

Faithful Colored Caretaker

of Stenton

DINAH

who by her quick thought

(c. 1728 - c. 1803)

and presence of mind

The Heroine and the Woman

saved the mansion

from being burned

by British Soldiers



Envisioned With Henry's Future



Dinah the Woman

(archival sources)

*“And I do hereby give further unto my said Wife [Hannah Emlen Logan] as her own property the **negroe Woman Dinah** and her **Grand Child Cyrus**, having already set her **Daughter Bess** free and desire they may not be dunned or valued as part of my Estate my said Wife’s Father George Emlen deceas’d having given Dinah to her in his Life time.”*

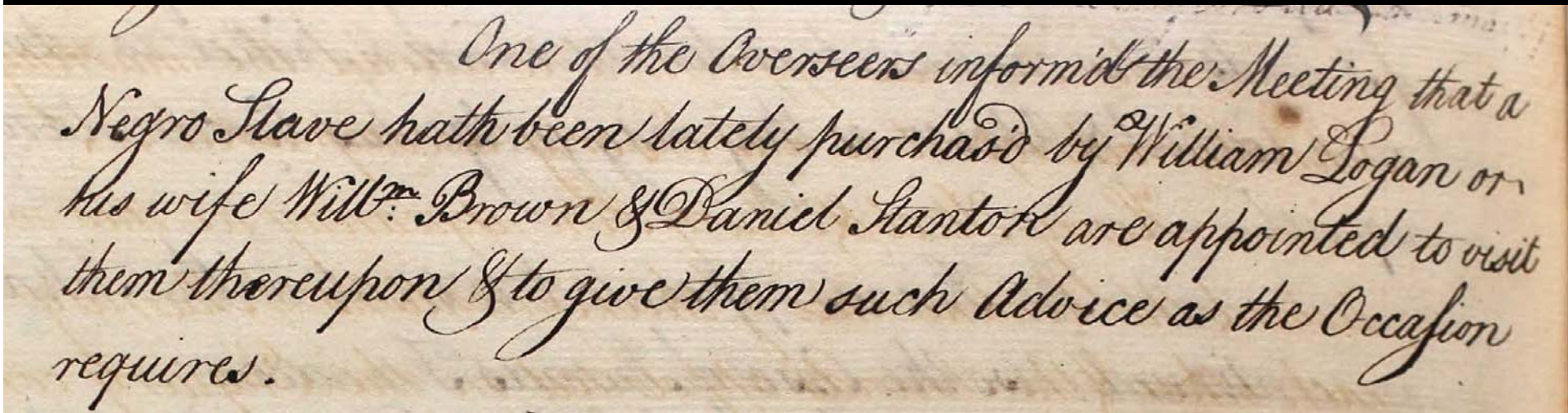
William Logan, Will, 1772.

From William Logan’s Will, we learn:

- Dinah belonged to Hannah Emlen and was part of her dowry property.
- Dinah had a grandson, Cyrus.
- Dinah had a daughter, Bess (already free).

Prior to 1755, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting stipulated that Friends who imported or purchased imported enslaved Africans should be admonished.

From 1755–1776, the Quakers worked at freeing slaves and became the first Western organization to ban slaveholding. So when William and Hannah Logan purchased Dinah's husband in 1757, the Overseers of the Monthly Meeting appointed William Brown and Daniel Stanton to investigate the Logan's purchase of Dinah's husband and advise them.

A photograph of a handwritten document on aged, yellowed paper. The text is written in a cursive script, likely from the 18th century. It is a record from a Quaker meeting, detailing the purchase of a slave by William and Hannah Logan and the appointment of William Brown and Daniel Stanton to investigate and advise them. The paper shows signs of wear, including creases and discoloration.

One of the Overseers inform'd the Meeting that a Negro Slave hath been lately purchas'd by William Logan or his wife Will^m. Brown & Daniel Stanton are appointed to visit them thereupon & to give them such Advice as the Occasion requires.

March 25, 1757

Philadelphia Monthly Meeting Records (1757-1762)

Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library

The Friends appointed to visit Mr. Nisbait & his Sister are continued; also those appointed to visit James Logan.

The Friends appointed to confer with Mr. Logan & his Wife brought in the following Narrative of the State of the Case relating to them which was read & directed to be entered on the Minutes the Meeting appearing satisfied therewith;

Agreeable to the Minute of the Monthly Meeting we have endeavoured to gett a Narrative of the Case which induced Mr. Logan or Wife to purchase that Negro; she had a Negro Girl born in her Father's Family & after some time a Young man of the same Family had a desire to take her for his Wife & proposid it to her Master & Mistress who consented & they were married & had Children, but since her Father, George Emlen died, the Man was sold out of the Family & he proved tender & unhealthy & the Purchaser determind to sell him again & sent him to seek himself a Master who came to his Wife's Master & Mistress & begged hard for them to buy him, but they being one with Friends in the concern to discourage the Importation of Negroes refus'd to buy him, & advis'd him to go to his Father who was able to free him & he went but his Father would not do it, & the Man was in much Trouble fearing he should be sold far from his Wife & Children into a strange Family the which prevaild on Mr. Logan's Wife to purchase him, but finding it gave Friends more Uneasiness than she expected as the Case was in Circumstances & thinking what they had done might be an Encouragement for others to purchase for View of Interest resolv'd to give him the Offer of his Freedom & did so, which he refus'd saying he was not in a State of Health to gett his own Living therefore he chose to live in his present Situation with his Wife.

William Brown
Daniel Stanton

June 24, 1757

Explanation of Purchase

Interesting that the names of the enslaved are not recorded here.

Dinah's husband was sold out of the Emlen family when George Emlen died. His purchaser wanted to sell him again due to his ill health. He begged William and Hannah Logan to buy him so he could be with Dinah.

Dinah's husband refused the offer of freedom because his poor health prevented his earning a viable living. " ...he chose to live in his present Situation with his Wife."

The Logans were not disowned nor partially disowned by the Meeting because their purchase was in its own way a humanitarian act.

In 1760, Hannah Logan noted among her expenses “*a gown for Dinah*” at 15 shillings.

Given her position working in an elite household, Dinah was likely relatively well dressed.

Wooden Servant Figure in a Gown
Shellwork Shadowbox Grotto, 1757
Philadelphia
Made by Anne Emlen, sister to
Hannah Emlen Logan
Stenton Collection



Be it known to Whom it May Concern; That
We William Logan & Hannah Logan of the City
of Philadelphia in the Province of Pennsylvania
having been possessed of a Negro Woman named
Dinah from the time of her Childhood & she
having Requested us to let her have her Freedom
~~that she might be free~~
We therefore do hereby discharge Manumit and
set free the said Negro Woman Dinah
and declare Her to be at full liberty to go and
live with Whom & Where she may think fit, and
We hereafter shall claim No Property in Her.
Witness Our Hands this 15th day of April
1776

Sealed & Delivered
in the presence of
John Morris

Will: Logan
Hannah Logan

Judith Davis
Ralph Roberts

Release from Bondage
William Logan &
Hannah Logan
Negro Woman named
Dinah April 15: 1776
Recorded in the Court Book
by the Hon^{ble} Judge of the
Court for recording of Manu-
missions Oct. 2.
John Drinker

- The Logans were “possessed” of Dinah since her childhood (age 12 and under).
- Dinah “requested” her freedom.
- Why is a line blacked out?

“Release from Bondage,” Dinah’s Manumission, April 15, 1776
Haverford College Library, Quaker Collection

I *Hannah Logan* — of the *City of Philadelphia*
Widow — do hereby
 set free from bondage, my *Negro Boy named Cyrus*
 when *he* shall arrive at the age of *twenty one* years which
 will be on the _____ day of the _____ month,
 anno Domini, one thousand seven hundred and _____
 and do, for myself, my executors and administrators, release
 unto the said *Cyrus* — all my right, and all
 claim whatsoever, as to *him* — person, or to
 any estate *he* may acquire, hereby declaring the said *Cyrus*
 absolutely free, without any inter-
 ruption from me, or any person claiming under me. In wit-
 ness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this *fourteenth*
 _____ day of the *Twelfth Month* in the year of our Lord,
 one thousand seven hundred and *seventy six*

Sealed and delivered }
 in the Presence of }

Thomas Fisher
Nicholas Waln

Hannah Logan

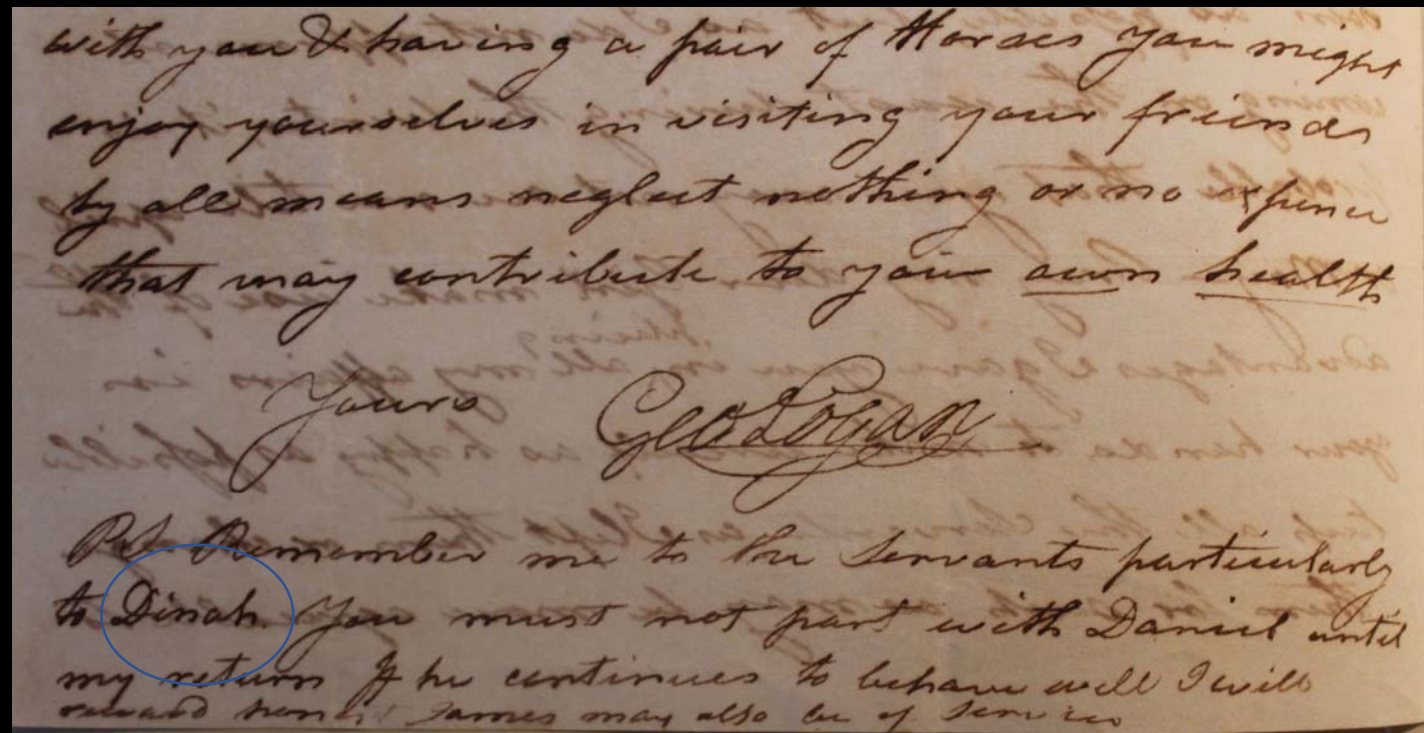


- Cyrus' manumission December 14, 1776
- Interesting that it is a pre-printed form
- Hannah widowed at this point in time

As Executor to William Logan's estate,
his son-in-law, Thomas Fisher,
recorded in August, 1777, "Negro
Dinah was **paid her wage** in full --
£12."

William Logan's Estate, 1772-1783, p.30. Historical Society of Penna.

Correspondence between Dr. George Logan and his wife Deborah Norris Logan discusses Dinah's care for their children and refer to her as "good old Dinah."

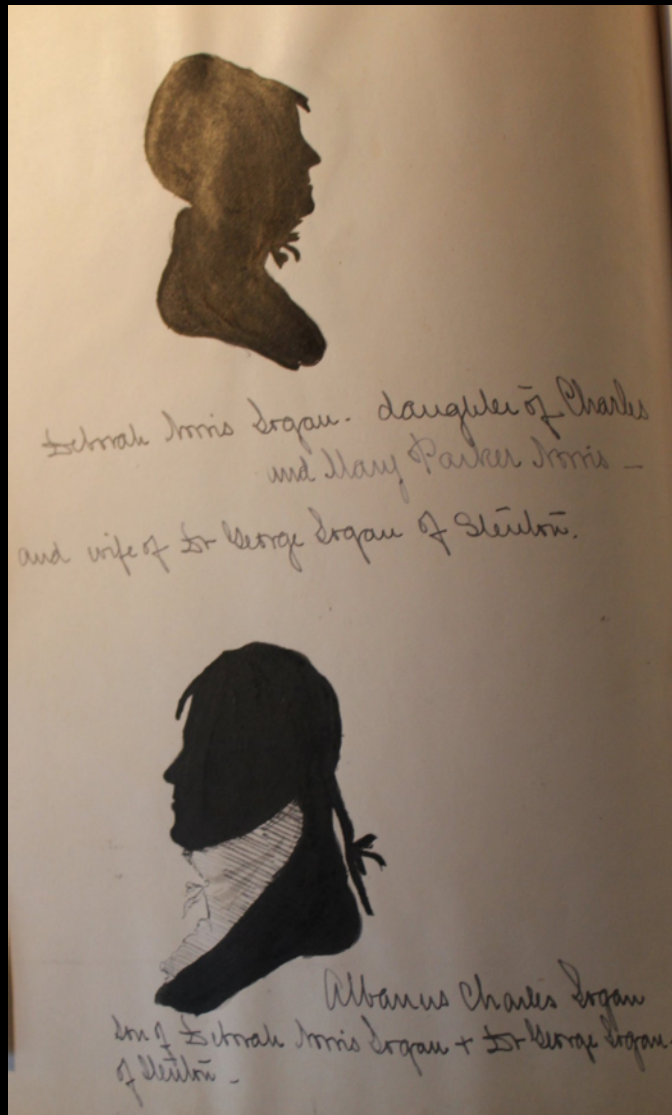


with you & having a pair of Horses you might
enjoy yourselves in visiting your friends
by all means neglect nothing or so expense
that may contribute to your own health

Yours G. Logan


P.S. Remember me to the servants particularly
to Dinah. You must not part with Daniel until
my return. If he continues to behave well I will
reward him. James may also be of service

morrow. My sons, who were young mountaineers in their fearless habits and love of the chase, had that morning taken out their father's favourite spaniel, and by accident, had wounded her; she was brought to me to be nursed, and accommodated with a cushion near the fire; my youngest boy was put to bed, and the two others were reading with me in the dining room; when a step was heard on the Piazza, the wounded animal raised herself and strove to get to the door — it opened — and in a moment the reformed Husband, father, Patriot and Friend, found himself in the bosom of his happy family: for our affectionate old Dinah, hearing the joyful exclamations, brought Algeron from his bed to share in his father's caresses, and herself embracing his knees, shed tears of joy that she had lived to witness his return. There was an honest security in his manner that at once banished all my fears from the machinations of his enemies; and never did one from their upright and virtuous conduct more completely live down calumny, or innocently triumph



The final reference to a living Dinah in Logan family papers seems to be that a letter from Deborah Norris Logan to her son Albanus dated February 3, 1803.

The 1777 Saving of Stenton
and
the Evolution of Dinah's Story



Biographical Sketches

of the

Life and Character

of

Doctor George Logan

written by his afflicted

and affectionate widow,

M. Logan.

Shenbrot
1821.

who were in attendance being set aside, and their places supplied by some of the most distinguished Physicians.

I have already mentioned that Doctor Logan had the misfortune to lose his father soon after he embarked for England, the death of his mother followed in a few months; and when he returned to his possession of his paternal estate, he found it little better than a wreck;—his house at Stenton had indeed been more fortunate than many other mansions in the neighbourhood for it had escaped being burnt by the British soldiers at the time that they filled Fairhill and sixteen other seats and houses in its vicinity; and it seemed to owe its preservation to the presence of mind of an old domestic who had remained in it thro' all the vicissitudes of its being committed thro' wanton depredations, two British soldiers came to the house, and as an act of special favour, desired the old woman, if she possessed a bed or any furniture of her own, to move it out directly, for they were going to burn the house. She remonstrated, but they were deaf to her entreaties, and went to the barn for some straw to effect their purpose; happily at that moment, an officer, with a drawn sword in his hand, galloped down the lane and enquired of the domestic if she could give him any intelligence respecting Quaker?

She
a natural and goodhumoured, (not sarcastic) wit, played skilfully along, and beguiled you into maxims of wisdom and virtue. She was the man who could make the sayings of Poor Richard fashionable in France, much have had the oratory power of conversation. (This note to be rewritten in the copy)

A: Loganf.

Stenton, 15th 6th m. 1822.

The first written version of the story appears in Deborah Norris Logan's 1821-22 manuscript sketch of Dr. George Logan. DNL refers to Dinah as **“an old domestic”** and an **“old woman.”** She does not use a name.

ANNALS
OF
PHILADELPHIA AND PENNSYLVANIA
IN THE OLDEN TIME;
BEING A COLLECTION OF
MEMOIRS, ANECDOTES, AND INCIDENTS
OF THE
CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS,
AND OF THE
EARLIEST SETTLEMENTS OF THE INLAND PART OF PENNSYLVANIA,
FROM
THE DAYS OF THE FOUNDERS.

INTENDED TO PRESERVE THE RECOLLECTIONS OF OLDEN TIME, AND TO EXHIBIT SOCIETY IN ITS
CHANGES OF MANNERS AND CUSTOMS, AND THE CITY AND COUNTRY IN
THEIR LOCAL CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS.

EMBELLISHED WITH ENGRAVINGS, BY T. H. MUMFORD.

BY JOHN F. WATSON,

MEMBER OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETIES OF PENNSYLVANIA, NEW YORK, AND MASSACHUSETTS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

"Oh! dear is a tale of the olden time!"
Sequari vestigia rerum.

"Where peep'd the hut, the palace towers;
Where skim'd the bark, the war-ship lowers;
Joy gaily carols, where was silence rude;
And cultured thousands through the solitude."

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR THE AUTHOR, AND FOR SALE BY
JOHN PENINGTON AND URIAH HUNT.—NEW YORK, BAKER & CRANE.

1844.

"Country Seats"

450

Country Seats.

portion of it, but the difficulties of the Penn family made it necessary to yield it to others. Jonathan Dickinson bought a plot; and a part was given to Andrew Hamilton for sundry professional services as a legal counsellor, &c., to the Penn family.

A few country seats were located along the Ridge road, having the rear of their grounds extending back to the beautiful banks of the Schuylkill. Among such were Mifflin's place, Vernal place, Potts hall, and others. Those named were all set fire to as the army came by the British—saying, as their excuse, that they could do no more, look-out shelters for their enemies. Two country seats on Germantown road were also burnt—say Norris' place at Fushill, and Charles Thomson's at Sommerville.

Stenton, near Germantown, the residence of the Logan family, was originally taken up by James Logan, secretary, &c., of William Penn. The family mansion was built in 1724, in a very expensive manner. At one time the fields there were cultivated in tobacco. It was used for a short time by General Howe, and at one time was preserved from intended conflagration by the British, by the skilful management of the house-keeper then there, in charge of it.

Familiar as I have been with the history and manuscript remains of the honoured proprietor, the first James Logan, I approach the secluded shades of Stenton, in which he sought retirement from the cares and concerns of public life, with such emotions as might inspire poetry, or soothe and enlarge the imagination.

In truth, I feel, with Sir Richard Steele, that on such an occasion, "I can draw a secret, unenvied pleasure from a thousand incidents overlooked by other men." A picture of the house, as now seen, is given in this work.

At the present time there are standing some three or four old brick country residences distinguished in their day. One of double front, from the road, in the lot on the northern side of the Arsenal; another stands opposite to the Arsenal, back from the road, having a circular square opposite to the street, and a piazza around the whole square of the building. Another stands at the angle of the ferry road, below the Arsenal, and shows in circular window to the road. It was built and resided in by Wise, who inherited it from the Swedish family of Cocke. This Wise was the first man to bring Lehigh coal to Philadelphia for experiment. He, being what he had, in his saddle-bags, and was laughed out of his hopes, tho' on its being tried for ignition in his cousin Dupuy's silver-ash furnace!

Strange to tell, a former country-seat is even now in the centre of Philadelphia! It is No. 2 South Thirteenth street. The same house where the five wheelbarrow men murdered a Hessian, and were hung for it, on the Centre square.



Logan House at Stenton, near Germantown, p. 477.

"It [Stenton] was used for a short time by General Howe, and at one time was preserved from intended conflagration by the British, by the adroit management of the house-keeper then there, in charge of it."

Annals of Philadelphia, Vol. II, 1844 [& 1850]

Dinah's story continued to be published; however her name was not associated with the "Saving of Stenton" story until 1897 when Frank Willing Leach published it in his "Philadelphia's 500."

- 1881 Townsend Ward, *The Germantown Road and Its Associations*. Part Second.
- 1889 Hotchkin, S. F., *Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill*, 24.
- 1897 Frank Willing Leach, "Philadelphia's 500," *Philadelphia Press*, Jan. 31. First association of **Dinah's name** with the 1777 Saving of Stenton story.
- 1899 *Memoir of Dr. George Logan of Stenton*, Deborah Logan's manuscript, published by HSP, edited by Fanny Armatt Logan.

- 1907 Naaman Henry Keyser, *History of Old Germantown*, 144-145.
- 1953 Frederick B. Tolles, *George Logan of Philadelphia*, 44.
- 1982 Sarah A. G. Smith, "173? [reference to Dinah's uncertain birthdate] Dinah and the Saving of Stenton: One of Philadelphia's Most Beautiful Houses," *A Few Unsung Women: Colonial and Pioneer*, The National Historical Activities Committee of The National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 95-99.
- 2001 Charles L. Blockson, *African Americans in Pennsylvania, Above Ground and Underground, An Illustrated Guide*, 24-25.

had been the theatre of war. Sir William Howe, when he held Philadelphia, gave orders to destroy the country seats and other places of obnoxious persons, in its vicinity. In consequence of this, on Saturday, the 22d of November, 1777, the house at Fair Hill and sixteen others, including that at Somerville, then the residence of Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, were burned. By orders of Col. Twistleton, two dragoons came to fire Stenton, telling the negro woman servant there, what they intended to do, and that she could remove her bedding and clothing while they were gone to the barn for straw. An officer, with his command, happening to come up at this time, inquired of the woman if any deserters had been about the place. With the quick apprehension that so often marks the well-trained negro servant, and the fidelity, too, quite as characteristic of them, she told him that at that very moment, two were in the barn. The supposed deserters were at once secured, and notwithstanding their protestation, were carried away as prisoners. The burning of so many buildings naturally excited much remark, and no doubt led to a reconsideration of the orders, which were revoked, and so Stenton was saved. In the movements of the contending armies around Philadelphia, the house was alternately used as head-quarters by Sir William Howe and by General Washington.

Townsend Ward,
GERMANTOWN ROAD
AND ITS
ASSOCIATIONS. 1:
PART SECOND.

Townsend, Ward The
Pennsylvania
Magazine of History
and Biography (1877-
1906); 1881; 5, 2;
American Periodicals
pg. 121

This version of the
story is told in the
third person.

ANCIENT AND MODERN
GERMANTOWN
MOUNT AIRY
—AND—
CHESTNUT HILL.

This Hotchkin version of Dinah's story includes some dialog by the British Officer and draws emphasis to the notion that Dinah saved not only the house but its contents including "important manuscripts." Some of the Colonial Revival language noting that Dinah is "faithful" and "colored" appears here. Dinah's burial place is unspecifically described as "the garden at Stenton."

During the Revolution the important letters which were to present the ancient Pennsylvanians to their descendants in their daily dress were near being lost. The British burned seventeen houses between Philadelphia and Germantown in retaliation for alleged aggressions from some of the houses. They ordered Stenton to be burned and two men came to burn it, and told the housekeeper, a colored woman, to take out her private property while they went to the barn for straw to set the house on fire. A British officer just then rode up, asking for deserters. The housekeeper, with quick wit, replied that they had gone to the barn to hide in the straw. He cried: "Come out! you rascals! and run before me into camp!" They protested and alleged their commissions, but the Logan house, with its important manuscripts, was saved.—Watson's Annals, Vol. II, p. 39, edition of 1857. The faithful colored woman is buried in the garden at Stenton. The old barn of stone still stands.

which are visible the imprints of a little child's feet and hands. It is believed that these imprints were made by one of the little Logans.

In the later years of his life James Logan was greatly afflicted, suffering much because of a fall, as well as from other infirmities which were the natural accompaniments of advanced age. He now retired as much as possible from the active cares of life, and spent much of his time in meditation and literary work. In speaking of his death, Mrs. Deborah Logan says:—"He finished his useful and active life at his seat at Stenton, October 31, 1751, having just entered into the 77th year of his age. He was buried in the Friends' Burying Ground, at Fourth and Arch Streets."

After the death of James Logan, his eldest son, William, who was born at Stenton, occupied the ancestral mansion. He married Hannah Emlen, and September 9, 1753, their son, Dr. George Logan, was born. Dr. George Logan married the gifted Deborah Norris, a grand-daughter of Isaac Norris, Senior, the close friend of William Penn. This unusually intelligent and accomplished lady, with her distinguished husband, long presided over the affairs of the Logan estate at Stenton. In their time, within the walls of the stately old mansion were often gathered in social intercourse many of the most distinguished men and women of the period. The literary labors of Mrs. Deborah Logan have been of great importance. In the attic at Stenton, she found, all dusty and neglected, a large amount of James Logan's correspondence. With loving and devoted care she collated and arranged this mass of material, adding such explanatory notes as were necessary. The Penn and Logan correspondence has been published in two volumes, under the auspices of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, and has been the means of throwing much light upon the condition of affairs in Pennsylvania during the earlier years of its history.

When the Revolutionary War broke out, Dr. Logan was in Europe studying medicine, and the place was in charge of a colored woman named Dinah. She proved herself a "faithful steward", indeed, and on one occasion, by the exercise of her ready wit, she was fortunate enough to be the means of saving the mansion from destruction. After the battle of Germantown, the British, greatly angered at the unexpected resistance they

had met, became very much incensed at those who adhered to the cause of the colonies, and, feeling now secure in the possession of Philadelphia, they commenced to put into effect measures of retaliation. It was determined to destroy a number of estates, and a force of soldiers was detailed for that service. Between Germantown and Philadelphia seventeen important houses were destroyed, one of the most noted of which was Fairhill Mansion, the home of the Norris family, which had been erected by Isaac Norris between 1717 and 1719. At the time of the Revolution it was the home of John Dickinson, who had married Mary Norris, the grand-daughter of Isaac Norris. Dickinson was particularly obnoxious to the British. It is worthy of note that a portion of his library escaped destruction, and became the nucleus of the library of Dickinson College, which institution was founded by John Dickinson.

When the soldiers charged with the destruction of Stenton arrived, Dinah was alone in the house. They informed her of their errand, and told her that they had just burned the house of "that d—d rebel Dickinson." She protested against the destruction, but in vain. They gave her permission, however, to get out her personal belongings, telling her to be quick about it, while they went to the barn to get some straw. While they were in the barn, a British patrol came up and inquired of Dinah if she had seen any straggling soldiers or deserters. "Oh, yes, you will find them in the barn," she said. Despite the vehement protests of the supposed deserters, they were carried-off by the patrol, and no further effort was made to destroy the mansion. Dinah spent the remainder of her days in the Logan family, and at her death she was buried under an old pine tree southeast of the house.

Just previous to the battle of Germantown, Stenton was occupied by General Howe as his headquarters; his guard was stationed on the northern part of the estate, the First Battalion being encamped about where Little Wakefield was afterwards built, and the Second Battalion about where the Reading Railroad cuts through the hill above Fisher's Lane Station.

August 23, 1777, the American army, while on its way to the Brandywine, encamped for a single night at Nicetown, and Washington for the time made his headquarters at Stenton.

Dr. George Logan was a man of considerable prominence and

In 1907, Keyser used the language of the times, the wording that would find its way onto the 1912 bronze memorial. The story is told in dialog with quotes.

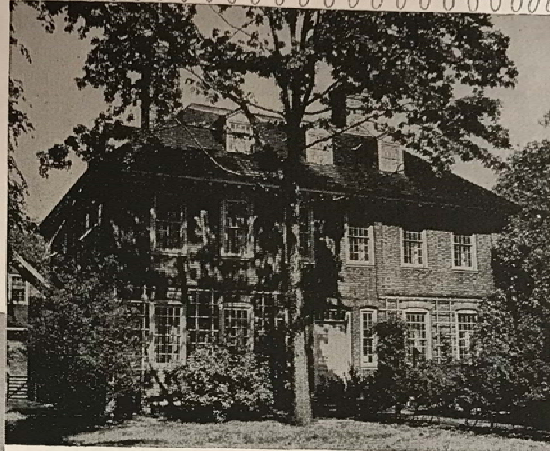
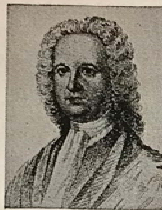
8 (1652)

UNITED STATES INVESTOR

August 9, 1952

F A M O U S A M E R I C A N H O M E S

*the Home
of the Sage
of Stenton ...*



... Saved by quick-witted Caretaker

WHILE William Penn and his secretary James Logan were traveling to America in 1699, their ship, according to legend, was attacked by pirates. Penn's principles forbade resistance but Logan successfully defended the vessel.

As Penn's confidential adviser, the scholarly Logan wielded great influence in Pennsylvania, in time becoming governor of the colony and mayor of Philadelphia. His home in what is now Germantown was started in 1728 and was named Stenton after his father's birthplace in Scotland. In his own words, he was obliged to spend much time at home, "being wholly reduced to a pair of crutches and Seditary Life by a fall off my feet." Nevertheless, the curtailment of his physical activity enabled him to devote himself to writing and to his remarkable library.

Logan was exceedingly friendly with the Indians who used to stay at Stenton for long periods, lining the staircase at night or camping in the maple grove. Because of his admiration for Logan, Chief Wingohocking proposed that they exchange names in the Indian custom. Instead, Logan suggested that the chief's name be given to the stream that flowed through the property so that "while the earth shall endure" it would be called Wingohocking. The creek, incidentally, has long since gone underground.

Owned by the Logan family for many years, Stenton was Washington's headquarters before the battle of Brandywine. At the battle of Germantown the house fell into British hands and was occupied briefly by General Howe.

Later in 1777 two dragoons arrived in Germantown for the purpose of carrying out orders to burn the homes of patriots in the neighborhood. While they were in the stable gathering straw to start a fire in Stenton, a party of soldiers came looking for deserters. Dinah, the Negro caretaker, promptly told them that two suspicious men were lurking in the barn and despite their indignant protests the two dragoons were seized. Seventeen houses had been burned, but thanks to Dinah, Stenton was saved.

Now the property of the city of Philadelphia and under the custody of the Pennsylvania Society of The Colonial Dames of America, this important landmark is open to public view.



The Home, through its agents and brokers, is America's leading insurance protector of American homes and the homes of American industry.

☆ THE HOME ☆
Insurance Company

Home Office: 59 Maiden Lane, New York 8, N. Y.
FIRE • AUTOMOBILE • MARINE

The Home Indemnity Company, an affiliate, writes Casualty Insurance, Fidelity and Surety Bonds.

This ad suggests that Dinah's story was still locally well known in the 1950s. If a house did not have a Dinah to save it, it needed "The Home Insurance Company."

Advertisement for
THE HOME Insurance
Company

1952

Stenton Pamphlet Box
Germantown Historical
Society Library

patriots in the neighborhood. While they were in the stable gathering straw to start a fire in Stenton, a party of soldiers came looking for deserters. Dinah, the Negro caretaker, promptly told them that two suspicious men were lurking in the barn and despite their indignant protests the two dragoons were seized. Seventeen houses had been burned, but thanks to Dinah, Stenton was saved. Now the property of the city of Philadelphia and under the custody of the Pennsylvania Society of The Colonial Dames of America, this important landmark is open to public view.



Detail of the above relaying Dinah's story and offering a caricatured version of the events as told by Deborah Norris Logan and ascribed to Dinah along the way.

George Logan of Philadelphia

FREDERICK B. TOLLES



NEW YORK
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1953



III. MASTER OF STENTON

STENTON, when George Logan reached it in the fall of 1780, was a sad picture of desolation and decay. Windows in the great house were broken. The sheds and stables were empty and silent. Scarcely a cow or a pig was to be seen. Gardens and fields were choked with weeds. For four years, ever since William Logan's death, the estate had been masterless and neglected, while armies marched through it completing the destruction. From the old housekeeper, who had stayed in the mansion through the terror and the loneliness, from the tenant, who had tried with small success to keep the farm in production, from Charles and Uncle James, who had occasionally ridden out from the city to inspect the estate, young Dr. Logan pieced the story together.

In August of 1777, General Washington's forces, moving south from Jersey to meet Howe coming up from Chesapeake Bay, had marched down the Old York Road and bivouacked at Nicetown, a few miles away. Washington, with twenty staff officers and their servants, had taken up quarters overnight on 23 August at Stenton. They had bought a sheep from the tenant and dined on it. The General 'appeared extremely grave and thoughtful, and was very silent.' After dinner he had issued orders for the troops to be paraded through Philadelphia to encourage the fearful and rally the disaffected in the threatened city.¹

A few weeks later, General Howe, having routed Washington at the Brandywine, had encamped the main body of his troops about a mile northwest of the Logan place. He too used the man-

sion as headquarters. From Stenton he had sent a force into Philadelphia under Cornwallis to occupy the city. From Stenton on 4 October he had directed the bloody battle that swirled all day around Judge Chew's house, two miles up the Germantown Road. People recalled Howe as 'a fine large man,' who looked remarkably like Washington. He had walked abroad 'in plain clothes in a very unassuming manner.' ²

During the occupancy of two such gentlemen as Washington and Howe, the great house and farm had fared reasonably well. But after they left, no one could protect it from plunder and forage by detachments of both armies. It narrowly escaped burning, the fate that befell John Dickinson's nearby mansion, Fairhill. Orders had gone out from British headquarters in November 1777 to fire a number of houses along the Germantown Road in retaliation for damages inflicted by American raiding parties. Seventeen dwellings went up in flames that day.

Stenton was saved by the resourcefulness of the aged housekeeper. Two redcoats, torches in their hands, had hammered on the door, ordered her to remove her private belongings immediately. They had orders from Colonel Twistleton to burn the house, they said. They disappeared around the corner looking for straw to kindle the blaze. Just then, a British officer rode up the avenue of hemlocks, sabre in hand, looking for deserters. With a straight face the old woman told him she had just seen two of them going to the barn to hide in the straw. Off he spurred, shouting: 'Come out, you rascals, and run before me back to camp.' ³

The ready wit of an old servant had prevented complete disaster. But in the next three years slow decay and casual marauders did their work, and the huge old mansion slumped into ugly ruin.

choice was a wise one.

Following the Battle of Germantown on October 4, 1777, the British, now in possession of Philadelphia, became angered by the unexpected resistance they had met in the eastern part of Germantown and Frankford. Under General Howe's orders some 16 houses, including the Dickenson's "Fair Hill," were burned to the ground.⁴ So it was that on November 22nd Col. Twisleton, determined on destruction, came to "Stenton."⁵

There is a lively account of the ensuing encounter of Dinah and the British soldiers. This story rings true and having come down as it doubtless did through several generations of historically-minded Logans, it may well be an almost verbatim account.

Dinah, in charge of "Stenton," was sitting along in the kitchen knitting. She was suddenly startled by a loud knock at the back door. Opening it, she saw two British soldiers.

"Well, Auntie," said one of them in a burly voice, "If you've got any things in the shanty you want to keep, pitch 'em out in a hurry, for we've orders to burn the place down."

"And tell us where we can get some good dry straw," said his companion.

The faithful old servant answered that she supposed they might find some in the barn and went inside with a heavy heart.

Hardly had the two soldiers disappeared inside the barn door when a squad of soldiers came galloping up to the house.

"Have you seen any deserters?" said the officer to the old lady who appeared at the second floor window.

"Oh, yes, Massa" said the quick witted negro woman. "You is just got heah in time. Der's two of the miserable critters a-hiding out dah in de barn now."

The officer and his men rode quickly to the barn and finding the two men put them immediately under arrest. To the

explanation that they were true British soldiers who had come to burn Stenton Mansion, the officer replied "that that game wouldn't work." The whole party galloped away and the old house was saved.⁶

Dinah's story as re-told by Sarah A. G. Smith, NSCDA/PA, 1982.

The footnote suggests this version is a re-telling of Frank Willing Leach's 1897 "Philadelphia's 500" story, which uses dialect and additions such as "Auntie" and "Massa" to place the freed woman in charge of the house in a subservient position and in a nostalgic Colonial Revival context.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN PENNSYLVANIA

ABOVE GROUND AND UNDERGROUND

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE



2001

CHARLES L. BLOCKSON

Philadelphia – Stenton

Located in the Germantown section of the city, Stenton, built in 1728, was the former home of William Penn's secretary, James Logan. A Quaker, Logan was one of the most intellectual men in colonial America. His Georgian Colonial mansion housed America's finest private collection of books, which is now part of the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia (Free Library of Philadelphia).

The house was occupied for a time in 1777 during the Revolutionary War by General George Washington and later by British General Sir William Howe, who made the home his headquarters for directing the Battle of Germantown.

On the historic home is a plaque honoring Logan's servant, an African-American woman by the name of Dinah. By her quick thought and presence of mind, Dinah saved the mansion from being burned by British soldiers in the winter of 1777.

According to family members many years later, two British

soldiers prepared to burn the mansion. When they went to the barn to get straw to set the fire, a British officer rode up with sword drawn and asked Dinah if she had seen any deserters. The wise old servant woman promptly replied that, "Two such have just gone to secrete themselves in the barn."

The officer rode to the barn and chased the "deserters" away, and Stenton was saved. The Logan family continued to live in the mansion for six generations until 1900. It is maintained by the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. A plaque was dedicated in honor of the black woman with this inscription: *In memory of Dinah, faithful, colored caretaker of Stenton, who by her quick thought and presence of mind, saved the mansion from being burned by the British soldiers in the winter of 1777.*

Although most historians in the past have said that Dinah was a slave, she had been freed by the Logans in the spring of 1776.

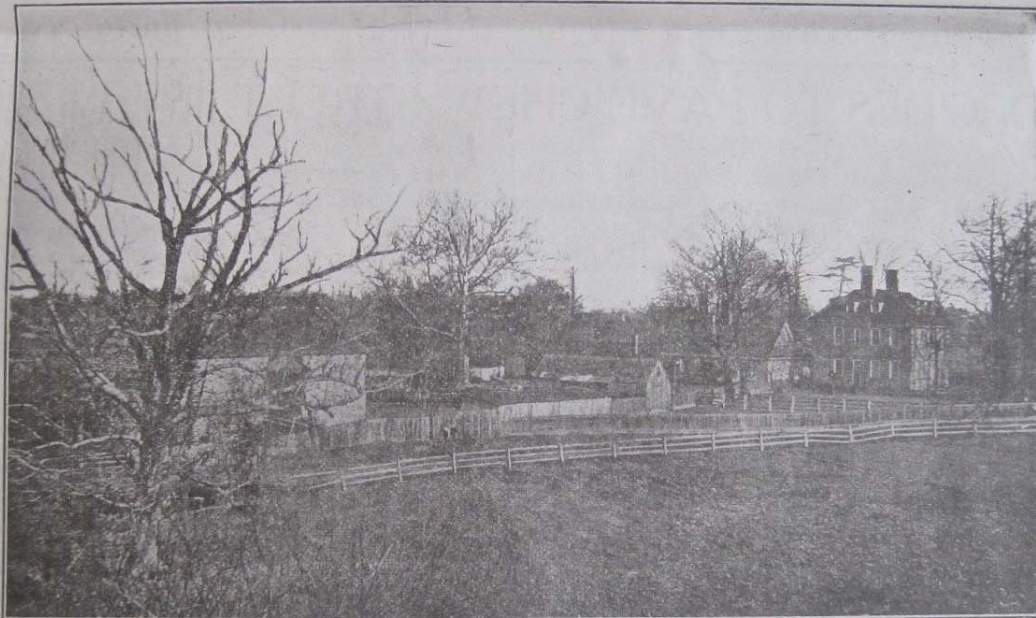


The 1912 Dinah Memorial

MEMORIAL TO A NEGRO WOMAN AT STENTON

Site and Relic Society Will Join With the Colonial Dames and Albanus Logan in Placing a Stone at the Grave of Dinah, Who Frustrated a British Attempt to Burn the Mansion.

Independent - 11/4 1910
Gazette
Nov. 4, 1910



GENERAL VIEW OF STENTON AS IT APPEARED IN 1900

One of the markers which the Site and Relic Society proposed to erect soon will be a memorial to a negro woman. She was a servant—probably a slave—of Dr. George Logan, who occupied Stenton, the Logan homestead below Wayne Junction, and by her quick wit she frustrated an attempt of the British military officials to destroy Stenton at the time of the Revolution.

The board of directors of the Site and Relic Society, at a meeting last Friday evening, took action on the matter. The society will co-operate with Albanus Logan, a descendant of the builder of Stenton, and with the Colonial Dames, who now occupy the

building, in the erection of a granite memorial at the grave of the woman, on the Stenton grounds. The Stenton property is now a city park.

James Logan, William Penn's secretary, built Stenton in 1728. It was for a century one of the notable buildings of the neighborhood of Philadelphia.

Dr. George Logan, the owner at the time of the Revolution, was then in Europe, and the place was in charge of a negro woman named Dinah. The story of how Dinah saved Stenton is told thus in the "History of Old Germantown":

After the battle of Germantown, the British, greatly angered at the unexpected resistance they had met, became very much incensed at those who adhered to the cause of the colonies, and, feeling now secure in the possession of Philadelphia, they

commenced to put into effect measures of retaliation. It was determined to destroy a number of estates, and a force of soldiers was detailed for that service.

Between Germantown and Philadelphia seventeen important houses were destroyed, one of the most noted of which was Fairhill Mansion, the home of the Norris family, which had been erected by Isaac Norris between 1717 and 1719. At the time of the Revolution it was the home of John Dickinson, who had married Mary Norris, the granddaughter of Isaac Norris. Dickinson was particularly obnoxious to the British.

When the soldiers charged with the destruction of Stenton arrived, Dinah was alone in the house. They informed her of their errand, and told her that they had just burned the

house of "that rebel Dickinson." She protested against the destruction, but in vain. They gave her permission, however, to get out her personal belongings, telling her to be quick about it, while they went to the barn for some straw.

While they were in the barn, a British patrol came up and inquired of Dinah if she had seen any straggling soldiers or deserters.

"Oh, yes, you will find them in the barn," she said.

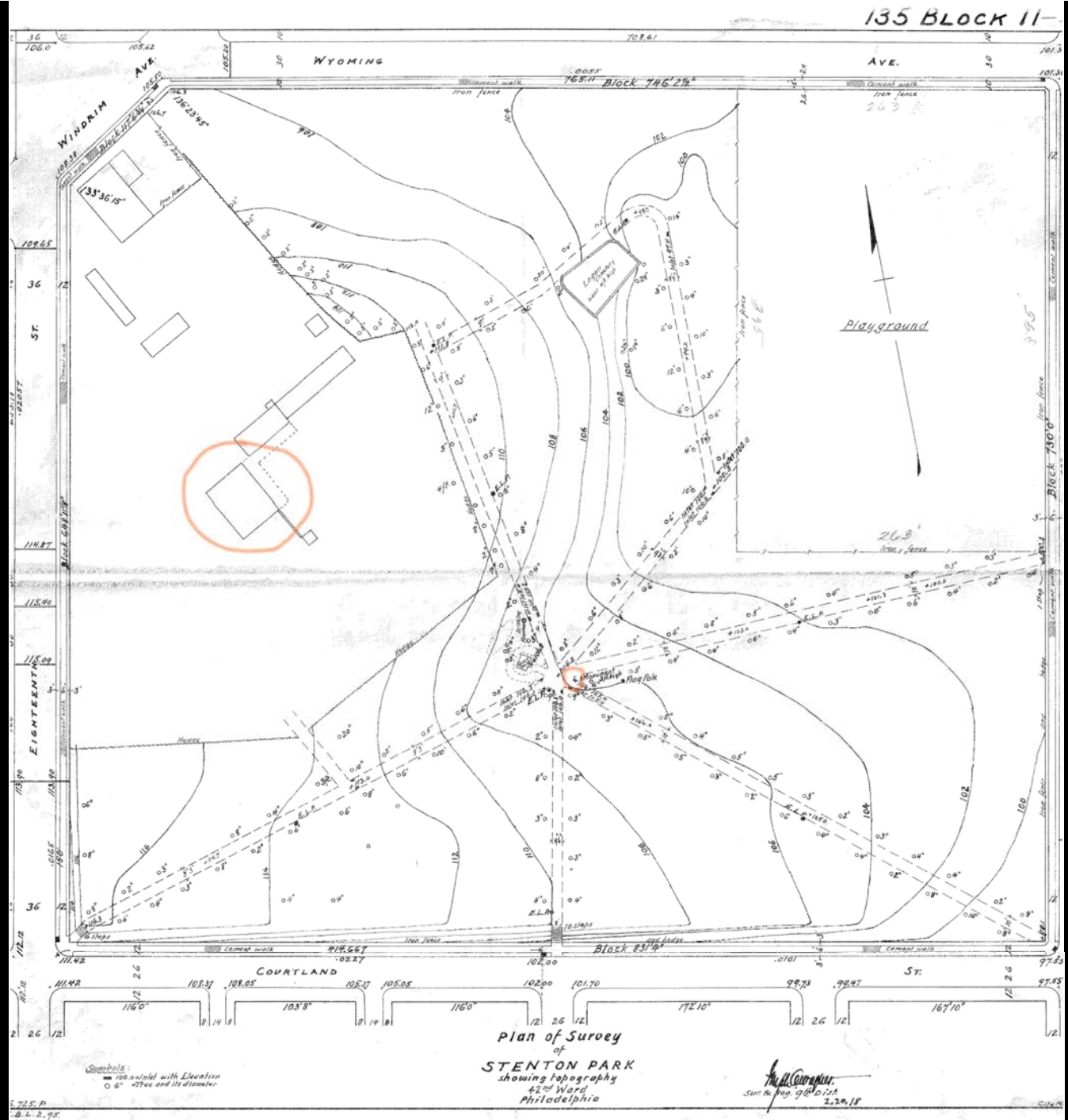
Despite the vehement protests of the supposed deserters, they were carried off by the patrol, and no further effort was made to destroy the mansion. Dinah spent the remainder of her days in the Logan family, and at her death she was buried under an old pine tree southeast of the house.

*Independent
Gazette*

Nov 4, 1910
Campbell Coll,
Vol 19, HSP

Planning for the
Memorial to
Dinah began in
1910.

Survey of Stenton Park, 1918



In memory of
DINAH
the
Faithful Colored Caretaker
of Stenton
who by her quick thought
and presence of mind
saved the mansion
from being burned
by British Soldiers
in the winter of 1777

Erected 1912 by the Colonial Dames the Site and
Relic Society of Germantown and private subscription

December 6, 1912, an article
in *The Germantown
Independent Gazette* reported
that the Memorial was ready
to be set up.

**Faithful Negress' Memorial. A Stone to be Placed
On Her Grave at Stenton.**

At the monthly meeting of the Board of Directors
of the Germantown Site and Relic Society on
Friday evening, Dr. Herman Burgin reported that
a memorial stone had been made for the grave of
Dinah, a negress buried in the graveyard at
Stenton. This is to be erected jointly by the Site
and Relic Society and the Colonial Dames.
Arrangements for the dedication have not yet
been made.

The Dinah Memorial
prior to being drilled
with four holes for
mounting on its granite
base. GHS



TOMB OF DINAH—FAITHFUL COLORED CARETAKER WHO IN 1777
SAVED STENTON MANSION FROM BEING BURNED BY THE BRITISH.
THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY OF THE COLONIAL DAMES OF AMERICA

*"I had a little nest full
[of robins] myself,
hatched out in the tree
which overshadows
good old Dinah's
grave and kept Becky [a
cat] in with sedulous
care while the little
ones were learning to
fly."*

Deborah Logan to
Sarah Walker,
June 4, 1827
Loudoun Papers, HSP

Postcard, Stenton Collection.



1934

STENTON PARK #59

COURTLAND - WYOMING - 16th & 18th Sts

4-5-34



Crier, 1979

Bronze plaque now in front of herb garden at "Stenton" — erected in 1912.

In the 1982 chapter, Sarah A.G. Smith noted that the "bronze plaque is now kept in the Stenton kitchen as it was being defaced by local children."



Once the plaque was removed from its base, Parks and Rec used it as a water fountain stand. The plaque currently hangs on this easel behind the house.



The granite base was removed from the site as part of the current renovations at the Stenton Park Rec Center between November, 2017 and February, 2018.

Dinah in our Time



Storyteller, Irma Gardner Hammond, Dinah Interpreter in Residence



The Germantown Women Mural on the North side of the Germantown YWCA



Artists David McShane and Carla Forte used a photograph of Irma for Dinah's likeness.



Ground Breaking Ceremony at Stenton Park celebrating the start of construction for new and improved recreation facilities. Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Commissioner Kathryn Ott Lovell, Councilwoman Cindy Bass, Senator Sharif Street, and community members participated in the ceremony. June 14, 2017

Additional Secondary Sources:

Soderlund, Jean R. *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985.