

An Account of A Friends Family Adventure Towards Moving Round Right

For my son Austin's 18th birthday, he asked me to take him to Philadelphia to visit some friends for a weekend. We were about 2 hours south of Philadelphia, so I was happy to bring him up. I had never been there either, and it sounded like a splendid adventure.

A few weeks prior, I discovered my family comes from the Fallsington Friends Meeting just an hour north of Philadelphia. Fallsington was called the Falls at the time that Friends first settled there. I found meeting minutes online and tidbits from historians, and a plan of action slowly began to take shape. Austin and I went to PA in July, and this is what I found.

15 generations back from Austin and Cypress (my children) was a woman named Rachel Penn, the Aunt of William Penn. Her son was Randall Blackshaw, he came with his Cousin William to Fallsington in 1682, he and his wife Alice Burgess (who arrived with their 3 children in 1683) were part of William Penn's Pennsylvania Settlers community from England. Randal Blackshaw and his family were the first immigrants on that side of my mother's side of my mother's family to set foot onto these lands.

Our family arrived thankfully on a different boat than William Penn. The meeting minutes I found talk about the terrible disease of smallpox that was on his ship, which killed 1/3 of the people aboard. There was no outbreak on the Randall's ship, unfortunately; Alice and Randall still lost one child, their 10-year-old Abraham, on the journey from a bad storm that broke the mast and killed him. I have included journal entries of another passenger, Phineas Pemberton, and ship logs at the end of this writing. The Blackshaws buried their son at sea. The storm that killed their son knocked the boat off course, and when they arrived, they entered Chesapeake Bay, which was far more south than anticipated. Currently, I live on a small island in this very bay and have developed a deep appreciation for this place. Then I discovered the Blackshaws traveled with their children up the Choptank River with the help of other Friends and made it to the Falls in what is now Bucks County, PA.

The elders I have been caregiving with on Tilghman Island can trace their family back to the original native peoples and the first sailors who came to the mouth of the Choptank River. The very river mouth that my ancestors traveled through; in fact,

according to the available journals and historical records, I was able to follow the river banks and watch the sunset standing on the very banks that they most likely had landed. I am sure much of the actual place was washed away and changed by the river's movement; however, it did something to my soul to stand on those banks and think about the courage it took to travel and the sorrow and joy they must have experienced.

I was intrigued by what I was finding about these early Friends through their meeting minutes and journals. The Friends' colonies were the only ones that did not need walls or protection, since they engaged in extensive diplomacy and respectful trade with the native peoples in the area. It was fascinating to learn about the kinship of indentured servants that came with Randal and his wife. It was so great to read about history in a way that is pretty different than what many of our history books relay. Having access to the meeting minutes that remained was deeply rewarding and lifted some of my hope for humanity. I gained a new depth of gratitude for journaling and for Friends' commitment to meeting minutes.

I dropped Austin off in Philadelphia and headed to Fallsington. When I reached the Fallsington Friends meeting, I noticed some delightfully familiar landscapes. In the usual way of Friends, the grounds around the meeting house were beautiful in a simple yet profound manner; gardens, old buildings blended with updated additions, old stone walls dotted the lands, and you could still see the impressions on some areas of the grounds where buildings of some sort once stood a long time ago.

I sat on the rebuilt horse block. I thought about the original horse block, which no doubt the women in my family had dismounted from their horses onto when they arrived at the meeting for worship each week. I walked around the grounds and stood where they think the first of the four meeting houses was built. The first meetinghouse was no longer standing, and while it is lost to history, its construction was part of the rich history of our family. Then I found out that the bricks that made the meeting house were made with the help of Randal Blackshaw. Three generations of our family lived and labored in Bucks, a part of a great experiment in the way living is practiced.

11 Generations back (From Austin and Cypress), Johanna Biles was to change the trajectory of my family line forever. Falling in love with and marrying a Baptist man 5 years her junior was no small act in her family nor her community. I discovered that her mother, Martha Blackshaw (Randal's daughter), and her father, George Biles 1st were both from prominent families and birthright Friends

Johanna's father, George Biles the 1st, was the Son of William Biles, who was one of the earliest Friends to arrive in the New World in 1679; records show him as being both a minister and a seller of glass vials, oddly called a vile monger. It took me a second to realize what they were saying in these documents, no doubt an adventure in itself. There were not many Quakers in the colonies by the early 1660s. That grew as Penn and other prominent Friends received a colonial province in West Jersey in 1677. King Charles owed a large loan to Penn's father, who was the brother of Rachel Penn(Randall's mother), which he settled by granting Penn a large area of land in the New World in 1681.

Turns out that George Biles and William Penn did not think highly of each other, which is ironic, given that their families would ultimately unite and then leave the church altogether. In the writings of William Penn, there are several mentions of disapproval of Biles' conduct. I have yet to come across any documents of Blackshaw's to know more of either Alice's or Randall's perspective on the matter. After I walked the graveyards, which took me a little while to find all three of them, I found the first one and where the unmarked graves were located, and the most likely place Randal Blackshaw would be buried.

After visiting Fallsington Meeting House, the local historian, and the graveyards, I drove down to Pennsbury Manor, where they had reconstructed William Penn's family manor. It was just a little less than 7 miles from Fallsington.

Once at Pennsbury, I met two really nice historians who I greatly enjoyed speaking with. We pulled out the Penn documents, which they had three books of. Another location has the other books from the collection. (It seemed a little bit of a point of contention, so I did not ask further about it)

We looked through the pages and found both William Biles, Johanna's paternal grandfather, and Randall Blackshaw, her maternal grandfather, in the writings of Penn. I walked through the museum, and a photo of one of the Biles homes was also in the exhibit; I'm not sure which Biles generation it was. It seemed strange that they would choose a Biles house as the model for the reconstruction of Penn's staircase if they knew the relationship he and William Biles had.

The historian's photocopied a map of the surrounding three counties for me, and we found multiple plots of land that the men had owned. William Biles had received a land grant from Governor Andros of 309 acres just below the Falls. He was an ambitious man holding tens of thousands of acres of land, holding government office, and traveling back and forth to England for Quaker interests. It was William

Biles' house that the first recorded Friends meeting in Bucks was held. The Friends in the area took turns holding Meetings for worship in their homes until the first meeting house was built.

There are some interesting moments of people being reprimanded in the meeting notes for things like selling alcohol to the Native peoples who lived there. There were several friends who suspected William Biles of also selling alcohol to them even while he was reprimanding those who had been caught doing the very act. It seems to me Biles was a torn man, one of wanting to follow the inner light and also wanting to lavish in the places of power. It's hard to say as early friends were a product of their times just like all folks are, so what might have been "unsavory behaviors" to them might have just been the average human behaviors of a man grappling with all the things in life that men grapple with at a different time in history.

One thing was very clear from the writings I observed: they deeply believed in family and caring for their children, as evidenced by the care and resource sharing they provided. They had a surprisingly low death rate of children compared to other colonies and back in England.

Johanna's mother, Martha, was the daughter of Randal and Alice Blackshaw. They arrived in the New World on a ship called the "Submission" on the second day of the eleventh month of 1682 after 58 days at sea. Their voyage was rather well documented; I have included some of their details, including the morning that they lost their 10-year-old son Abraham in a storm.

Martha was one year old when she began the great journey with her parents, her sisters Phoebe 16, Sarah 14, and Mary 6. She left Liverpool with 3 brothers: Abraham, 10; Jacob, 8; and Nehemiah, who was 3.

September 6, 1682, their ship set sail. 52 people, including the captain and crew, were on board. It took the ship 58 days to reach the shores around the Chesapeake Bay. Due to the cloud coverage, the Captain got a little lost along the way. They had been going to Pennsylvania and ended up in what is now Choptank, MD, along the Choptank River, which branches off the Chesapeake Bay.

The Blackshaws had already procured land in Pennsylvania in 1681, a year before either Penn or Blackshaw set foot on the land, according to the Holmes map. There were over a hundred people on Penn's ship, which was named Welcome; 1/3 of those people died of smallpox on the journey.

Contrary to Penn's voyage, only one death seems to be recorded on the Submission, and that was the Blackshaw family's oldest son at the time. There is some scant documentation that there were two more children who had died in England who might have been twins, either at or just under the age of 20. However, I have not seen this in any meeting minutes or any mention of it in any other writings. I saw it briefly in a genealogy report of the Blackshaws that I caught a glimpse of and kept myself from traveling down that no doubt interesting thread of information.

All in all, there were 22 ships in Penn's fleet that brought 2,000 Quakers to the shores between 1681-1682; none of the original passenger lists apparently survived, so what is available are all reconstructions that have been created over time by people slowly piecing documents together. There seems to be no list available for the Ship that Penn was on, which is a shame since they lost so many.

One of the rabbit holes I did venture down included the information about family and how the Quakers of the time differed from the Puritans and Middleland peoples from where they came from. The indentured servants that the Blackshaw family had with them were not the slaves or servants that we sometimes think of painfully in history. They were contracted servants and not random strangers they bought to help with the farming work that was needed when they arrived in the new lands. The Bradbury family made a servitude contract with the captain of the ship, it seems, and the Blackshaws to pay for and receive safe passage to the colonies.

Perhaps Blackshaw could not afford to pay for all of them, or something else happened that Rodger Bradbury was not a part of the contract with Blackshaw. The Bradbury family was blood kin to the Blackshaws, were fellow Quakers, and were neighbors back in England. The contracts that these folks had as "servants" were more like a construction contract we would have with a carpenter, well sort of. One you couldn't back out of, and the master could be really terrible to you since you contracted your flesh for work in exchange for passage. (A more common occurrence than one would think.) Needless to say, the Bradbury family must have trusted the Blackshaw family very much to willingly go into this arrangement.

To Quakers, family by faith and blood, and especially the children, were incredibly important to them. Respect and kindness were also incredibly important to them, as reflected in the documents I have read when concerning such matters. I cannot imagine how hard this must have been for both of these families as they reconciled how to save Rodger Bradbury from servitude to the Captain. I am hopeful that perhaps they made arrangements with another Quaker family in Maryland who was headed to Delaware, thus ensuring that fair treatment and full respect for the

contract that they agreed on for Elanore and her son would have the highest likelihood of being upheld. Randall Blackshaw had to sell the contract he had with Eleanor Bradbury and her sons, in introducing them to someone else to purchase Rodger Bradbury's servitude from the captain. At least that is what I was able to gather from the writings. Deeper scrutiny may reveal improved perspective and accuracy on the situation. If he had not done something, likely not only would the father of that family have been stuck indebted to the captain, but their family likely would not have made it much longer intact. It's likely Rodger Bradbury would have either stayed under the captain's debt, possibly having to go back to sea, or been sold to strangers. From what I have read, that could have pretty much been a terrible sentence of slavery that we are better accustomed to knowing concerning indentured servitude of the time.

Virginia at the time was not known, from what I have read, to be very kind or just to the plantation workers, be they servants or slaves. White slavery and servitude was a far bigger part of commerce than I think most would want to believe in the colonies; many, many white slaves went to VA and lost their lives along the way. This is also what made the Holy Experiment in PA so fascinating and so rebellious in the face of what was happening all around in the other colonies. The Quakers refused to toe the line of continued mistreatment of servants or slaves, from what I am reading, which was a huge social change in contrast of the times, it seems, particularly for other colonies.

I was not there and can only speculate about the weight of the decision that these two families had to make together. I have not found other documents that show the Bradbury family having served for their payment nor to whom or where they had been indentured. I will stay optimistic that it was simply to more Friends, as the Blackshaws seemed to have good connections with other Friends who had immigrated to the New World. At the time, many Friends made servitude contracts and were treated equally to their masters, who were Friends in all regards. The mention that Rodger made it to Delaware to the Quaker province is also a good sign that perhaps their family stayed together and was treated well for the remainder of their contract.

Ship records show that the Bradburys had five children: Jacob, Joseph, Roger, Martha, and Sarah, ranging in age from 18 to 2. There is no mention of the sale of the two daughters' servitude, so I am not clear as to what that means. Many of the documents seem to show that early Friends were indentured servants for 3-4 years; one or two mention 7 years. One document I found was pretty interesting:

“....in the upland court record the sale of William still Taylor for 4 years to Captain Edmund cantwell. And a short time after this the clergyman of New Castle in a letter states that they had lost their schoolmaster but that he can be replaced as he learns that a vessel is shortly to arrive when he will go to the doc and buy one and it is also stated that no less a person than a distinguished singer of the declaration of Independence was sold in his youth as a servant and after the expiration of his time taught school.....”

Once our family made it to the Falls, Randal would be commissioned to make the bricks for the Falls first Friends meeting house, which planning started in 1683 and by 1690 it was complete. The meeting house was situated between Randal Blackshaw's and Samuel Burges lands;

I am not able to find these lands on a map and have only really found access to the 1681 map, which obviously is a little different than the actual reality of the land in 1682 when they arrived. This was a map of Pennsylvania containing three counties of Chester, Philadelphia, and Bucks created before Penn and fellow Friends arrived in the area. The first meetinghouse building is thought to have been where the former schoolhouse stood, which in 1992 was the site of Hugh and Harriett McCue's home.

Randal Blackshaw owned several other parcels of land besides the land next to where the meeting house was built. It is not clear how he came about to have this land, nor is it clear which parcels of land he kept the cattle that it is said he owned in the county according to historical documents from 1684.

William Biles, his first wife, Randall Blackshaw, and Alice Blackshaw(Burges) were a part of the original settlers in Bucks County and a part of William Penn's Pennsylvania Settlers Community. Penn, Blackshaw, and Biles all attended the Falls Meeting together. Due to the timing of the building of Pensburry manor and that of the first Meeting house along with the closeness of William Penn and Randal Blackshaw; and the simple reality of there not being very many settlers in the area at the time I am led to wonder if Randal Blackshaw did not also have a hand in making the bricks for the Pensbury manor which was under construction at the same time just 7 miles from the Falls. The meeting minutes seem to suggest some struggle to get enough bricks made for the meetinghouse, and I wonder if that is due to both projects happening at the same time? (This could simply be coincidental since I have found no connecting documents to confirm this idea)

I was able to find documentation of both Randal Blackshaw's and his daughter Martha's (Johanna's mother) deaths in the minutes of the Fallsington Friends meeting. There are three graveyards at Fallsington. The earliest Friends did not mark their graves, not even with stones. I am not sure how they made sure they did not bury people on top of people, and there is no mention in the minutes of how they would do so. I'm sure it's far simpler than my imagination would lend it to be. There are large open areas in the graveyards, which is not uncommon for Friends meetings in the area.

I additionally discovered it is highly likely that a few more generations are buried at the Falls Friends meeting graveyard. They lost the documentation of who was buried at the oldest graveyard and only have the date range of the people buried there. I have been going off of the marriage and moving data and death records that Friends have for them to narrow down who might be there should I decide to dig further down that tunnel.

The documents of who exactly is buried in the graveyard at Fallsington during that time were lost in the Croasdale store fire of 1910, which seems to also be a point of contention when talking to the historians that I have spoken with at Fallsington and at Pennsbury Manor. They all seemed quite disturbed at this loss, though I have no background in the subject to fully understand why. It seems to me as though perhaps the fire was more nefarious or due to preventable carelessness, yet another rabbit hole I refrain from at this time.

I had hoped to find more information about Alice Blackshaw, who was Johanna's grandmother. Alice Burges was born in Mobberly, Cheshire, England. She married Randall Blackshaw, and from what I can gather with sound documentation, they had 7 children, with Abraham dying in 1682 before they made it to Fallsington.

Randall Blackshaw, (born in England, died in Bucks County PA) 1622-1699, his wife Alice Burgess 1639-1689 (or 1688) (born in England, died in Bucks County), their daughter Martha Blackshaw (born and died in Bucks County PA) 1675-1742; Her husband George Biles 1 (Born and Died in Bucks County PA) 1673-1708; their Daughter Joannah Biles (some sources say Johannah) (born in Bucks County died I think in Westmoreland, PA) 1699-1742 After that point my family moved to Westmoreland PA and then to OH. Joannah was disowned when she married a Baptist named Evan Morgan; she was still a Quaker for the remainder of her days and raised her children in the way of Friends. Documentation became very muddled after that point, likely due to the disconnection from Friends' historical writings. It seems she was the last Friend until me, 10 generations later, and my

Children whom my daughter, Cypress May Steffens, is the first birthright Friend after 11 generations from disownment. Cypress was born April 14th 2005

Alice was the First woman from this part of my family to move to the New World. Thus far, I can find little mention of her name in the minutes. I have a feeling that if I can get a hold of some of the women's meetings for worship with a concern for business minutes, currently held at Swarthmore, I would find some good information. Women were very active in the dealings of Friends, though not nearly as well documented in the history of our country, it seems. They were seen and treated as full equals within the Quaker community alongside their male counterparts, even owning land and personal property.

I did find out that Alice passed away and was buried the 18th of the 11th month of 1688. The meeting minutes were actually from the Middletown Friends meeting in Bucks 7.5 miles from Fallsington. I am not sure if the minutes from Fallsington were lost and the Middleton meeting minutes were all that were left of the documentation or if she was actually buried at the Middleton meeting cemetery and that's why its documented there.

After I had left Pennsbury, I went to Middleton Friends Meeting House, which had early on branched from the Fallsington Meeting House. I adventured to the meeting house cemetery, photographing where early Friends at that Meeting would have been buried. I walked the gardens and peeked in the windows of the meetinghouse. It was a very traditional-looking meetinghouse with long wooden benches on either side of the meeting room. At the time, men and women sat in different sections of the meeting during worship and had separate business meetings; it is interesting to see how the meetinghouses are arranged, offering a glimpse as to how they may have been seated during those times. There were modern additions, and the buildings had obviously been kept up over all these years.

There was a beautiful monarch butterfly and herb garden on the grounds next to the meetinghouse, leading to a very large tree in the graveyard; it was so big it would take at least 5-6 people, arms outstretched, to wrap their arms around the trunk.

The old entrance to the graveyard had a plaque for the slaves buried there. Their graves were also unmarked like early Friends; it was a nice commemoration to remember that while Friends were very strong abolitionists at the time of abolition, there was a lot of work within the Friends meetings to reach that point in the culture.

It seems that white indentured servants were even more important in farming than slaves on many plantations, so I wonder how changes in the commerce of the human laborer affected communities in those days. It's really easy to get information on a few perspectives in our country and there's so much emotion still entangled in the history of slavery here in the USA. I'm pretty sure there were a lot more varied perspectives and impacts during this transition from slavery and indentured servitude in the Quaker colonies than we are often privy to.

There were several Friends who had to work very hard to convince other Friends that slavery was not respecting that of God in everyone that Friends held so closely to. Even though slaves and servants were often treated very well and often as equals in these communities, their bodies were still not their own in many ways. It's easier for us to see what that damage can do to a person now, likely not so easy for most at that time. Hard to change a paradigm when everyone is so deeply ingrained in it. I find it very interesting that it seemed for these colonies to be very much a matter of business for a long time. They have very different records of free men and women be they of light skin, dark skin or of any particular heritage from old world or the new one they lived in.

Slavery and servitude seemed, from the documents I have been reading, less about skin color or culture and more about the commerce of human labor from any source. Comparatively, the fair treatment of any freedman/woman in the Quaker communities rubs against some of what I have been taught about such matters and might be worth digging deeper into for my own better understanding of how we conduct business and how we can be so upright in so many ways yet allow commerce to blind us to our own biases and unwitting oppression of another; even as it stands against our own deeper moral judgments.

I will refrain from delving too deeply into the truly profound and inspiring communications with the Lenape Turtle Clan, the indigenous people who lived near and shared life with the Quaker settlements. They had a pledge of brotherhood and peace that lasted a surprisingly long time for the truly painful reality that the people of these lands were going to face along the journey to today.

The Blackshaws and other Quaker colonies, from what I can see in the documents, were the only English colonies that never had to fortify their walls against the native peoples; they had bought land from and traded goods with them freely. It was said that peace between the clan and these colonies lasted 100 years. I don't know how

historically correct that is; I haven't dug to the depth needed to affirm. I have only looked through some of the stories that some of the Friends at the time had documented regarding the historical adventure I was already traveling.

I have been deeply filled with gratitude as I have been walking and observing my own path as the way becomes clearer with the passing years in my life. To be a part of a family history that circles back to the home within that we call Friends has helped encourage me to continue to move in service and gratitude along this journey of life.

I am a convinced friend and my name is Sandra Steffens (Sandra Armstrong) Born in Saint Paul MN May, 1 1981. My two children Austin Steffens born June 11th was 1 years old when I began attending the Floyd Friends meeting upon the recommendation of Allison a Friend at Floyd Friends meeting in Floyd, VA. My daughter Cypress Steffens was born April 14th 2005 and is the first birth right Friend in our family since Johanna Biles was disowned from the Falls Friends meeting in Bucks (Now Bucks county, PA) 11 generations prior.

Sandra moved to Tilghman, MD, in February 2021, and her children moved in with her by 2022. Seeking transfer of membership from Floyd Friends Meeting in Floyd, VA to Third Haven Friends Meeting in Easton, MD, in the 4th month of 2023.

Below you will find some of the writings between the ships' logs and the journal of Phineas Pemberton that I thought Friends may be interested in, from this historical adventure the past few years have gifted me with.

September 12th: *“left sight of Cape Cleare”* - (Ireland's southernmost island)

September 17th: *“A whale came neare us & appeared fair to us & followed us some time.”*

October 2nd:

“Abraham died at 6:00 in the morning

A great head sea broke over the ship and stave the boat and took the most part of it away, broke up the main hatches that were both nailed and cooked and took them away that they were not seen where they went, broke the boat's mast and hissed that were lashed in the mid ship, broke of the gunnel head in the mid ship and broke the four sheet and took several things of the deck and several things that were in the boat it's cast bewixed decks.

At 9:00 in the morning the boy was put overboard, about four in the afternoon a great sea fell on our rudder and broke it about one yard or something more from the head, it was again pieced as well as it cold that night not being discovered until 10:00 at night and was made pretty firm the next day. Didn't clear up for another few days. The rain would come and go quite a bit."

October 9th:

"Faire wether and wind, hundreds of porpoises about the ship some leaped high out of the water and followed the ship about an hour."

By mid to late October even though at this point they were still lost, likely due to the continued overcast sky's they could smell the odor from the pines along the shores and knew they were not far from land. They ended up traveling up the Chesapeake Bay to the Choptank River. They landed at the Choptank Maryland port on November 2nd 1682. The Blackshaw family then had to travel over land from Maryland to the Falls colony.

It was noted that Phineas Pemberton and Randall AKA Randolph Blackshaw were the most important colonists said to be on the submission and judging from the respective positions in the group this is likely to be so. I also saw in some of the notes mention of Blackshaw arriving in Appoquinimink Delaware. This is close the Delaware River heading towards the Falls colony.

Along with the death of The Blackshaw's son Abraham the second most impactful entry during the journey that I found is as follows:

"The voyage across the Atlantic has been most trying one to the passengers due principally to the serve exceptions of the master James settle but partly from the fact that many of them had overinvested in the commodity of the time known as servants. So much so that their funds became exhausted and Randall Blackshaw was compelled to sell in Maryland Eleanor the wife of Roger Bradbury together with her three sons so as to liquidate his indebtedness to the captain and enable him to reach the Quaker province on the Delaware."