

Research Notes on Barclay J. Smith, A member of San Francisco Friends Meeting before the 1989 earthquake

by Bruce Folsom, San Francisco Friends Meeting, August 2023

History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, J. H. Battle, editor (1887):

Page 346: "The "Newtown" Company was organized with Horatio G. Sickel, of Philadelphia, president; . . . Barclay J. Smith, . . . directors. Ground was broken June 8, 1872, at Crescentville . . ."

Page 460: "The National Bank of Newtown . . . organized Mar. 17, 1864 with Kinsey B. Tomlinson, president, and Barclay J. Smith cashier, . . ."

Friends Intelligencer, Vol. 27, 1871, p. 585:

"Died. WOOD On the 11th of Ninth month, 1870, at the residence of her son-in-law, Barclay J. Smith, in Newtown, Pa., Rebecca, widow of the late John Wood, of Montgomery county, in the 76th year of her age; a member of Horsham Monthly Meeting."

Bruce Folsom, 2023:

We are fortunate in possessing a photograph labeled "B.J. Smith," showing a man with beard, mustache and sideburns; wearing a dark, circular cap, white shirt and dark bow tie, dark vest and coat; seated at a desk with many cubbyholes; holding a pen in his right hand. The photo is affixed to a large sheet of paperboard, and above it is written in ink, "B.J. Smith." To the right of the photo is written, "B.J. Grandpa Smith had a store in San Francisco. He was a Hicksite." Written lower down on the paper is, "B.J. Smith was a member of Hicksite Friends in the east."

Three other photos are affixed to this piece of paperboard.

At the top of the paperboard are two photographs of the first San Francisco meetinghouse. Below each of them is written, "570 Harrison St." Below the two of them together is written, "First Friends Meeting in SF"

Finally, below the meetinghouse photos and above the photo of B.J. Smith, is a photo of a woman holding a baby. This photo is labeled, "Albert & Lillian Smith."

From "A List of the Isolated Members of the Seven Yearly Meetings of the Religious Society of Friends in America, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1896":

Under San Francisco:

Smith, Albert W., Phila.

Smith Harper A., Smith's Cash Store, Phila.

Smith, Laura M., 455 Seventeenth Street, Phila.

Smith, Lydia A., 455 Seventeenth Street, Phila.

Friends Intelligencer and Journal, Vol. 58, 1901, p. 231:

"DEATHS. William Wood . . . Two brothers and one sister survive William. They are Daniel, of Philadelphia; Mitchell, of Johnsville, and Lydia Ann, wife of Barclay J. Smith, of San Francisco, Cal. . . . William Wood was a member of the Society of Friends and an esteemed minister of Baltimore meeting."

From "A Friends' Meeting and a Franciscan Mission," *Friends' Intelligencer*, Aug. 20, 1910 (by T.S.K.):

"The meeting kept up in San Francisco so long, would have gone down sooner under its discouragement, had not Barclay J. Smith, with money contributions and unselfish personal exertion, kept up his love for the Society, and the little meeting as long as it was possible."

From a letter of Nanna [Binford] and Richard Pearson to Elizabeth Owen, ca. 1946, transcription 5/11/90 by B. Folsom:

"My earliest recollection of Friends on the Pacific Coast was that of listening to an uncle Jared P Binford tell of an extended visit that he and another Friends minister made to California and Oregon about 1880, and of their meeting Barclay J Smith who, at that time was the proprietor of a restaurant in San Francisco.

It was during the International Christian Endeavor convention in San Francisco about 1897 that I first met Barclay J Smith and learned of his wish to establish a mission for the benefit of the poor children of the area then known as the "south of Market St."

I had at one time engaged in such work in the East and consented to see what could be done.

The result was that of my being installed as a member of the Smith house - which at that time was located on seventeenth St a block or two from the old Catholic Mission.

Swarthmore Hall was in fact, a one storey frame building, an annex to the old Mansion 570 Harrison St. . . .

Members and attenders in addition to those you mention - Albert Smith, a cousin of BJS - Lillian Abbot of Pasadena, Ruth Barker, Frank Erskine Ernest L Gregory. . . .

At the meetings held in the YMCA Hall and Swarthmore Hall, Barclay J Smith sat facing the meeting and at his request when in attendance I sat with him. . . .

You ask about Barclay J Smith -
Tall, spare dark, of few words; never idle, kind
His interest in the mission was humanitarian rather than actively evangelistic."

From a letter of Hannah Erskine to Elizabeth Owen, dated Oct. 15, 1946, transcription Jan. 17, 2010 by B. Folsom:

"When I came to San Francisco in 1900 the Meeting was held in a hall which I believe stood on property on Harrison St. belonging to Barclay Smith & his home was close by."

From notes of Elizabeth Owen at an interview with Ortha and Dana Thomas, Nov. 2, 1946:

"Barclay J. Smith was a conservative Hicksite Quaker. He wore his hat in Meeting. His home was at Swarthmore Hall, a large, beautiful residence in Rincon Hill. After the death of his wife he made over his place into apartments and some 24 people lived there. All ate in the dining room. Esther Smith lived there. She was not his daughter."

City Directory:

1890: Smith Lydia Mrs., with Smith's Cash Store, r. 543 Seventeenth

1901: Smith Esther R. Miss, principal Silent Workers, r. 570 Harrison

Silent Workers, 928 Harrison street. Miss R. Esther Smith, Superintendent

1902: Smith Esther R. Miss, r. 570 Harrison

Silent Workers, 928 Harrison street. Miss R. Esther Smith, Superintendent

1903: Silent Workers 930-1/2 Harrison street. Miss R. Esther Smith, Superintendent
1904: Silent Workers 930-1/2 Harrison street
Smith R. Esther, missionary, r. 930-1/2 Harrison

From a letter of Jeane (?) L. Arnold to Elizabeth Owen, dated Dec. 12, 1946, transcription Jan. 17, 2010 by B. Folsom:

"[Nannie Binford Pearson's] husband worked in Smith Cash Store, I believe. I can't tell anything particularly of Barclay J. Smith. He seemed like a nice quiet, kind old man. I don't know which branch of the church he belonged to, rather think Conservative or Hicksite, not the Gurneyite, I believe."

From handwritten notes of Elizabeth Owen, ca. 1946, transcribed Jan. 2010 by B. Folsom:

"From 1890 - '96 the Friends at 132 McAllister St. opposite the City Hall shared quarters with the W.C.T.U. The room and library were open during the week.

It was at this period that Barclay J. Smith became the leader of S.F. Friends. His home was at 431 - 17th St and he was President of Smith's Cash Store, 414-418 Front St.

He is supposed to have been descended from the Smiths of Bucks Co. Pennsylvania. Otha Thomas at one time associated with the Friends work in S.F. says that Barclay Smith was a conservative Hicksite Quaker, one who wore his hat in Meeting and sat facing the Meeting."

City *Directory* (entries below are listings for "Barclay J. Smith"):

- 1880-81: r. 330 - 22nd St.
- 1881-82: Proprietor Home Restaurant, Kearny & Pine; groceries 519 Post; r. 519 Post
- 1882-83: Clerk Harper A. Smith; r. 519 Post
- 1883-84: Manager Harper A. Smith; r. 519 Post
- 1884-85: [same as 1883-84]
- 1885-86: Clerk Smith's Cash Store; r. 475- 17th St.
- 1886: Editor "Home Circle" 115-117 Clay, r. 475 - 17th St.
- 1887: Editor "Home Circle" (monthly) 115-117 Clay, r. 475 - 17th St.
- 1889: Manager Harper A. Smith, r. 475 - 17th St.
- 1890: Smith's Cash Store r. 453 - 17th St.

1891, 1892, 1893, 1894: [same as 1890]
1895: President Smith's Cash Store 414-418 Front, r. 431 - 17th St.
1899: President Smith's Cash Store 25-27 Market r. 570 Harrison
1900: r. 570 Harrison
1901 and 1902: Smith's Cash Store r. 570 Harrison
1903: President Smith's Cash Store r. 570 Harrison

San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 10, 1891

Transcribed from ProQuest internet archive April 2010, B Folsom

THE SOCIAL WORLD

Private Receptions.

A very pleasant party was given recently at Barclay J. Smith's home, 453 Seventeenth street. The invited guests donned all kinds of ludicrous costumes, from the dude tramp to the king of ragpickers, and repaired to the large parlors, where numerous games were indulged in. Prizes were offered for the most proficient gamester and for the ugliest costume. Among the gentlemen, Frank Hull [?] received both prizes. Among the ladies, Miss Gertie Hutchins and Miss May Farrel received prizes respectively. Refreshments were served during the evening and the merry gathering broke up at midnight.

San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 9, 1892

Transcribed from internet archive March 2010 by B. Folsom

"New Advertisements" by S.F. Weekly Commercial Record:

"[H. A. Smith's] father, Barclay J. Smith and he built up [Smith's Cash Store] and made it what it is to-day. Both are Pennsylvanians, and in Bucks county, that State, had their home before coming here. There the senior Mr. Smith was engaged in business. When they arrived in 1880 the son had not as yet much experience in business life."

1895 *Directory*:

Churches - Friends Meeting:

"Services held every Sunday at 11 A.M., at the rooms of the W.C.T.U., 132 McAllister street. Barclay J. Smith, leader. Room open during the week"

San Francisco Chronicle Dec. 15, 1903

Transcription from internet archive March 8, 2010 by Bruce Folsom

"DEATH OF BARCLAY J. SMITH."

"Barclay J. Smith, president of Smith's Cash Store, who came to this city about twenty-five years ago and built up a large grocery business, died early yesterday morning at his home, 570 Harrison street. He was 70 years of age. He was born in Pennsylvania, was a Quaker and the chief support of the Society of Friends in this city. He was very philanthropic and for several years he supported the Sunshine Kindergarten on Harrison street. He leaves a wife, son and daughter. The son, Harper A. Smith, will succeed the deceased in the management of the large store."

San Francisco Chronicle Oct. 3, 1904

Transcribed from ProQuest internet archive April 2010, B Folsom

DEATHS.

SMITH---In this city, October 1, Lydia Ann Smith, widow of the late Barclay J. Smith, and mother of Harper A. and Lau