Seventeenth through Nineteenth Century Philadelphia Quakers as the First Advocates for Insane, Imprisoned, and Impoverished Populations

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The Society of Friends, especially in the city of Philadelphia, was the only group in the seventeenth century through mid-nineteenth century to align themselves with the plight of those deemed insane, imprisoned, or impoverished. While the connection to the insane was seemingly decided on by those outside of the Society of Friends, their first-hand experience of being thrown into prison simply for being Quaker brought to light the awful conditions within. Women served not only as ministers and proponents within the Quaker movement, but also as caregivers and nurses within the institutions created by the Friends in order to improve society as a whole. They were also observed within these institutions as patients and prisoners. The names Hannah Mills and Julia Moore may not yet be familiar, but the course of this research requires their experiences with the Society of Friends be included.

In England, early Quakers were themselves be seen as mad, possessed by demons, and acutely radical. The popular belief was, the Inner Light would enter their bodies so profoundly and cause them to literally shake; hence, the term Quaker. English founder George Fox and minister James Nayler, were regularly victims of hate. Prominent Quaker scholars Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost note how "In the English Northwest, Fox and Nayler were at first violently beaten or stoned and called Puritans."[1] Friends seeking to escape religious intolerance in England clashed with Puritan ideology in the early American colonies. The average Quaker was ostracized and persecuted in England, and more so in New England. Puritans carried out harsh, cruel punishments freely in the new world, effectively stunting the spread of Quakerism in New England. As a result, Philadelphia provided ample audiences who would attend weekly, monthly, and annual major meetings, but also to further advancement in policy and reform efforts.

Concerned with the lack of Quaker institutions for those within the Society of Friends, and excluded from English institutions, they began founding their own. Originally, these places were to be created by and for the Quakers themselves, in order to better facilitate rehabilitation to fellow Friends. Gradually, they expanded their mission to include those outside the faith; Quaker or not, anyone was welcome into these institutions. The existing asylums and prisons in England were overcrowded, dark, and ridden with disease; before Quaker intervention, no school of thought championed treating each ailment or situation separately. Existing research on the Quakers as leading humanitarian reform are plentiful, but often only discussed in English or American terms, rather than both simultaneously.

The York Retreat, in York, England is a shining example of an improved asylum and has been modeled after by other institutions on nearly every continent. There, the Friends' unwavering belief of the Inner Light, regardless

of wealth or state of mind, allowed them to begin and continue humane treatment methods, with the goal of reintegration back into society. Some of the first, crucial Friends, found great talents in spreading the word of George Fox and Quaker doctrines, especially women. Within the institutions set up to serve the insane, imprisoned, and needy, women found great success working as nurses, compassionate caregivers, and key reformers in the movement. English women Friends would travel throughout Europe and even into the colonies to spread Fox's teachings. While the existing scholarship acknowledges the many contributions of early female Friends, there is little discussion of the female experience within the insane, imprisoned, and impoverished populations; hence the inclusion of both Hannah Mills and Julia Moore.

The very notion that those who had lost their will or ability to reason deserved more than confinement and neglect, and were in fact able to become productive citizens was radical to most English thinkers of the seventeenth century. Prisoners were chained to windowless walls, covered in filth and vermin and often kept alongside those who had lost their will to reason, deemed mad, or those just in debt. In both Europe and America, the existing institutions for these marginalized groups proved insufficient to serve the diverse, growing populations of cities such as York, or Philadelphia. Quaker women and men, both new and veteran, became pioneers in humanitarian efforts; many of their institutions remain in operation today.

Similar to conditions of the insane and imprisoned found in England, the destitute population in colonial Philadelphia were seen as a burden on society, and often treated as subhuman. Philadelphia, more so than any other colonial city, was the figurative center of the newly born United States. In their efforts to rehabilitate anyone willing to undertake doing so, the Society of Friends greatly reduced the stigma directed at these disadvantaged groups in America. The benevolence of Philadelphia Quakers can also be seen in abolition efforts, public education, and the temperance movement. By having their own, Quaker institutions and faith as a means to reach the seemingly lost, they urged the construction of new and improved establishments, such as Friends Hospital and Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. Before the reforms ushered in by prominent Philadelphia Quakers, the treatment of the insane, imprisoned, and poor was cruel, harsh, and all around unpleasant. Often chained to filthy, windowless cells, violent offenders along with those suffering from neurological or chronic disabilities only made the overcrowding within prison walls more intense and dangerous. The Walnut Street Jail had become severely overcrowded, and disease and danger ran rampant. Emphasis was placed on severe punishment, rather than the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners back into society. Philadelphia Quakers aimed to instead focus on rehabilitating the human, regardless of their illness, crime, or income, and did so by founding both institutions and organizations.

Much is known about William Penn and founder George Fox, but what of Hannah Mills, or Julia Moore? These women's stories present readers with accounts of the female experience in pre-and post revolutionary England and Philadelphia asylums, prisons, and almshouses. Hannah Mills was a young Quaker patient being treated at the York Insane Asylum in

England. It was her sudden death, surrounded by mysterious circumstances, that prompted a renewed sense of urgency to reform these institutions. Wealthy and well-respected merchant William Tuke and his grandson, Samuel Tuke, successfully lobbied for the construction of a new safe haven for the insane in England. Penn would continue the mission of English Friends in Pennsylvania, ensuring prisoners would be limited to violators of the newly instilled penal code, and only after a fair trial.

Each book encountered during this research referenced at least one other source in the accompanying bibliography. While George Fox would have likely prayed for an ailment cure, or treatment for those who had lost their reasoning abilities, Quakers soon realized that science also held merit. They chose to begin studying medicine before it had become the norm, especially women seeking to help others and remain ardent in their faith. The emphasis on prayer and individual devotion to attain a cure would have been the average course of action for most Quaker doctors, ministers, and elders of the seventeenth century. However, subsequent centuries would see women beginning to study medicine, though not until the early nineteenth century in growing numbers. The shifts in political, religious, and economic values within the society of Friends during the eighteenth century served to further innovate techniques first introduced in the prior century, and introduce new concepts to be carried into the nineteenth. The Quaker dedication improving the overall moral health of society was the driving force behind their humanitarian efforts, in both England and Philadelphia.

I aim to answer the question, how did Philadelphia Quakers assist in these early reform efforts? Why was it the Society of Friends chose to take up the sizeable task of making life for those largely ignored by English society, their own personal mission once in America? The dedication to discipline on the part of early Friends was clear, and their desire to spread enlightenment through personal means with God allowed many to find his love. Simultaneously, seventeenth century Friends began to study medicine as a respected science. Hannah Mills, in late eighteenth century England, had no idea her premature death would inspire a century-long movement geared at improving methods for the treatment of the impaired. At the turn of the eighteenth century in America, William Penn made the necessary penal reforms to allow for just, fair trials and/or punishment or rehabilitation for all Pennsylvanians. Julia Moore is just one example of how those who have lost their way were able to find new hope in their lives, thanks in part at least to nineteenth century Philadelphia Friends. Julia herself did not write the account of her time and death in Eastern State Penitentiary, yet it is a riveting primary source, well-documented and published by female Friends in Philadelphia. The Friends who donated their time, efforts, and energy to those otherwise abandoned by society demonstrate clearly their doctrine of Inner Light. The document, published by the Female Prison Association of Friends in Philadelphia, was proof that rehabilitation was possible, even for the seemingly lost. The discipline, silence at meetings, and pursuit of Truth in everything, are all meant to let the Light Within shine through unhindered. Had it not been for the efforts of these early Philadelphia Quakers, creation of mental-health oriented institutions,

prison reform, nor welfare systems would be so evolved. Philadelphia Quakers served the insane, incarcerated, and impoverished populations of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries by actively petitioning for expansive humanitarian efforts and donating not only money, but their time, energy, and compassion.

George Fox and Seventeenth Century Quakers

George Fox, the founder of Quakerism, is often considered to be the last great thinker to come out of the Enlightenment. Instead of accepting the Church of England, he founded a religion dedicated to inner reflection and the pursuit of Truth from within. The opulence of the monarchy was rejected by Friends, who dressed in plain dark colors head to toe, and refused to bow before any man. Early English Quakers, including Fox, were often jailed, and their experiences while confined drove some Friends to literally lose their minds. Those who were released never forgot the horrors present inside the prison, and strove to somehow help those still imprisoned. Within the Society, women were especially valued and their contributions numerous, especially as early proponents of the movement. In 1931, The Quakers as Pioneers in Social Work was published. Author Dr. Auguste Jorns noted Fox and his ability to engage women in reform efforts during the mid-seventeenth century. "During his visits to the various meetings he had recognized the necessity of securing the help of the women, and with assistance of a certain Sara Blackbourne (or Blackbury) he succeeded in assembling a circle of sixty women, who watched over the interests of the poor and sick, of widows and orphans, and above all of their fellow members who were in jail."[2] The most common methods of treatment within English prisons were starvation and bleeding. Starving prisoners chained to dungeon-like walls and limited access to facilities only added to the turmoil found within the overcrowded prison walls. In addition, jail officials often sold contraband to inmates, who ranged from debtors to the delusional. "In 1669 George Fox advised his followers to provide a house for them that be distempered" [3] in order to try and rehabilitate those considered to be insane. There, they could be seen and treated by medical professionals, privately and with dignity. Those deemed insane were often put on display as curiosities to amuse the general public, further solidifying their subhuman status.

Eighteenth Century English Friends, the York Retreat, & Hannah Mills

Visitors to English prisons and asylums such as Quaker reformer Samuel Tuke took notice of their squalid, primitive conditions. The grandson of wealthy tea merchant William Tuke, Samuel wrote "In the year 1791, a female, of the Society of Friends, was placed at an establishment for insane persons, in the vicinity of the City of York; and her family, residing at a considerable distance, requested some of their acquaintance in the City to visit her"[4] however, these visitors were turned away on the basis that the patient was not well enough to be seen. Hannah Mills, the female patient being described by Samuel Tuke, died prematurely just a few weeks after the aforementioned incident at the York Lunatic Asylum. Samuel Tuke would later petition Friends at the Quarterly Meeting held at York in March, 1792. Despite the failure of another such Quaker institute dedicated to the care of the insane, the York Retreat was constructed

and opened in 1796. Both Samuel and William Tuke were instrumental in securing funds, land, and ongoing support of this institution; many criticized the thought of trying to rehabilitate criminals, and especially, the insane. Not surprisingly, critics were skeptical of any Quaker involvement in the sciences, which in the seventeenth century had just begun to evolve. Dr. Auguste Jorns wrote in German first, his work later translated by Thomas Kite Brown, how "systematic medicine was still in its infancy; so that it is easy to understand seventeenth century Quakers had little respect for it."[5] However, with the Quaker dedication to literacy, a spirit of scientific inquiry and study would soon emerge, with Philadelphia at the forefront.

Friends in Seventeenth Century North America

As a direct result of Puritan persecution of Quakers in America, William Comfort writes how the "cursed-sect" of the Quakers received their worst treatment and between 1659 and 1661 four of them were hanged on Boston Common."[6] Puritans were especially hateful towards the Society of Friends, and public punishments such as the aforementioned hangings severely limited the spread of Quakerism in New England. In sharp contrast to the restrictions of Puritan New England, stood Pennsylvania, and its steady stream of English Friends. An Englishman named WIlliam Penn was advertising land for sale and "From 1682, when Penn landed on American shores to found his new colony, to the establishment of the United States of America, the settlers followed the humane concepts of the Founder."[7] William Penn had an extensive background as a lawmaker, and was able to pass considerable legislation in regards to dealing with the imprisoned population. William Penn himself wrote the Charter of Privileges in 1701, and his fifth point reads, "THAT all Criminals shall have the same Privileges of Witnesses and Council as their Prosecutors."[8] Meaning every individual is entitled to a fair trial complete with due process, whether they are a defendant or part of the prosecution. While still just beginning to settle in the Delaware Valley, priorities were made amongst Friends to instill both a penal code and protection of religious freedom. "Penn and his legislators constructed a legal system that incorporated the reforms that many Friends in seventeenth century England had championed"[9] which included provisions for the insane, imprisoned, and destitute populations around them.

Quaker Institutions of Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Philadelphia

The Pennsylvania Hospital had been founded in 1751 with a mission to help the poor, sick, and "In 1796 a separate wing was built for housing one hundred insane patients, the first recognition in America that the mentally ill required a special medical institution" [10] with the help of Philadelphia Friends. As Friends became more involved in humanitarian efforts, their role in government shriveled. By "1756 the Quakers in the Assembly, though supported by the German population, felt they could not consistently vote for war preparations, and most of them retired from the legislature."[11] Some scholars say the Friends traded in their civic involvement for a more humanitarian approach, aimed at improving society's morals by reforming the individual. William C. Kashatus III wrote how "After officially withdrawing from the Pennsylvania Assembly during the

French-Indian War, Friends entered a period of internal spiritual reform that eventually led to a more tribalistic relationship to the larger society."[12] The Quakers saw the urgent need for reform in regards to the imprisoned, insane, and impoverished communities around them, and set out to do just that; strengthen the larger society by tending to those otherwise ignored or disadvantaged within the existing mainstream.

In fact, "By the middle of the eighteenth century Philadelphia was enjoying a flowering of scientific endeavor of which several Quakers played an active role."[13] Institutions such as Pennsylvania Hospital and the American Philosophical Society remain in operation today. In addition, the "Quaker withdrawal from governmental office had the effect of placing eighteenth-century Quaker men and women in more comparable positions."[14] The daily oversight of the poor was left to the women Friends, who taught skills such as sewing, or gardening as a way to keep inmates and patients occupied and productive during their stays. The first methods of occupational therapy were also introduced by Quakers working in these institutions, often as volunteers. In addition,
"Mid-eighteenth-century reformers also reversed any tendency to diminish the opportunity for female service in Quaker church government, advocating the establishment of additional women's meetings at all levels of the society."[15] Women also formed their own voluntary organizations and called for increased discipline within the Society of Friends. "To evaluate the part played by women in the Quaker community it is essential to divorce The religious experience of Friends From their involvement In political affairs and to look at religious and moral concerns at a local level."[16] The ability of Quaker men and women to join forces in improving conditions was in part due to their acceptance of science and study of medicine and continued to pioneer treatment methods.

Meanwhile, "On May 8, 1787, a small group of men, armed with Christian benevolence and the desire to improve the conditions of the Walnut Street Prison, established the Philadelphia Society for Alleviating the Miseries of Public Prisons."[17] This group was in part founded by physician Benjamin Rush, and some years later Benjamin Franklin joined. Quakers wanted to improve society as a whole, and began many other organizations geared toward reforming the treatment of prisoners, insane, and impoverished communities. Writing of the same year, Catherine Drinker Bowen details the day by day events and arrivals of delegates from every state (including Franklin) to the Constitutional Convention. In Philadelphia she notes how "at home there was an example in the Quakers, who in cases of public service considered the less profit, the greater honor."[18] Though Benjamin Franklin himself was not a Quaker, his support was crucial, and helped the Friends to secure funding for various social projects. As a result, "After 1790 a concerted effort was maintained, as is done in prisons today, to separate the different types of criminals."[19] At the Walnut Street Jail, four categories of prisoners were used to separate them. The use of solitary confinement was reduced to only one of these groups, while the others were able to participate in employment within the prison, or even take classes at the Walnut Street Jail. "From 1790 to 1799- a decade of experimentation in penology-the

Walnut Street Jail became the mecca for students of penal reform from various parts of the country as well as from Europe."[20] Architects and scholarly visitors from abroad came to marvel at Walnut Street Jail, which the city had come to take a great deal of pride in. Meanwhile, Female Friends in Philadelphia created their own version of the aforementioned group, and joined them in the tremendous undertaking of oversight of the public prisons and those confined within them.

Eastern State Penitentiary & Julia Moore, Nineteenth Century Philadelphia

Even in the case of Julia Moore, who had "joined hands with the workers of iniquity," and participating in a cruel robbery, was arrested, and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, before she had completed her twenty-eighth year"[21], all hope was not lost. She was sentenced to Eastern State Penitentiary, which had pioneered the notions of solitary confinement and inner reflection necessary for guidance by the Inner Light. She entered as a literal and figurative wreck, and was after a previous, failed attempt, receptacle to advice of the Friends assisting her. At first, before being sentenced to jail, Julia had resisted the words of Friends trying to help her leave behind her life of sin. However, it took the prison sentence to fully introduce her to spiritual redemption.

Early in her stay, Julia was visited by an elderly male minister, and "Although the minister's remarks above alluded to, were at first, unwelcome tidings, she had been favoured to recognise the mercy that was mingled with such an exposure of her real situation"[22]; he had said what she needed to hear. The only way to avoid a life of sin was if she, herself chose to do so. Unfortunately, her disease would worsen and then subside, periodically throughout her incarceration. She practically memorized the Bible, and held it and its teachings in the utmost esteem. "She read her Bible attentively, and though the light of Truth shone at times with brightness, yet the sins of her youth pressed weightily upon her spirit"[23] as she knew she had sinned, and carried it with her. Julia longed to feel the acceptance and forgiveness of Jesus Christ, and it was through him she found her own salvation. She would come to view her jail sentence as a blessing in disguise, and continued to keep in touch with female Friends throughout her incarceration.

Even though she would die in Eastern State Penitentiary, the help she received from Friends did more than just make her comfortable and occupied. One day, a Friend working closely with Julia noted how "Suddenly she was inspired with hope, and the query arose in her mind, "May there not be room even for me?" And the possibility of such a mercy filled her soul with joy."[24] Julia had indeed found God, and would sing him praise until her last breath. She let the Inner Light guide her away from using profound language such as curse words; she describes in her account how Jesus took away those strong impulses to use indecent language. Within a year of her imprisonment, Julia seemed to be enlightened and eternally grateful for the day which she arrived to the penitentiary. According to Julia, she found "that it was a great mercy that she had been stopped short in her career of infamy, and cast into prison"[25] rather than dead on the streets.

Not all prisoners were open to the Quaker discipline, and here Julia also tried to spread the messages of Jesus she had learned.

While involved in a life of crime, her so-called friends and partners in crime had not been nearly as nice as the Friends she encountered in Eastern State, a prison. Julia said, “Oh! If my poor fellow prisoners would only believe in what you say, and feel His love as I do, they would be so full of happiness, they would not care for anything else. I often feel so sorry for them, that I try and pray your instructions may be blessed to them all.”[26] She reiterates how her only joy as of late was through Jesus Christ, and for introducing her to him, she was forever grateful for the Friends of Philadelphia. Unbeknownst to her, Julia Moore was observed with the intention to showcase the Quaker penal reform as successful. The Female Prison Association of Friends in Philadelphia had her account published in 1844, just a short year after she had passed away. Rehabilitation was the ultimate goal of many Quaker institutions and organizations, more so than the public display of punishment that had prevailed in early America.

Other Prominent Nineteenth Century Quaker Institutions in Philadelphia

Also in Philadelphia, “The Friends Asylum for the Insane had pioneered in the care of the mentally disturbed from 1813, when it first opened its doors in then-rural Frankford.”[27] The Friends Asylum heralded its success of completely avoiding the use of heavy chains or withholding food as the main means of punishment, though chains were still used to restrain unruly patients at times. The sprawling structure housed a gymnasium, tennis Court, extensive lawns and was the first such institution in North America, dedicated to those who had lost their ability to reason, who often still received barbaric treatment reminiscent of the Middle Ages. The goal here was to restore patients with full use of their capacities, and regain entry into mainstream society as productive citizens.

When this facility and the Walnut Street Jail both became dangerously overcrowded, the need for a new and improved penitentiary became a pressing issue. A constant sentiment was held in regards to Walnut Street Jail, as “the city took pride in it and its novel arrangements for the humane treatment of prisoners, after the notions of Philadelphia Quakers and the philosophy of the Italian reformer, Beccaria, who believed that evildoers should be helped as well as punished.” [28] However, the population of Philadelphia surged and required several additions to each of these institutions in order to house ever-increasing numbers of prisoners and those both diagnosed or seemingly insane. The end result was the construction of an entirely new establishment; Eastern State Penitentiary.

Eastern State Penitentiary was open and housed prisoners from 1829 until January of 1971, and has since been declared a National Historic Landmark. Like Julia Moore, the first prisoner to enter the new, state-of-the-art penitentiary, was sentenced to jail for committing burglary. While the experimentation with solitary confinement had begun at Walnut Street Jail a century earlier, it was at Eastern State Penitentiary where it took full form, and drew both praise and criticism from visitors. Charles Dickens himself wrote of his personal disapproval of giving men no contact whatsoever with other humans. Meanwhile, Alexis de Tocqueville, visiting from France, admired the discipline the prisoners seemed to exhibit. Both American and European guests marveled at the brilliant architecture of the prison, laid out in a

spoke-wheel design and marveled at the individual plumbing and heating units within each cell. Each corridor was visible from the central hub, which further demanded obedience from each individual within. Heads of prisoners were covered on the rare occasion they travelled outside their cells, in order to completely cut them off from their former lives of crime. The hope was they would re emerge, without the temptations of vice or bad company, and become productive citizens after having an extensive amount of time to reflect on their wrongdoings. Author Michael Meranze finds "evidence that "the most knowing rouges" avoided committing crimes that might result in a penitentiary sentence, they insisted, were "powerful reasons for extending its operation, to those penitentiary offenses not at present comprehended within the statute" of 1829."[29] In this sense, the prison population would inherently decrease, as returnees to society would have left behind their sinful ways and acquaintances long ago. The Inner Light would guide wrongdoers in the right direction, at least ideally.

To conclude this research, hopefully one other person sees how the Philadelphia Quakers of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries were the primary advocates for the insane, imprisoned, and impoverished communities around them. Their humanitarian efforts have greatly assisted the scientific research and progress made in regards to care for the diagnosis and treatment of the mentally ill, as well as conditions for prisoners, and those who have financially fallen on hard times. Their efforts were limited to only benefit Friends at first, as they were excluded from English establishments. In turn, an urgent need arose for Friends to create both institutions and organizations in Europe and the United States, to better serve and improve society as a whole.

George Fox sought to inform every man and woman of the Inner Light each of them carries intrinsically. Hannah Mills perished likely because of the treatment she received while at the York Insane Asylum. In response, William and later Samuel Tuke would petition for a new asylum, dedicated to the wellbeing of Friends, which was very much needed. William Penn looked toward the New World for a green living space where Quakers could worship as they saw fit, and a fair trial available to anyone entering a courthouse. While Julia Moore had the misfortune of dying young, she was greatly assisted by Friends in finding Jesus and remaining faithful all while her rehabilitation at Eastern State Penitentiary.

Each of these figures, men and women, Quaker and non, were examples of a concentrated effort to redefine how the world regarded those deemed insane, imprisoned, and impoverished. The stigma related to these groups would be relaxed, not eradicated, but only after Quaker intervention. The necessity to treat the insane as unique cases perhaps able to acclimate back into society, was suggested first by the Quakers. Simultaneously, the need to lessen the terrible conditions in overcrowded city prisons was given increased attention, and thus Eastern State Penitentiary was created. Furthermore, the Quakers were best suited to provide assistance to not only Friends in Philadelphia, but other young women within the open doors of Quaker almshouses. The names taught and learned in school are often limited to key players. The everyday, average Quaker voice goes unheard; women even more so. Philadelphia provided the Friends with an endless supply of needy populations, and the

waves of reform came for not only the insane, imprisoned, and impoverished, but also for the public education system, abolition of slavery, and temperance movement. The Society of Friends chose to leave behind a legacy of humanitarian efforts to benefit future generations; they succeeded. Often excluded from current scholarship are the narratives of those found within these institutions. Philadelphia Quakers of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries greatly assisted the advancement of proper treatment for the so-called insane, such as Hannah Mills, and Julia Moore, who was both imprisoned and impoverished by forming and serving various associations and charitable organizations.

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[22] An Account of Julia Moore, 6. This minister told her she was a creature of sin, and essentially

needed to change her ways, which seemed to open Julia's eyes to her dire situation.

[23] An Account of Julia Moore, 7.

[24] An Account of Julia Moore, 8. She is elated at the fact that even though she has sinned, there is room in heaven, with Jesus, even for her.

[25] An Account of Julia Moore, 8. Being arrested and sentenced to Eastern State was to Julia, a true blessing, for within her cell she learned how to self-reflect and let her Inner Light guide her, rather than her bad decisions.

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