



Haverford Township Historical Society



JOHN BEVAN (1646-ca.1721)

Compiled by Richard D. Kerr

[The following is excerpted from History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania by George Smith M.D., published by Henry B. Ashmead in Philadelphia in 1862.]

JOHN BEVAN, or JOHN AP BEVAN [a Welsh term meaning John son of Bevan], as he was sometimes called, was born in Glamorganshire, Wales, in 1646, being the eldest of five children. His parents, who were wealthy, died while he was quite young. Being the heir, when he arrived at age, he found himself in possession of a large estate, while his brothers were unprovided for — his only sister being dead. His strong sense of justice at once induced him to “portion all his brothers, and give them a helpful subsistence in the world.” In 1665 he was married to a religious woman, a strict member of the Established Church, who, when her husband had shown a disposition to become a Quaker, was distressed, and felt it to be her duty to interpose her serious objections. They argued the question without result; but the indiscretion of the priest, in pronouncing the sentence of excommunication without previous notice against the husband, in presence of the wife, so shocked her feelings as to make her nearly faint away, and after a time made her willing “to search closely into the weighty work of salvation.” They both became Quakers, and in the language of their certificate, were regarded “as a nursing father and a nursing mother to (the spiritually) weak and young” of their neighborhood. In 1683, John Bevan, with his family, removed to Pennsylvania, and settled either in Merion or Haverford, his land being located in both townships. He had been a pillar of the Meeting he left, he was equally so of Haverford Meeting, which he aided in establishing, and which was frequently held at his house in its infancy. He stood high as a preacher in the Society, and the records of Haverford attest his constancy and efficiency in the promotion of works of benevolence and charity. While in the country he traveled much as a minister, and in 1704, visited his native land on “truth’s account,” accompanied by his wife and his youngest daughter, Barbara, who was also a preacher. He never returned to America, but after suffering some persecution, being imprisoned in Cardiff gaol [jail] in 1721, he died shortly afterwards. He had four children married in Pennsylvania:

1. Jane Bevan, married to John Wood, of Darby, in 1687;
2. Evan Bevan, married to Eleanor Wood, of Darby, in 1693;
3. Elizabeth Bevan, married to Joseph Richardson, of Philadelphia, 1696;
4. one other.

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