**When the Vice President ‘Hid Out’ in Quakertown**

On the morning of July 11, 1804, the Vice President of the United States climbed aboard a small boat and was rowed crossed the Hudson River to Manhattan. Then, by private carriage he returned to Richmond Hill, his estate on the lower end of the island. He'd slept very little the night before, felt weary and tense but was ravenously hungry. He ordered his servants to prepare a large breakfast while he washed up and changed cloths. The entire household was relieved to see him. They knew their employer, Aaron Burr, had gone to Weehawken, New Jersey, early that morning to engage in a duel with his political rival, Alexander Hamilton. It was obvious the Vice President was unscathed. The staff did not yet know that Hamilton was mortally wounded.

While he sat alone at the large, wooden dining room table eating his breakfast, a servant announced the arrival of an unexpected guest. Burr was disinclined to see anyone, but the caller was his cousin who happened to be visiting the city. The VP hadn't seen the man since a family funeral in Mount Holly nearly a decade before, but the Burr family was proud and close-knit. A conversation with a 'loyal supporter' might help him feel better so Burr instructed his servant to admit the visitor and to set another place at the table.

It's not known for sure who the visitor that morning was. Though most agree it was Burr’s cousin, some say it was an attorney or financial advisor. Nor is it known what the two men talked about. Aaron Burr probably told his relative what happened that morning. The man was undoubtedly shocked at the predicament the Vice President found himself in. As a family member, the man most likely offered to help in any way he could. It appears the Vice President eventually did accept a favor from his cousin, because he soon appreciated reciprocal hospitality, spending over a month at the Burr farm in Richland Township, Upper Bucks County Pennsylvania.

Dueling was illegal in both New York and New Jersey. New York had the more severe penalty, though. It was considered murder and merited capital punishment if a participant died. Hamilton shot in the lower abdomen died on July 12th. As a result, on August 2nd, a New York coroner's jury found the Vice President of the United States guilty on two counts: dueling and felony murder. New Jersey initially filed only misdemeanor charges, since Hamilton died in New York, but eventually the state also pronounced Aaron Burr a murderer.

Burr wrote to his daughter in South Carolina, Theodosia Alston: "There is a contention of a singular nature between the two states of New York and New Jersey. The subject in dispute is which shall have the honor of hanging the Vice President." Public outrage over Hamilton's death soon reached tempest proportions. Burr fled New York, sailing to Georgia where former Senator Pierce Butler offered him sanctuary. Not wishing to cause his old friend trouble, Burr soon moved to the South Carolina plantation of his son-in-law, State Representative and future Governor, John Alston. He spent some time there with his daughter and two year old grandson, Aaron Burr Alston.

Burr did not stay with his daughter long, again, not wanting to cause problems for his son-in-law who was an up and coming politician. Burr’s movements over the next couple of months are vague. Exactly when and how he returned north is not known. One story claims the VP traveled by horseback and carriage. Another theory is that he sailed from Charleston under an assumed name. In either case, he avoided New Jersey and New York, arriving first in Philadelphia. After that, there is no record of Burr's whereabouts until he returned to Washington to complete his term as Vice President in November of 1804. It's believed he spent October, "hiding out" at his relatives' rural farm which was located on Morgan Creek, on the east side of the Bethlehem Turnpike in Richland Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania near the newly named community of Quakertown.

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Benjamin Burr migrated from England to Connecticut in 1635, as one of the colony's earliest settlers. His son, Henry Burr, was born there in 1664. As a young man Henry became a 'convinced' Quaker. As did many New Englanders who were persecuted by Puritans, he chose to participate in William Penn's Holy Experiment in the Delaware Valley. Henry Burr is named on a deed from Penn to a group of investors for "one-nineteenth part of the province of New Jersey." In 1682, Henry took up his portion of the land in Northampton Township, Burlington County.

Henry Burr and Elizabeth Tredder Hudson were married at the Mount Holly Friends Meeting in 1689. Their first son, John, was born May 29, 1691, and their daughter Elizabeth Hudson in 1695. Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth Martha, and an indeterminate number of other children followed, in succession.

Elizabeth Hudson Burr married Samuel Woolman at Chesterfield, New Jersey in 1714. Their son, John Woolman, became an internationally renowned Quaker minister, journalist, abolitionist and Indian rights advocate. He traveled North America offering testimony and ministry. During his journeys, he sometimes stayed in Richland Township with his good friend Samuel Foulke, leader of Richland Friends Meeting and county official.

Henry and Elizabeth's son John married Keziah Wright at Mount Holly in 1712. Keziah died in about 1731 and John Burr remarried Ann (unknown). John had a confusing number of children by both wives. John's son Joseph Burr married Mary Mullen at Burlington (date unknown). The couple had four children: Hudson, William, Keziah, and Robert. It was Joseph who led the Burr Family to Springfield Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

Then, in 1743, Joseph Burr purchased 1,000 acres of "the Griffith Jones's property" in Richland, and an additional 540 acres in 1745. Early maps of Richland Township show that the Burr property straddled Morgan Creek and fronted on the east side Bethlehem Pike, north of Paletown Road. Today, the railroad tracks from Perkasie to Quakertown traverse the old Burr plantation from its southeast corner to its northwest. Joseph Burr relocated to Richland soon after he acquired the property. Records at Richland Friends Meeting indicate he donated money to the Meetinghouse Fund in 1752.

Joseph Burr eventually gave his property in Richland to his son William and returned to Burlington, New Jersey. Records show that William had relocated there by 1771. Also by then, William's brother Robert had moved to Bucks County. In 1760 Robert married Mercy Antrim of Springfield Township, PA. It appears Robert Burr either went into partnership with his brother or purchased the Richland property from William. He presented a transfer of membership from Burlington to Richland Friends Meeting in 1777. The Burrs continued to live in Richland for three generations. It was not until the 1820's that maps show the property owned, first, by a Lester then by a Stoneback.

"Cousin" is a vague term, especially in a far flung family like the Burr's were. The title was applied to many distantly related family members and often did not indicate that the individual was the child of an aunt or uncle. It is speculated that the guest who dined with Aaron Burr at Richmond Hill the morning after the Vice President's duel with Alexander Hamilton was James Chapman, husband of Rebecca Burr (daughter of Joseph and sister of William and Robert).

James Chapman was born in 1740. He moved from Richland to Wrightstown with his parents John and Mary (Twining), in 1761. He married Rebecca Burr at Burlington (Quaker) Meeting in 1770. The couple almost immediately moved to Richland. Chapman transferred from Burlington to Richland Friends Meeting on April 18, 1771, and Rebecca from Burlington to Richland in November of that year.

James Chapman was a surveyor and a scrivener. He recorded innumerable property surveys in Upper Bucks and Northampton Counties and wrote most of the deeds and wills in Richland between 1796 and 1820 (taking over the role Samuel Foulke had filled for many years). Chapman was an important member of Richland Meeting and was a founding member of the Richland Library Company. He was the head tax assessor for Richland and Milford Townships during the House Tax Revolt lead by John Fries in 1799. He was a prime witness against Fries at his trial.

The second generation of Richland Burrs (except James Chapman) was not as active in the Friends Meeting as their father Joseph was. Consequently, only scanty documentation is available. It is difficult to determine if siblings William, Robert and Rebecca Burr Chapman lived on the property in Richland at the same time, if they lived there alternately or in succession. It is known that Rebecca Burr and James Chapman lived in Richland for many decades. In the records of Richland Friends Meeting appear the birth of three children to the couple: Jacob Abbot, b. 2-19-1773; Elizabeth, b. 9-8-1776; m. Samuel Iden; and Abigail, b. 12-31-1779. James and Rebecca Chapman eventually moved to Buckingham, in about 1820.

History cannot tell us where the Vice President of the United States was during October of 1804. Chapman was a renowned and well-traveled community figure. He was also the most senior of the Burr family in Upper Bucks at that time. It may very well have been ‘Cousin’ James Chapman who had breakfast at Richmond Hill in New York City on July 11, 1804. If so, that he offered the Vice President sanctuary on his remote farm on Morgan Creek in Richland is far from improbable.