

Treason In Abington

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Elizabeth Shorter's life work was done when the grandson she had brought from London to Abington in 1684 married Mary Carver. The year was then 1699, and Mary, who had been born in a cave along the Delaware, was not yet 17. Her sturdy husband, Isaac Knight, was twice her age.¹

After the Widow Shorter died, Isaac owned about 600 acres of farmland — two adjoining parcels between the present Highland Avenue, Susquehana Street Road, Easton Road, and the Cheltenham Township line. The eastern half was an original grant from William Penn to Isaac's grandmother for £5; the other half Isaac had bought for £50 in 1697.

Isaac and his bride lived, at least for a time, in part of the grandmother's comfortable house. This was near the northeast corner of the property, adjacent to the ground which later became the property of the Abington Presbyterian Church. The 100 acres surrounding the house were long known locally as the Stanley Farm; today, they are the campus of Abington High School complex.

The first generation Knights born in Abington consisted of five girls and three boys. The oldest son, also named Isaac, was born in 1707, and, like his father, lived to be 85.² Unlike his father, however, Isaac Jr. learned to read and write — at the then very young Abington Friends School.

The elder Knight must have been enormously busy on his land until Junior was old enough to help. Like his grandmother, he could not have managed his fields and livestock without help. Unlike his close neighbor, Humphrey Morrey,³ at Edge Hill, in Cheltenham Township, he had no slaves imported from West Africa to work his plantation.

Getting his produce to market was difficult. Isaac did not live to see the opening in 1751 of the present Jenkintown Road through his property, but he had always been interested in roads. He was one of 58 "inhabitants of German-Towne, Abington, Cheltnam, North Wales, and the Northern Liberties" who petitioned the Governor and Council in 1701 for "a settled Rhoad to Philadelphia,"⁴ and was a "juror" who helped to lay out the Old York Road in 1711 from the Delaware River to the Northern Liberties.⁵ After 1712 the easiest way out of his farm was probably from the northeast corner to the Old York Road.

Agriculture did not changed greatly during Isaac's lifetime. He probably did considerable fencing to contain his cattle, using the good stand of chestnut trees on the slopes of Edge Hill, which ran across the upper corner of his land. As a sideline he probably burned limestone in his own kilns, and hauled it in wagons, which were gradually taking the place of crude sledges on and off the farm.

He almost certainly operated a grist mill. The mill at the southeast corner of the Knight land, called Rice's Mill and Paxson's Mill in more recent times, was originally known as Knight's Mill.

Isaac Jr. (who, confusingly, is called Isaac Senior, in the microfilm and tax records) was married about 1730. His first wife bore him seven children before she died in 1747. He had three more by his second wife.

The oldest son, Joshua, born in 1731, married Sarah Tyson in 1753, with 20 other Tysons witnessing the marriage certificate.⁶ It is through her descendants that the Shorter and Knight deeds and documents were preserved and ultimately donated to the Old York Road Historical Society.

A second son, Jonathan, died in his 29th year. Following him came another Isaac, whom we shall call Isaac 3d, and, finally, John, a half-brother to the others, born two months before the first Isaac died in 1750.

So, as the events in the Province built toward the coming Revolution, the land, except for about 100 acres at the Cheltenham Township end, which, from the evidence of the recording of earlier deeds, apparently had been sold about 1756, was divided among four Knights: Isaac Jr., Joshua, Isaac 3d, and John.

Isaac Jr., on the Property Tax list of 1769, was assessed for 300 acres, three horses, and nine cattle.⁷ This made him the second largest landholder in the township, and his tax of £45 13s. was the fifth highest. Actually the assessment understated his holding by about 100 acres.

That same year, Joshua (his oldest son) is listed as owning 140 acres, two horses, and four cattle.⁸ He was also a blacksmith, and ten of his acres were "on the York Road near the Meeting House,"⁹ adjoining land of Abraham Tyson (the tax assessor that year), and others. A stone house and smithy stood on his land in Jenkintown, and he made his home there. Since the farm was mortgaged for £200 in 1778,¹⁰ he may have used that money to acquire the Jenkintown property and set up his blacksmith shop.

The two younger brothers were not assessed until the Provincial Tax of 1774. In that year, Isaac Jr. is shown as holding 150 acres; Joshua, the same 140; Isaac 3d, 200; and John, who was also a tanner, 100. The combined tax was a sizable £78.¹¹ Isaac 3d was listed as having a servant. Surveyors sketched some or all of these holdings in 1779,¹² 1789, 1793, and 1814.¹³ From their maps and descriptions accompanying later transfers, it is possible to locate quite accurately how Isaac Jr. divided his land among his sons. His namesake was given the choice 105 acres in the eastern corner — the ground which Elizabeth Shorter had reserved for herself in the deed of 1699.¹⁴ Joshua's ground was the north corner; that is, at Susquehanna Street Road and the present Easton Road. John's acreage was irregularly shaped, with about five-eighths of a mile frontage on the road running northeast from Weldon. Isaac Jr. kept the heart of the 500 acres, with the most of his frontage on the road to the mill (Highland Avenue).

An examination of the surveyor's sketches reveals that considerable attention was paid in the subdividing process to giving each farm access to the springs and streams; the springs for household use; the streams for the cattle. Isaac Jr. was careful to see that his own land was well watered in three or four places.

All three sons of Isaac Jr. preferred the British cause. This powered many mills on its meandering course through Cheltenham Township before it became the Frankford Creek.

The Knight family had arrived at the eve of the Revolution, a time when Quakers, particularly, found themselves balanced precariously on the fence of divided loyalties. They were certainly aware of the Testimony of the Philadelphia Meeting on January 24, 1775:

We have by repeated public advices and private admonitions used our endeavors to dissuade the members of our religious society from joining with the public resolutions prompted and entered into by some people which, as we apprehended, so we now find, have increased contention, and produced great disorder and confusion . . . From our past experience of the clemency of the King, we believe that decent and respectable addresses would avail towards obtaining and restoring the public tranquility! - *and we deeply deplore* that contrary modes of proceeding have involved the colonies in confusion.¹⁵

This was signed by James Pemberton, clerk, one of the 20 so-called Virginia Exiles, 17 of whom were Quakers, banished from Philadelphia in 1777 "to keep the peace." Isaac Jr. and his sons knew and respected Pemberton, who is described as a man of "punctilious probity ... almost the last of the race of the 'cocked hats', ... and primitive men."¹⁶

Isaac Jr., too, was highly respected, both among Friends and neighbors. Although he was nearing 70 in the winter of 1774-75, he was named by the people of the Province to a Committee of Correspondence and Inspection,¹⁷ to act under the provisions of the "Association" agreement

of Congress, to attempt to establish a unified policy among the various colonies toward the oppressive acts of the British. He was one of the 40 chosen from the County of Philadelphia, which then included the future Montgomery County, and all the outlying townships and boroughs of the future city.

It is difficult today to re-create the mental and economic anguish the Knights endured during the Revolution. They had their strong religious conviction that any kind of fighting was wrong, but many of their friends and neighbors, even some of the Quakers, had taken up arms. They could not be, even if they wished, completely neutral, because they had to sell their produce somewhere. If they took it to Philadelphia, occupied by the British in 1777, they became the lawful prey of Continental scouting parties. If they sold to Washington's troops, they ran the double risk of not being paid, and of having the British attack them for their efforts.

Foraging parties from both sides, in scouring the countryside, could hardly have missed their productive 500 acres, either. The Tyson's, who were both neighbors and relatives, during 1777 and 1778, "suffered greatly from British soldiers skirmishing through the Sandy Run valley, robbing their granaries, their stores of beef and other supplies, and driving off their best horses and other livestock."¹⁸ Taxes, too, became increasingly onerous, and, if they refused to drill on Militia Days (which they did), the taxes were automatically doubled or tripled.

All three sons of Isaac Jr. preferred the British cause. This in itself was neither unusual nor surprising. Probably two-thirds of the population of the Province of Pennsylvania felt the same way. Even the Continental Congress, as late as January 2, 1776, was not too concerned about this disaffection, but urged the committees of safety "to treat all such persons [Loyalists] with kindness and attention; to consider them as the inhabitants of a country determined to be free, and to view their errors as proceeding from want of information rather than want of virtue or public spirit."¹⁹ That attitude was soon to change.

The Knights, however, carried their convictions further than most, and were accused of treason as a result. On May 8, 1778, their names were listed on the first proclamation of attainder issued by the Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania "against certain named persons adjudged guilty of high treason" for having "severally adhered to & knowingly & willing aided & assisted the Enemies of this State & of the United States of America, by having joined their Armies at Philadelphia, in the County of Philadelphia, within this State."²⁰ They were given until Thursday, the 25th of June, to surrender themselves for trial or stand attained of High Treason.

Isaac 3d surrendered, and was subsequently discharged by proclamation when no witnesses appeared against him. Joshua, the oldest, and John, the youngest, did not. In May of 1778 they were 46 and 28, respectively. In the eyes of many of their neighbors they were traitors. The penalty was confiscation by the State of all their real estate and personal property.

What Joshua and John did specifically to aid the British cause was not stated in the proclamation against them, although John is listed elsewhere²¹ as having been a guide. Whatever they did to incur the wrath of their neighbors could not have been trivial. It was certainly not just because they were Quakers, no matter how outspoken.

Although the Quakers had been reviled during the French and Indian War for not fighting for the King, and now for not fighting against him, the number of persons of all faiths actually accused of treason was so small as to be insignificant. In all of what was to become Montgomery County only about 47 had this dubious distinction, and some of them were acquitted or discharged. The Knights, with one possible exception, were the only ones from Abington.

Some of the those accused surrendered, like Isaac 3d, but had to stand trial. Thomas McKean, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and, in 1778, Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, presided at 16 trials between September and December. Two of those convicted were hanged. Some called it "an example;" others, "judicial murder." One was John Roberts, wealthy and influential miller of Lower Merion, who had served on the same Committee of Correspondence as Isaac Knight Jr.

Among the documents preserved by the Tyson family was a letter which set off the search into the brothers' Loyalist activities. The return address was simply "Beaver Harbour," and the date was April 7th, 1787 — four years after the end of the Revolution. It was sent to Isaac Knight Senior (whom we know as Junior) in care of James Pemberton, Philadelphia — the same James Pemberton who had been exiled ten years earlier for being outspoken in his Quaker anti-war beliefs.

Honoured Father

I have to trouble thee once more concerning my losses, having been before the Commissioners to prove my claims and, falling short of authentick proofs as to the confiscation and sales to their satisfaction, was desired by them to procure the condemnation or an acknowledge[ment] of the commissioners that seized and sold the property with the prices sold for or even one of their Advertisements for the sale. Thy procuring the above vouchers will be of infinite servis to me as I have nothing in my possession to prove the confiscation nor attainder of my pirson and it is necessary for me to prove both - therefore beg that every exertion be mad[e] use of to obtain the proofs discribed as the whole depends on these things:-

this has been the hardest winter ever known by the oldest inhabitant in this country; the snow is between two & three feet deep on a level in the woods at this time; there has been upwards of fifty moos[e] killed within six weeks in this settlement which has been a grate relief to the Inhabitants, provision being very scant, many families not having a mouthful of meat nor bread for some weeks before.-

as to health, we are in a bad state, my wife has been confin'd to the house most of the winter and is not any better yet. I am much troubled with the rheumatick pains so as to disable me from work. John's wife has been sick this three weeks past and not any better.-

so concluding with love to thee and all our relations and friends, not forgetting our children.

Joshua Knight

In an atlas it takes but a moment to locate Beaver Harbour — a small village in New Brunswick, less than 20 miles across open water from the eastern tip of Maine.

So the story unfolds: Joshua and John were among the estimated 100,000 Loyalist, then three per cent of the white population of the new United States, who fled from the northern states to the Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and from the southern states to the Bahamas and Florida, to escape the animosity and even violence of their nieghbors.²³ Only a handful, of course, had actually been accused of treason.

A few of the more moderate Whigs recognized the absurdity of persecuting the Tories after the war was over. They argued that these misguided people had lost all political influence anyway, so it would be better to allow them to stay in the United States than to drive them off to found an unfriendly colony to the north. But those who argued thus, no matter how conspicuous their own service had been in the Continental cause, ran the risk, almost literally, of being tarred with the same stick.

The British government undertook a huge task in evacuating the Tories, giving them land, and indemnifying them for their losses in the States. Even if the promised 200 acres of farmland for the head of each family did not always materialize, Parliament did pay out about \$16,000,000 by 1790 to 4,000 refugees, while others received grants of crown-lands, half pay as military officers, special annuities, or civil service appointments. It might be remarked, parenthetically, that the

British took far better care of the Loyalists than Congress ever did of Washington's ragged soldiers during and after the War for Independence.

It was not until the spring of 1778, when the British were preparing to leave Philadelphia, that any concerted attempt was made to enforce the laws passed by the Assembly against those who favored the British cause. Meanwhile, the Loyalists who had joined the British forces in the city were becoming more and more disillusioned and apprehensive. The rebels were not being defeated fast enough, if at all, and now the British army was about to withdraw, leaving them to the untender mercies of the Whigs. Most of the Tories decided that only in flight lay safety for themselves and their families until his Majesty's forces got to work and won the war.

The rear-guard of the British marched out of the city on the morning of June 18th. Before sundown, the Continental troops took possession of the city, and found their former prim and pretty Quaker town a shambles. Desolation, filth, stench, and flies were the legacy left by the foe. Since their collective losses from the wanton destruction of houses and businesses ran into hundreds of thousands of pounds, the enraged Whigs quite understandably preferred complaints against those who had assisted the British army during the occupation of Philadelphia. Joshua Knight, blacksmith; John Knight, tanner; and Isaac Knight, husbandman, were attainted even before the British left.

Sir Henry Clinton had planned to go to New York by water, and had his transports lined up in the Delaware for that purpose, but the demands for protection from the 3,000 Loyalists who wished to go along forced him to let them use the transports while he took his army and 12 miles of baggage wagons by land across new Jersey.²⁴ Philadelphia's streets were piled high with furniture and other belongings of the refugees awaiting cartage either to the wharves (to be taken along), or to auction places for public sale. As each transport was filled, it dropped down the Delaware and anchored to wait for the rest. "There they lay for a fortnight in the steaming heat of a tidewater Pennsylvania June, their unhappy passengers devoured by mosquitoes and sweltering in their crowded quarters between decks."²⁵

Most likely they were also suffering from the anguish a gambler feels when he has staked his fortune and his future on the wrong horse. Even under the "protection" of the British they had suffered as much humiliation and financial hardship as if they had been defeated in battle. But that was only the beginning.

As Joshua's letter relates, his property was "seized and sold." So was John's. The Pennsylvania Archives give the details, sometimes fragmentary, sometimes complete. Confiscation usually took the form of an inventory of real estate and personally possessions. In Philadelphia County (as distinguished from the city itself), Col. George Smith and William McMullen, Esq., were appointed agents for the State to handle all the details of seizing and selling the properties.

There is no indication that any Knight furniture or farm equipment was confiscated, but the real estate was inventoried and described.

Joshua owned 100 acres bounded by Susquehanna Street Road and the properties of Jacob Lippincott, Thomas Tyson, and his two brothers. This was mortgaged for £200 "in arrears." He also had two lots adjoining each other, "ye one Containing ten acres Deeded, ye other Containing twelve acres only on title Bond, Near to Abington Meeting house, Adjoining to Land of Abraham Tyson & ye Widdow Coffins and ye York Road, Whereon he Latly Lived — Concidrable in Debts by What I can find to ye amount of two hundred and ten Pounds," according to Col. Smith.²⁶ There was still another parcel, containing 24 acres, bounded by Susquehanna Street Road and the land of William Jenkins and Samuel Davis.

These properties were not immediately sold. In fact, Sara Knight (probably Joshua's wife, the former Sarah Tyson) rented the Jenkintown places October 1st, 1778, at £10 per year. This would seem to indicate that she did not follow her husband (to whom she had been married 25 years) when he first "went over to the enemy," but continued to live in their home beside the blacksmith shop on York Road.

John Knight's 107 acres were bounded by the Abington Road (part of the present Easton

Road), and properties of his father, his two brothers, Jacob Lippincott, and Rynear Tyson, Joshua's wife's grandfather. A two-story stone house stood on the property, approximately where the Casa Conti restaurant is today. There were also outhouses and lime kilns, orchard and meadow.²⁷ It is probable that the outhouses were used in John's tanning trade. The Archives show that the acres were rented in December 1778 for £50. From the evidence of tax payments made by Isaac, it appears that the two Isaacs worked Joshua's and John's land until those farms were sold, paying both rent and taxes for the privilege.

Joshua's 100-acre tract was purchased on the 22d of June 1780 by Philip Moore at public sale in the city of Philadelphia (the county seat). The total purchase price was £29,000, three fourths of which was turned over to the Commonwealth, the other quarter reserved for the University of Pennsylvania. Moore also bought the 24-acre parcel for £8,000,²⁸ while Joseph Dean, of the Manor of Moreland, purchased the 10 ¼ (including house and smithy) for £11,600.²⁹ The same one-quarter share was reserved for the university in each case. The records do not indicate what happened to the other 12 acres, but since they were not deeded, Joshua probably did not actually own them.

No purchaser was found for John's land, so the Commonwealth eventually bid it in for £41,000, "for the use of the university,"³⁰ on August 30, 1780. Less than three weeks before that, William Jenkins, tax collector for Abington Township, had received from Col. Smith £236 10s. "for ye months of Jan. & feby. and ye County Tax for Joshua & John Night's Estates in Abington."³¹

Here we must pause to explain the enormous sums paid for the properties, and the role of the University of Pennsylvania in the sale of confiscated estates.

Beginning in 1777, Continental currency depreciated so rapidly :a fast trotting horse could not keep pace with it."³² A Philadelphia merchant kept a chart showing, month by month, what 100 pounds in specie were worth³³ in the "old rags and lampblack"³⁴ of Continental money. In August 1780 it had depreciated to 70 to 1. This means, that John's farm, sold for £41,000, was actually worth about £583, or roughly \$2,800. Similarly, Joshua's 100 acres, sold in June when the ratio was 64 to 1, was worth about \$2,175, and the 10 ¼ acres in Jenkintown, \$780.

Because Dr. William Smith, Provost of the college founded by Benjamin Franklin, and some of the trustees and teachers of that institution were supposed to be tainted with too much Toryism, the Assembly, in 1779, annulled the Academy's charter and created a new institution, the University of Pennsylvania.³⁵ The device of giving the university 25% of the proceeds of confiscated estates was an ingenious way of endowing it without taxing the citizens of the Commonwealth. The U. of P. in most instances took the income, in cash or produce, rather than purchase money. John's estate was apparently leased to PeacockMajor,³⁶ an Abington farmer who had been a first lieutenant in the First Company of the Fourth Battalion. There is a note in the Archives, dated July 21, 1780, that William (probably Joseph) Dean either owed or paid "Int. on ¼ ps. of Purchase Money £2 18s. Specie, or 5 Bushels and 8-10 of Wheat."³⁷

Brother Isaac, meanwhile, escaped prosecution, and continued to farm his land. The Archives, in a summary account of the proceedings of agents for confiscated estates in Philadelphia, has a note: "Made an Inventory of some Iron belonging to Isaac Knight, formerly of Abington, gone with the enemy, and left them with Levis Fohrerer."³⁸ This was dated July 23, 1778. Since this was a month after the date set for Isaac's surrender, it could be that he had not yet been discharged, or that the agent who made the inventory confused Isaac with Joshua. It is more likely the blacksmith of the family would have the iron.

By a curious coincidence, one of the Isaac's profited from the confiscation traitor's property. On November 3, 1780, Isaac Knight and David Jordan were paid £432 (about \$28.75) "to Keeping Two horses Late the Property of Benedict Arnold Confiscated 32 Days Each @ £6 15s. p. Day."³⁹

After Joshua's holdings were gone, and he personally could suffer no further loss in Abington, two members of the Tyson family came forward with claims against the confiscated estate. The

Tyson had been conspicuously on the side of the Whigs as the Knights had been on the side of the Tories, yet Joshua had married a Tyson, and one of his sisters had married another, Jonathan, son of Derrick. The family ties seem to have been stronger than their political differences, because Abraham Tyson advanced Joshua £30 on June 15, 1776, and Joseph Tyson loaned him £50 Specie on November 1, 1777.⁴⁰ Both claims were approved by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and paid with interest and costs some years after the war.

Most curious of all, however, is the following statement, under date of November 23, 1795 — 17 years after John's flight:

I, John Tyson, of the City of Philadelphia, do hereby give information to his Excellency Thomas Mifflin, Esquire, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, That there are four hundred acres of land Situate in the Township of Haverford and County of Delaware an undivided moiety of which stands forfeited to this Commonwealth by reason of John Knight, late of Philadelphia County, having been duly attained of High Treason and that the said land is now in the Possession of Margaret Hibbird and Samuel Seeton [Leedom?].⁴¹

One can only speculate on the motive for this late and apparently gratuitous act of informing, for by that time the high tide of feeling against the Tories was long past. John's mother had married Isaac Jr., at Haverford. When she died in 1785, John was her only surviving child. This might have been a property inherited by her and then willed to him.

The records do not indicate whether Joshua and John, with their wives, sailed on the transports to New York in 1778, but it is more than probable that at least the men did. It was not safe to stay behind. The next five years must have brought them alternating moments of hope and despair as the fortunes of the war ebbed and flowed, and their thoughts turned northeastward.

According to Sabine, an "original agreement between the founders of Pennfield, made at Philadelphia, in 1782,"⁴² was placed at this disposal by a descendant of Joshua. Joshua could hardly have been in Philadelphia in 1782, but a plan did exist, and he was definitely one of the planners.

"It was under this agreement that a meeting of Quakers was held at the house of Joshua Knight, 36 Chatham Street, New York City, on July 5, 1783, in order to decide some matters of importance in connection with their plans."⁴³ Samuel Fairlamb, of Chester, George Brown, of Buckingham, and John Rankin, of York County, all similarly attainted of treason, were appointed to locate lands for the association. They petitioned, on behalf of "those Gentlemen, who by the unhappy termination of the War are obliged to leave their Homes and seek an Assylum in His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia," for land for about 60 families.⁴⁴ The site chosen for them was at Beaver Harbour, north of the island of Grand Manan. The settlement was established in the fall of 1783, as at least 800 former residents of Pennsylvania poured into the Province of Nova Scotia.

Colorfully, but without dates or references, Sabine relates that "early in the Revolution he [Joshua] abandoned everything, went to the Island of Campo Bello, N.B., where, for a winter, he occupied a fisherman's salt-house, or hut. Joined finally by other Loyalists from his native Province, he settled on the mainland of the Bay of Fundy at a place called Pennfield, in honor of William Penn."⁴⁵

There appeared to be discrepancies in this account. Early in the Revolution there was no "N.B.," since New Brunswick did not become a separate province until 1784 — after the Loyalists settled there. Also, if Siebert's account is correct, Joshua must have been in New York in 1783, and almost certainly sailed on the *Camel*, 293 tons, William Tinker, master. This ship arrived at St. John on September 18, 1783, with "Loyalist and Refugees consisting of 104 men, 50 women, 20 servants, as well as 47 children under the age of ten. Nearly all belonged to the

two special companies of Quakers and Anabaptists, and they were sent immediately down the Bay [of Fundy] to Beaver Harbour."⁴⁶

Could Joshua have made a trial visit to the island later made famous by FDR, returning to urge his fellow Loyalists to seek their fortunes north of the border? No matter, land at Beaver Harbour he did. An old plan of the town, in the British Museum, shows 15 streets and 950 lots in the town proper, with many large farms and garden plots behind them. With an excellent harbor and good spring, the town looked impressive on paper, but rocks and swamps made farming difficult, and the settlement waned. Joshua transferred his home to Pennfield:

"... the Parish of Pennfield was erected in the following year [1786]. It was agreed to build a small meeting house July 7, 1786, on ground allotted for that purpose. We are told that a fire devastated the town in 1787, which must have greatly increased the distress and want among the pioneers at Pennfield. About the time of the fire, however, partial relief was afforded through the efforts of two Quakers gentlemen from Philadelphia who had visited Beaver Harbour a twelfthmonth before, and on their return home had raised a subscription with which they bought and shipped 240 barrels of flour and Indian meal, together with some other necessaries, to be distributed amongst their destitute brethren... Whatever recovery Pennfield made from its first conflagration was wiped out by a forest fire in 1790, which left but one dwelling house standing. According to a recent writer, 'a few inhabitants, including the family of Joshua Knight, remained or came back to rebuild their dwellings at or near the old sites'; but some of the settlers... went elsewhere. In June 1803, the population of the Parish of Pennfield which continued to consist of Quakers principally, numbered only 54. This little community occupied a good tract of land and lived chiefly by farming, although it sustained two saw-mills, and had recently launched two vessels of 250 tons each."⁴⁷

Joshua symbolizes the perpetual loser — in all but courage. Even at age 60, crippled by "rheumatick pains," he built again, and lived for 15 more years in that frosty country. He must, though, have longed for the mellower climate of his native Abington; for the sight of the children he left behind; for a little of the luck or wisdom of his brother Isaac; but most of all, probably, for the strength of the Friends Meeting he left behind. The Quaker delegates sent from Philadelphia to visit their brethren in the wilderness returned and "reported sadly that the meetings were not kept up and the children were not trained in the thoughts and discipline of Friends."⁴⁸

Even the days of the Isaacs in Abington were numbered. The first of the three surveyor's charts preserved by the Tysons is dated April 1789. It identifies the "bounds, &c. of Land, The Trustees of the University to Peacock Major, heretofore John Knight." This survey of the 107 acres was made "at the request of Isaac Knight [probably Isaac Jr.] and in the presence of Peacock Major and Samuel Burman, Assignee of the sd. Major by Lease." Since the tax records show that Major was in the possession of those same acres, three horses, and two cattle six years earlier, the survey was probably requested by Isaac to define his own holdings. What is curious on the sketch, however, is Jacob Lippincott's name where Isaac 3d's, had been. We can only surmise that Isaac 3d, sold his farm and moved in with his father, who was then past 80.

Thomas Livezey, Surveyor, made the next sketch, on the 30th of March, 1793. It shows the boundaries of the "Plantation late of Isaac Knight the Elder deceased... containing 202 Acres & 112 Perches." Isaac had died the previous September. A two-story house with two chimneys is shown on the west side of Lime Kiln (Jenkintown) Road about where Abington Avenue is now. A large barn stood north of the house, and a spring house between the house and the road.

This was soon sold, for by 1798 there were no longer any Knights among the "taxables" of Abington. In 1814 Thomas Livezey returned, and received "Four Dollars and fifty Cents in full for Surveying, calculating & drafting" this property. It was then called Jonathan Tyson's Plantation. The Tories were gone. The Whigs were here to stay.

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45. Sabine, op. cit.
46. Wright, op. cit.
47. Siebert, op. cit.
48. Wright, op. cit.

SOURCE: Parry, E.C., "Treason In Abington," Old York Road Historical Society Bulletin, Vol. XXVIII, 1967.

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(Information contributed by Kathleen Smith)