



Haverford Township Historical Society



THE MORLEY FAMILY OF HAVERFORD COLLEGE

By Richard D. Kerr

The following notes were abstracted from "Bygones," an unpublished manuscript of family history by Lillian Janet Bird Morley, held in the Quaker and Special Collections area of McGill Library at Haverford College (Ref. 807 Box 44 LBJM "Bygones"). Lillian Janet (Bird) Morley (1866-1939) was the wife of Frank Morley (1860-1937). He was recruited from England to be professor of mathematics at Haverford College between 1887 and 1900. While there, they were the parents of Christopher Morley (popular essayist, author and poet), Felix Morley (editor of the "Washington Post" newspaper and later President of Haverford College during World War II) and Frank V. Morley (mathematician and author). Frank and Lillian Morley are buried at the Haverford Friends Meeting Burial Ground off of Buck Lane in Haverford Township.

Lillian Janet Bird and Frank Morley, both English, were married on 11 July 1889. Apparently Frank had already spent at least one academic year alone at Haverford College, living in Founders Hall. Lillian and Frank wanted to be married by their friend Will Sherwood, who lived in Darlington Court and was the headmaster of Magdalen College at Oxford University. He could not leave during the school term, so Frank returned to England and they went to Oxford to be married there by Sherwood, after which Lillian would leave her family and her country behind and travel with her husband to a new life in a place strange to her.

After sailing to America, they arrived by train at Bryn Mawr station in a downpour, with no conveyance from there and no one to even meet them. They had to walk and got thoroughly soaked. The Morleys had been provided with temporary quarters at Bryn Mawr College at "Cottage No. 2," which was just being vacated by Professor and Mrs. Woodrow Wilson on his move from Bryn Mawr College to Princeton University (and later the U.S. presidency).

Shortly after her arrival in America, Lillian Morley discovered in late 1889 that she was pregnant. They would need larger accommodations, so they rented a house, known as "Spring Cottage," which was on Avon Road in Bryn Mawr, on the land of Charles Mather. Spring Cottage was a two-story stone house located next to a springhouse; it fronted on Avon Road. The Morleys had to pay rent on both places for a while, and moved into Spring Cottage in April 1890.

Their first child, Christopher or "Kit," was born in that house on May 5, 1890. Their doctor was George Gerhart M.D. of Ardmore, who would later lead the founding of the Bryn Mawr Hospital. Lillian wrote, "On June 8th ... Mr. Haughton, the pleasant Rector of the Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, came down to the Cottage to christen the child to save us, I imagine, the burden of getting up to the church. He was thus baptized and given the name of Christopher Darlington Morley – the first being a favorite of mine, as I was so fond of its shortened form, Kit, and the second because his father and I first met at Darlington Court, Bath; the entire name was

euphonius in sound, and the labials ran pleasantly off the tongue, the long and short syllables being placed right.” (Retrospectively, one can see in the last sentence where some of Christopher Morley’s considerable wordsmithing skills may have originated.)

In 1891, the Morley family sailed back to England to visit family and no doubt show off young Christopher. On their return, they moved to a larger house that was closer to the Haverford College campus and far more convenient for Professor Morley. This was a stone house on “the Avenue at Haverford.” Lillian, in her later writing, believed that they had rented rooms at the Buck Tavern for a week during this transition, while completing the furnishing of the house. The house was owned by David Scull, a Quaker millionaire and a college manager (board member) whom she remembered as a “hard” person in terms of getting repairs made. She described the house as being “on campus.”

In the Fall of 1892 the Morley family moved again, this time to “Dr. Crewe’s yellow Colonial house beyond the Observatory, the western edge of the college grounds and quite near President Sharpless’ red brick house – indeed the lawns adjoined and were only separated by an iron railing.” This house, which in a later section she wrote was “built by Dr. Chree, a physicist,” was a wood frame house that proved to be cold in winter. She noted in her writings the irony of the shortcomings of the structure’s design, given the intellectual powers of those who designed it. The Morleys would live there for eight years, the remainder of their time at Haverford. Lillian wrote, “Both Felix in 1894 and Frank V. in 1899 were born there in bitter Januaries.” Lillian also miscarried a daughter in one autumn during this period.

Young Kit Morley had “adenoid troubles,” and after “expensive visits” to a Dr. McCoy in Philadelphia (about 1897), “Dr. Gerhard, Frank and I took him to the newly opened hospital at Bryn Mawr. He was the first patient there, and as Dr. Gerhard said, ‘Kit’s blood christened the hospital.’” (His adenoids were removed there.)

Lillian was a talented and serious amateur violinist, and she gave lessons to help with household income. She also took part in recitals, had a number of close friends within the Haverford and Bryn Mawr college communities, as well as the local neighbors association. She wrote in her memoir, “Entertaining in Philadelphia Quaker circles was a good preparation for Prohibition days,” failing to understand how people could eat and digest so much food at social occasions without the assistance of wine. Felix Morley was born on January 6, 1894 and Frank V. (Vigor) Morley followed on January 4, 1899. As a result of her increased responsibilities, Lillian, even with assistance of a steady stream of one or two hired maids in the house, had to gradually cut back on her activities. At one point, still playing the violin but without ample time to practice, she quit the instrument entirely when she felt she could not maintain her high standards.

In 1900 Professor Morley, along with Lillian and their three young sons, moved to Baltimore when he took a chair in pure mathematics at John Hopkins University. In their early years there, Kit received a toy miniature printing press as a Christmas gift and started publishing a “Weekly News,” which he issued on Saturdays at suppertime and for which family members were interviewed, quoted and asked to offer articles and items. Christopher Morley returned to his old haunts at Haverford College in 1906, as a freshman student at age 16, in the Class of 1910.

Writing about him, Lillian offered the following insights:

“Kit was a funny little person, so often saying the wrong things in his endeavors to make awkward situations happy and comfortable for everybody.”

“One of the irrepressible early experiments of Kit’s in Baltimore was to stand between an up-coming and down-going street-car to see if there was room for him there. Fortunately there was that once, and he did not try the experiment a second time.”

On Kit returning to Haverford College: “He tramped about the country with his chums, rediscovering I dare say many familiar scenes...”

“Old copies of the Haverfordian of those days are full of versifyings, tales and bits from C.D.M. and in his John Mistletoe he touches upon his actions and reactions of his College life. Early that college year I went to Haverford for a few days to fix up Kit’s room with curtains, cushions and the like, and to see something of the boy and old friends. It was pleasant to be met at the station by Kit’s rosy, healthy, smiling face, and I returned to Park Avenue feeling sure that he would get out of this life at Haverford much more than just the College curriculum.”

[The following is from “Biographies,” edited by Mary Wood (1988), on the Lower Merion Historical Society webpage

http://lowermerionhistory.org/?page_id=266

Morley, Christopher Darlington

1890-1957. Writer. He and brothers Frank and Felix all won Rhodes scholarships as graduates of Haverford College. Author: Parnassus on Wheels (1917); Kitty Foyle (1939); Travels in Philadelphia (1920); some 50 others. Editor: (1937) revised Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations.

Morley, Felix Muskett

1894-1982. Born in Haverford. Political scientist, editor. Graduate Haverford College, 1915. Ambulance work with British army Flanders, 1915-16. Philadelphia Public Ledger, 1916-17. Rhodes scholar, 1919-21; resident fellow, London School of Economics and Political Science. Guggenheim fellow; Ph.D. Brookings Institution, 1936. Editor: Washington Post, 1933- 40; Pulitzer Prize, 1936. President of Haverford College, 1940-45. Author: Our Far East Assignment (1926); The Society of Nations (1932); The Foreign Policy of the U.S. (1951); Freedom and Federalism (1959, 1981); others.

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