other Germantowners wrote the first American abolitionist tract. To return to the Biblical story ... Pastorius was responsible for preparing the intellectual, fertile ground in which, nearly two hundred years later, the seed of the Science and Art Club would take root.

Among the fashionable cognoscenti goes a series of three bits of social interrogation: in Boston one hears, "Where did John Jones go to school?" In New York, "How much is John Jones worth?" In Philadelphia, "Who are John Jones' people?" Now, by extension in early Germantown, the question might have been be "About what == does John Jones think? Germantown from its inception had a reputation for being a place where intellect was valued. As an early-on market town, it was the home lawyers and professionals. Among these were the Sauer family (three generations of Christopher Sauers) who published the first Bible in America (admittedly in German) and Christopher Meig, the architect and builder of Cleveden.

Having refreshing summer air and good water, during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the privileged and educated of Philadelphia came to Germantown for holiday and many took up full-time residency: the Chews, the Morris, and the like. In point of fact, Germantown was a leading contender to be the Seat of Montgomery County. Later, a great groundswell supported the plan that new Federal government should be located in Germantown. Such Ambition doesn't come from a backwater Podunk, but from an enterprising, intellectual, savvy, and affluent community.

The diary of Sidney George Fisher is packet with references to the intellectual and social reputation of Germantown. The venerable Wister

family, of Wisteria-fame, was among those whom Fisher extols. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a stellar example of Germantown's brainy grit can be founded in Rueben Haines' seeking to create an ideal school system for Germantown with his importing William Russell and A. Bronson Alcott to be the project's overseers.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Germantown and, indeed, all of our country was immersed the issues of the Civil War. The city of Philadelphia has been cited as the most southern of northern cities. In contrast, Germantown was rife with abolitionist sentiment yet on the other hand many of its citizens were proponents of States Rights ... What dilemma! The war brought the Mower Soldiers Hospital to Upper Germantown now Chestnut Hill and Camp William Penn to near by Glenside ... here freed African Americans trained to enter the Union Army. After the battle of Gettysburg, Germantown had its own Union League. Following the war, and just before our club was founded, Germantown had not lost its intellectual weltanschauung but its soul had gone through a schizophrenic nightmare

With close of the War and the beginnings of a highly operative rail link to Philadelphia, Germantown, with its long established reputation of "a place to be" became a suburb. Philadelphia might have become the Industrial hub of the USA, but Germantown became the home of the hub's lawyers, bankers, investors, and entrepreneurs ... the suburban home of a Philadelphia brain trust very much in the tradition of Daniel Francis Pastorius.

The intellectual tradition started by Pastorius lived on. In the latter 19<sup>th</sup> Century Germantown reveled in its history as manifested by the founding of such organizations as the Germantown Horticultural Society, the Germantown Relics Society, and the Germantown Historical Society. These groups and several others provided personal credentialing within the community ... this leads to back to that question about John Jones ... Still was honored in Germantown "About what does John Jones think? Such milieu was predestined to produce an organization devoted to the intellectually curious, to a club like the Science and Art Club of Germantown.

Marion Joiner, points out that our founders were a group of young, upwardly mobile characters ... something akin to the yuppies. Unlike Yuppies, our founders sought to create a time and place where they could

find solace in an organized group that focused and discussed ideas and unlike the Yuppies, our founders already had financial and social credentials. Our founders set in motion a forum where intellectual curiosity was satisfied and intellectual camaraderie could flourish. They were for sure the spiritual and intellectual descendants of Daniel Francis Pastorius who valued intelligence and the freedom of ideas flourished. Let's charge our glass to salute Daniel Francis Pastorius, our historical patriarch, to salute our founders, to salute our club's future.

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