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Am .00607 (Collection 3047)

Joseph Alibone
Diary

1772

1 vol., 0.1 lin. ft.

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Abstract

Joseph Alibone was a Philadelphia Quaker. Alibone's diary covers a month-long period during May and June of 1772 and chronicles his journey to West River, Maryland, for the Friends' Yearly Meeting. In his diary Alibone noted visits to friends along his travel route, various towns and landmarks that they passed, weather and other conditions that affected his journey, and the activities of the West River Meeting.

Background note

In 1672 John Burnyeat, George Fox, and a group of Friends held a meeting in West River; it was the first Quaker meeting in the colony of Maryland. That meeting is now known as the Baltimore Yearly Meeting. In the spring of 1772, Joseph Alibone, a Philadelphia Quaker, and other Quakers from across the region, traveled from Philadelphia to Maryland to attend the meeting's centennial celebration.

Scope & content

Joseph Alibone's small travel diary, consisting of just under sixty pages, covers the period from May 19 to June 15, 1772. Although references are made to these particular dates, the style of the narrative is that of one continuous entry, perhaps indicating that entries were not made on a daily basis or that the narrative was penned at the end of the journey. The diary has no identifying marks except Alibone's name, which is written on the back page. The diary chronicles a voyage from Philadelphia to West River, Maryland, with stops in Wilmington, Head of Elk, Baltimore, and Annapolis. At the outset of the diary Alibone mentioned being in the company of his brother and sister. He also sometimes mentioned Sister Patience, although it is not clear if she was a relative or simply a fellow Quaker.

Most of Alibone's journal concerns his journey to West River, just south of Annapolis. There are a few pages devoted to the meeting itself. Most of the diary refers to the state of the roads, which were occasionally poor due to the rain; the quality of lodgings and meals; persons with whom he visited or dined; and occasional remarks about his surroundings. Near Head of Elk (present-day Elkton), Alibone remarked upon the

strength of the fishing trade. In Baltimore, a city of rising importance at the time, he noted that there were “near twice the number of Houses as Wilmington” and that some especially fine houses collected rents higher than those in Philadelphia. He further added that “were the streets kept in better order it might justly be said to be a very pretty Place.” Upon leaving Baltimore and passing near Carrollton, he described the landscape as “abounding with Pines & very much resembling the Jerseys.” There is also a description of an excursion to Annapolis a few days before the West River Meeting. Alibone also made reference to a number of ironworks that he passed, occasionally noting the quality of their products.

Apparently Alibone was one of many Quakers from across the colonies to make the journey to West River; he mentioned that many people attended from great distances, some of them living communally in tents that were set up as temporary shelter. He also noted that not all of the attendees took the event as seriously as he did. Although some of these participants had “little profession of piety,” Alibone was hopeful that some of them would be reached by the “power of the Gospel.”

Alibone’s narrative is peppered with the names of people he met and of old friends he visited. He mentioned seeing Philadelphians William Paca and Joseph Pemberton, the latter of whom had also traveled to Maryland for the West River Meeting. While in and around West River he spent much time with the Hopkins family, especially Gerard and Johns Hopkins and their families. He described Gerard as keeping an “elegant and plentiful Table.” He also spent several evenings with the Josey family.

The diary ends on June 15, as Alibone and his group prepared for their return to Philadelphia. At the end of the diary Alibone stated, “We may safely say that during the whole time we were out, no People could be more hospitably Politely and agreeably receiv’d & entertain’d.”

Separation report

None.

Related materials

At other institutions:

Pleasants Family Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, Cal. This collection contains some records of the West River Yearly Meeting.

Bibliography

Baltimore Yearly Meeting, "History of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting," <http://www.bym-rsf.org/history.html#qmv> (accessed 7 July 2004).

Subjects

Annapolis (Md.) – Description and travel – 18th century
Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Baltimore (Md.) – Description and travel – 18th century
Elkton (Md.) – Description and travel – 18th century
Quakers – Social life and customs – 18th century
Voyages and travels – Middle Atlantic States – 18th century

Alibone, Joseph
Hopkins, Gerard
Hopkins, Johns
Hopkins family
Josey family
Thomas family

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Provenance unknown.

Alternative format

None.

Preferred citation

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