NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

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THE RECORDS OF GLORIA DEI CHURCH:
MARRIAGES AND "REMARKABLE
OCURRENCES," 1794–1806

The previous issue of Pennsylvania History contained Reverend Nicholas Collin’s early nineteenth-century records of interments in the grounds of Gloria Dei (also called the Old Swedes’ Church), a Lutheran temple in the Philadelphia suburb of Southwark. Collin also registered information about the individuals he wed and their witnesses and commented on many of the marriage applications. While the ages, previous marital status, parents, and place of residence of brides and grooms provide valuable genealogical and historical data, Collin’s notes reveal a great deal about the conditions and attitudes toward marriage and personal relationships, especially among poorer Philadelphians, during the Early National Period.

Reverend Collin began making notes in the marriage register of his church as early as November 30, 1789. Among the early comments is an interesting confirmation of the practice of clerical approval of popular divorce. Starting in January, 1794, Collin set aside a portion of the register for a section entitled “Remarkable Occurrences Concerning Marriage.” “The continuance of licentious manners and defective laws,” Collin later explained, “renders necessary the recording of such incidents as may prove the prudence of my conduct against blame for cases against which no caution can secure, and also to instruct my successor on the rules of proceeding, so necessary in the lamentable
disorders of the society.” Entries in the “Remarkable Occurrences” appear through November 17, 1818, although Collin continued thereafter to include other comments in the marriage register itself. Collin’s attention to his commentary was sporadic, with notations every week or month in some years but hardly at all in others. The record is particularly valuable since Gloria Dei was the city’s most popular church for weddings in Reverend Collin’s tenure, during which he betrothed over three thousand couples from Philadelphia and the surrounding countryside. One reason for the large number of ceremonies was the widespread belief that it was especially lucky to be married in Old Swedes’ Church.

By Pennsylvania law, written parental approval was required for all marriage applicants younger than twenty-one years old. To protect himself from legal action and from irate citizens who had not approved the betrothal of their dependents, Collin demanded evidence that minors had obtained the consent of their parents, guardian, or master. Thus, he refused to perform the ceremony for young men and women without both the permission of their parents and freedom papers proving that they had completed their apprenticeship, indenture, or, in the case of blacks, that they were not slaves. Since property might be at stake, Collin also declined to marry some older couples without their parents' approval if their family name was the same as a nearby inhabitant of “respectable station.” Other applicants of the age of majority had to prove their single status or the death of their previous spouse. Over half of all couples refused by Collin failed to show proper evidence. Some were subsequently married in Gloria Dei, but most did not reapply. The Reverend also would not join blacks and whites, although he believed that “these frequent mixtures will soon force matrimonial sanction.”

Fraud, the independent attitude of young people, bigamy, and premarital sex contributed to the “extreme want of order” which Collin found in America. A great many applicants resented the existing laws, feeling that they unjustly infringed on their natural rights—perhaps a legacy of the rhetoric of the American Revolution. Refused marriage because he did not possess his freedom papers, one shoemaker left with a “miff, saying he was free and independent. He behaved otherwise civilly,” Collin observed, “but has no idea of civil order. If one or two other clergyman refuse he will probably either quit the woman, or live with her without wedlock.” Many others evinced a similar contempt, often tinged with class consciousness, for law and custom. Thus, when Collin turned away a man for not having his freedom papers, the intended “bride’s sister abused me for this hardship to the poor, tho’ I told her similar precaution is taken with people of all conditions.”
Political and religious regulations were not the only ones which chafed against the libertarian ideals of many applicants. A couple refused for not having the permission of the woman’s father “thought it very odd, as many others, having no idea of parental authority.” Minors often scandalized Collin with demands to be married without the consent of their parents, instead “insisting on their capacity and right of choosing for themselves.” These attitudes suggest the continuing struggle between generations during this period over who would make important life decisions for young people. That so few middle- and lower-class parents even attended the wedding ceremony of their children further indicates that many couples selected their own mates.

The lack of serious purpose displayed by many of those who came to be married exasperated Reverend Collin. One of his fits of pique concerned the levity of a woman refused because neither she nor her partner had brought evidence. “If I do not now marry him, I never shall,” she said, “for I may marry his rival.” “Liberty!” wrote Collin, “Liberty, in a shape often seen by me! Wretched manners!” Liberty it was, but in the sense of impulsiveness as well as freedom. The ultimate in impulsiveness may be found in one man’s retort to refusal: “The bridegroom gave as a strong reason for his importunity, that his love was so violent that he might suffer if he refrained from bedding with her that night.”

Marriage was occasionally contracted for appearance sake, to legitimate temporary affairs or merely to provide access to a respectable inn. After a short time, one or another of the partners would either desert or return to the minister and inform him of some fraud, usually bigamy, and the marriage would be annulled. The frequency with which mariners were betrothed on the night before their departure suggests a similar ploy. One man was bold enough to admit to such a purpose, requesting “a certificate of marriage to be filled up, but without performance of the rites, that he might have opportunity of bedding with the woman any place, as she was to be his fellow traveller for a year.” At times the complexities of the fraud imitated the intricacies of eighteenth-century art, as in the case of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. In Collin’s words, “Martin Murray’s wife came to know if her husband was lately married. Three years ago she was married to him by a fellow who assumed the clerical character, Joseph Cassel, as she afterwards learnt, and who signed the certificate John Smith, this her husband took from her three weeks after.”

Most instances of fraud concerned bigamous relationships, of which apparently a large number existed. Some “New England men, as well as other Americans,” Collin observed, “not seldom have 2 or more wives by
getting married in diverse places." One case involved the collusion of a husband and wife to marry her to a third party so that the husband would be clear of her debts. In other instances, various women, described as "strumpets," "hussies," and "town drabs," brought drunken men to wed. This may have been a method for women of easy virtue to marry or a form of extortion that their vows would later be "forgotten" for the right price. So common was this type of swindle that Collin eventually tired of recording every such occurrence. Pregnant women and their prospective husbands often applied for nuptials, imploring Gloria Dei's rector to antedate their marriage certificate. A number of couples, like their modern counterparts, chose to beget children and live together without the benefit of ceremony. Many of those who decided after several years to legitimize their union also requested antedated certificates. Collin steadfastly refused to participate in these deceptions.

The machinations of the couples who applied for marriage should be read with caution. They were recorded precisely because they were exceptions. Moreover, Nicholas Collin was biased; he disliked Philadelphians, feeling that they behaved like heathens. He was an elitist who mistrusted the liberty of the lower classes, the young, and women. Collin blamed much of their freedom on "false ideas of liberty," assuming that society had been more orderly in an earlier day. Yet, as Gottlieb Mittelberger remarked in the 1750s, "Liberty in Pennsylvania does more harm than good to many people, both in soul and in body. They have a saying there: Pennsylvania is heaven for farmers, paradise for artisans, and hell for officials and preachers." The most significant change may have been that during the Revolution laboring people embraced an ideology which enabled them to articulate their own views of morality without the cloak of deference. And, in terms of marriage, many Philadelphians obviously felt free to act as they pleased regardless of their parents' wishes, to select their mates on the basis of attraction, and to disregard laws and customs which interfered with their immediate desires. The late eighteenth-century city did not resemble a "traditional" society as much as a conglomeration of individuals each going his or her own way.

The following excerpt contains most of Collin's notes about the Remarkable Occurrences between 1794 and 1806, and information about the marriages he performed during the first four months in 1795. Reverend Collin's capitalization, use of the ampersand, and spelling have been retained, but we have expanded some abbreviations and silently altered punctuation to render the text more comprehensible.
January

2: Widow Fletcher came to inquire whether her daughter Jane had been married to a young Frenchman, Francis, as they had lately eloped; on hearing that they were not, she forbid the bans, the girl being only 16 years of age, and he a very young tradesman.

8: A young man of 24 requested me to join him, secretly, to a lady of 18, as he was going on a journey for 3 months and would, til his return, avoid the eclat, alleging that her father was willing, both as to the match and mode. I refused, without personal appearance of the father. Putting the question to him which I had on similar occasions put to an hundred others, "Suppose you come to have a young amiable daughter, would you approbate a clergyman who should not ask your consent?" to which he returned the answer which many others have, "No, I must confess that I would not."

8: Came Margret Power, who was married to John Martin, on the 22d of December last, for a new certificate, as he had taken the first from her, and had left her on the very evening of the marriage. She was a widow, 27 years old, and he 26; natives of Ireland.

8: A negro came with a white woman, who called herself Eleonore King, widow of a sea captain. They were refused.

10: Came a man to ask whether a certain Mary White had been married. She was on the 10th of December last, as per record. He declared her to have been his wife, though she pretended widowhood. He had been from her in New York for 3 years.

Note well—Hajams and his wife declared, at the time of marriage, that this woman was pregnant by the party Philip Land.

February

1. Rudolph Bartholomew and Alsey Levering, who had a child together, were married.

March

2: A Spanish mariner was to be married to a young girl, but did not come. I had requested a certificate from her father, though her mother was to be present, this he could not obtain because the father, who came that day to enquire, had refused his consent until his intended son-in-law had returned from the voyage on which he was going the next day.

Same evening, late, came a couple; were refused chiefly because the hour was unpardonable, and no previous notice had been given.

5: McLeroy and Mary Couglin were joined. They had cohabited for six years.

31: Adam Cleland and Lydia Frances, married without fee, being very poor.
April 24: At 11 at night came a party to be joined. I refused in a manner complaisant.

From the 1st of June till 11 of July I was on a tour through New England. Just before a French captain of a privateer came with a young lady, from Baltimore. Begged very hard but were refused.

July 12: Came a man of mature age, to bespeak his marriage for the next day, his bride was an orphan. These came accordingly but she confessed that her father was living; were refused.

September 6: Came a young man, sincerely confessed that his father was not willing—refused, with advice to procure his consent.

7: A young Frenchman would be married without the bride's parents consent—refused.

Note well—Here are omitted many who came late in the evening, also such as endeavored to procure an antedating of certificates.

12: A drunken man, from Burlington, came with a dirty town-drab; refused, and the man warned of his danger. The company also reproved.

23: The William Britton upon record for this day, proved to be the son of a person living in Philadelphia, thus the marriage is false.

24: Came a Frenchman with a young woman, brought good evidence but were refused for the present. Next day I went to their lodgings, above the market; in the afternoon they were joined, after previous testimony of an elderly woman, the bride's relation, that her mother, living in New Jersey, would be satisfied, and that she was past 22.

October 28: Came a couple twice, were refused because he was not quite sober; were married next morning.

28: Came a couple from Wilmington, he a middle aged man, she a girl between 20 and 23, to appearance. A female cousin testified that her father had not, for 12 years, spoken to her. Refused till further certificate.

In November three companies, most of these persons drunk, applied in vain.

December Parents came with their son and a girl, by him pregnant, as they said. He was not free, and therefore refused until his master should certify his consent, the declaration of said parents to the purpose being insufficient.

EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCES AND ESPECIALLY REFUSALS

The licentious manners which in this part of America, and especially in Philadelphia, are evidently striking, and which in matrimonial affairs are so pernicious, render a continuation of these memoirs necessary.

January, 1795

6: A non-commissioned officer came with a young woman about 19 years old, whose parents live in the country, about 18 miles from Philadelphia. He strongly entreated me to dispense with certificate of the father's consent. She also
appeared very uneasy, but less anxious about the marriage. They were refused.

13: A seaman, belonging the Danish Ship Unge Victoria, came to request me to marry him to a widow. I, in the first instance, sent inquiry to the Captain, who answered personally that he had no further objection than prudential care for the young man's well-being. I enforced this motive on him, but he was determined to get married; I then promised, if she proved clear of impediment. On examination of herself and others, I found reason to believe that she had a second husband living, and refused. They were, however, married by some other clergyman.

In the course of two months several were refused.

March

15: Came a young man to bespeak the marriage ceremony for to-morrow, promising to bring certificates.
16: Said person did not come.

April

3: A young couple was refused because he did not produce sufficient proof of his being out of his apprenticeship.
3: A young couple refused because the man could not produce certificates of his being out of his apprenticeship. The bride's sister abused me for his hardship to the poor, tho' I told her similar precaution is taken with people of all conditions.
6: A swedish mariner came to engage my service in his intended nuptials; refused until he produced testimony of the woman's character; warned not [to] forget his national character in this foreign alliance.
5: (Easter Sunday) A young couple came in a chair. Refused on suspicion of being runaways.
20: Two men urged me to marry a woman pregnant by a man who had taken care of her since the desertion of her husband, who had (as they say) cruelly abused her by stabbing, etc., and thereby killing the fetus in her womb. These also remonstrated the impossibilities of procuring legal divorce because of her poverty. Refused with prolix demonstration. Bad manners, crooked laws! Oh when shall I be cleared from this detestable place.
24: Came a young sailor, with an uncle and other company, to be joined to a small young girl. They asserted that her father and mother were dead. Refused.
25: Came 2 men, from the country up Lancaster road, with a young girl who confessed that her mother is living and had given consent. Refused til better evidence [presented].
28: A woman who had been published, came to declare that she had broken off the match on discovering the bad character of the man.

May

7: A young decent couple came without company, seemed to act sincerely, but were refused til certificates should be obtained.
13: A man about 50 years old came to bespeak marriage with a girl of 18. I advised him to consider better of it. He did not return.
14: A couple after 10 o'clock. Refused as irregular.
23: A decent man used many persuasives to be married without consent from the
bride’s father. I refused, but offered to confer with [the father] as I knew his whimsical temper.

June

3: A young couple refused. She said that her father does live 200 miles from here, that she left him 18 months ago because her step-mother was unkind. I offered to enquire about her from the family in which she resides, but she refused this piece of service.

18: A young pair, just, as they said, come from Ireland, were refused until a certificate on their circumstances could be obtained from the Captain.

July

15: A young man late from Ireland came to be joined to a young woman, with whom he had a child, and in consequence thereof was threatened with imprisonment by her father. I refused until this man could be heard, but this he, the bridegroom, positively rejected, expressing bitter ill will against his intended father-in-law.

28: A couple of elderly persons came, alledging as a great motive of the intended union, that he had something, and she also which by joining might be worth something. Nevertheless they begged the marriage for one dollar. Refused with the same reasons as frequently are used to such people—that I baptize gratis, visit the sick gratis, aid many poor, bury the indigent without fee, but that marriage is not charity, that if they would swallow less rum they could pay.

September

Some couples refused; one, very decent and both of age, because she was a Friend and could not produce an open certificate thereof from her mother, it being against the statutes of that denomination.

October

8: A young man refused because he did not bring certificate from the girl’s father.

November

2: A couple refused for the want of better evidence. She seemed to be of age, but asserted that her parents live in New York, which wants confirmation.

8: A young couple refused as the bride, about 18, had no certificate from her mother.

30: A couple came to request my parting them. He gets drunk and beats the wife. She seems to have a cutting tongue. Dismissed with proper advice.

December

9: A drunken man came at 9 in the night, urging me to marry him; ill pleased by the refusal.

Runaways advertised in the Gazettes, here registered to prevent my being imposed to marry any of them.

RECORDS OF GLORIA DEI CHURCH


Forbidden

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES

February, 1796
3: A young couple coming alone, refused until proper evidences were brought. They returned with such the 8th and were married.

March
13: A young girl refused because she had not brought certificate of her freedom; the witnesses appeared creditable.

May
13: A young man, as he said, merchant's clerk, young though possibly of age, denied because a nephew of a respectable person in town whom I would first consult. The young man said that his uncle never had any regard for him because a poor lad.
13: Two men and four women came. The bride looked very young and seemed much alarmed; she and some of the company said that her parents, formerly of Burlington, were dead. The chief woman, who would give the bride away, pretended to be a sea captain's wife and to live in a street not very distant, said that the girl had been two years her maid. Refused.
Note well—They came in chairs, no doubt from the country.

June
18: A young man refused because he would not bring certificate from the girl's father.

July
3: A young couple (though of decent appearance) refused for want of certificate.
5: A young man late from Ireland, who had brought a girl from that country with intent of marriage, refused till he could produce certificates. He pleaded in vain his coming from New York and having no acquaintances in this place. Two more refused this month.

August
19: A young couple of decent appearance, with several attendants, among them a middle-aged couple who were intimately acquainted with the girl, applied and offered bonds to any amount. Her father, as they said, had given consent, but was out in the country. The young man was going to sea in 2 days. Positive refusal without certificate from her father.

September
25: A young couple refused though they brought as evidence a man whom I had
married 1½ year ago. The reason was the girl being young and having no certificate of being free. She has come from England 3 years ago, as they said.

October
29: A young couple of decent appearance and attended by many persons, refused for want of proper certificates. She was but 16 years; her mother lives near Wilmington.

November
15: A Boston mariner was refused though attended by a person who said he was cousin of the bride, and affected that her father (belonging to Burlington) had been abroad on a voyage for 2 years.

REMARKABLE OCCURANCES
The same licentious disorders in public manners render it necessary to continue the notes in the former way.

January, 1797
17: A couple came after previous notice; the bride being young, I required peculiar information, and in the course of inquiries found prevarication. A fellow who pretended to be her brother, and asserted that their parents lived in New Jersey, proved to be of Irish origin in this manner: a female of the company, to quiet any suspicion from his dialect, said, without my previous remark thereon, that he was born in Ireland, but his sister here. They were dismissed with advice to the intended bride not to deceive her parents or near friends.

February
12: A couple came alone, of decent appearance and mature age; he about 30, she about 24. The bridegroom hesitated on pretence that her parents had not consented. She reproached him passionately for his infidelity, having so long baffled her. She told me that they had had a child together which is dead. On this he would have consented by a small additional persuasion from me, but I withheld this, yet put the matter to his conscience, with advice to marry her if he thought there was a prospect of happiness.

May
24: A woman desired me to search the records for the marriage of a couple, premising the request with an offer of two dollars if it could be found. I answered that half a dollar only is the charge for the renewal of a certificate. She made me look through 2 or 3 years, and then said she was surprised that the lady should pretend to being married when she was not. A fresh proof of the artful and still absurd tricks of these hussies.
29: A young couple came, without previous notice, at 10 in the evening. I refused until they brought evidence. The girl behaved with levity, yet earnest desire of the rite. She said, if I do not now marry him, I never shall, for I may marry his rival. Liberty! Liberty, in a shape often seen by me! Wretched manners!

June
Some refused.
A man refused because the bride had no certificate from her father.
17: Martin Murray's wife came to know if her husband was lately married.
Three years ago she was married to him by a fellow who assumed the clerical character, Joseph Cassel, as she afterwards learnt, and who signed the certificate John Smith, this her husband took from her three weeks after. She had no evidence.

July

29: A couple from Virginia, just come in the stage, sent word about 4 or 5 o'clock that they would be married in the evening. Came, but had no evidence but a Virginian residing here for a short time. The man was midle age; the woman about 20, having no parents, as they said. Refused. Probably runaways.

On the succeeding time may be observed that similar cases happen not seldom: young girls, some 15, coming with improper men, as strangers, etc., insisting on their capacity and right of choosing for themselves; young persons being, or appearing to be, apprentices or servants; persons demanding secrecy. Occasionally, but not often, persons of too near relation applied, as a woman and her first husband’s brother’s son. (Note well—Some people regard this as proper). Black and white seem to approach, I having been solicited by several, and well-looking girls.

FORBIDDEN

James Linum, minor.

REMARKABLE OCCURANCES

The continuance of licentious manners and defective laws renders necessary the recording of such incidents as may prove the prudence of my conduct against blame for cases against which no caution can secure, and also to instruct my successor on the rules of proceeding, so necessary in the lamentable disorders of the society.

January, 1800

25: Thomas Snowden proved to be a son of _____ Snowden, in Philadelphia. He asserted that he had come from England to the West Indies, when a boy, and from there to Philadelphia; that he was a comedian, belonging to the theatre here; that he was not in the least related to any of that name in the city. His bride had assumed a false name, proving to be a daughter of ____.

The deception was more plausible from his having notified his intention of being married by a written message, at 3 o'clock P.M. of same day, in which he mentions himself as a stranger and being unable to pay more than a low fee.

The witness, Thomas Bisset, had heretofore been present at a wedding, and I recognized him. The father of this Francis took him from the partner and sent him off to _____. I declared to him that the marriage was undoubtedly false.

February

2: A very young couple were refused, although they brought several witnesses. The bridegroom said that he was midshipman of a vessel of war, lying at New Castle. Suspicion arose from his very thin dress, and his total want of resemblance with a pretended brother who came as evidence, and was, by his own assertion a mariner, being several years older.

In same month another couple were refused.
March
Beginning of March a couple came at midnight, rapping hard at the door, requesting to be married, as he (being a captain by assertion) was going to sea next morning. Were refused, and did not return.

April
12: An Irishman, about 30 years, came with a young girl, in appearance 17, but as he said 20. They alleged that they had just come from Baltimore, but not in the same stage; that he had left her, but she had followed him, being pregnant by him and near her time. The appearance did not show so much, and how far it went her dress concealed. The fellow was ragged and smelt much of the stable. Her name was that of a sadler and harness maker in this city, but she denied any relation to him. He went away after vain solicitation, saying that he must try and get married this night to save the girl's reputation.
13: A young couple, both being hired to the Swedish Consul; his father, an Englishman, being hired to a gentleman in the city, had not given his consent, as I required, because this son was a minor; therefore they were refused. About this time a young man in trade, of good connections, applied three times with earnest solicitations and offers of reward for being married with antedating the certificate, in order to conceal his premature connection with the bride, for whose reputation he expressed great anxiety. I refused with ample demonstration of the necessity for official veracity, and the pernicious consequence of falsifying records. He was under great perplexity how to act. I strongly advised him by no means to delay the performance of the nuptial rites, though his misstep might not be concealable. He did not repeat the request. He offered a generous fee for my trouble, but I declined acceptance of it, being always happy to give salutary advice.
In second week of April, a young officer in the American Army, by birth a Russian, requested being married to a young woman from Reading, alleging that her father had given consent; I refused until he should produce certificate.
24: A young negro, not free, refused.
27: A young German servant, refused until his master's certificate of consent may be produced.

May
24: A good looking pair came; she was 19, and had, as she said, the consent of her father; I refused until that should be produced. The bridegroom was ill pleased but not indecent in his quick departure.

July
2: A negro came with a white woman, said that he had had a child with her which was dead, and was uneasy in his conscience for living in such a state. I referred him to the negro minister, not willing to have blame from public opinion, having never yet joined black and white. Nevertheless these frequent mixtures will soon force matrimonial sanction. What a particoloured race will soon make a great portion of the population in Philadelphia.
2: A captain of a small vessel, Bostonian, came after previous notice, with a genteel girl, 20 years old, and brought her sister and her husband Simeon Dillingham, innkeeper in North Water Street. Though no particular cause of suspicion existed against the assertion of them all that her parents were both
dead, that her step-father was living and took no care of her, that she kept house for a gentleman, etc., yet I ventured not to marry her for fear that her father might be one of the Gibs in the city, though all denied any relationship. Such is the standard of honesty in this American metropolis! It is possible that the very evidence had taken false names; besides these New England men, as well as other Americans, not seldom have 2 or more wives by getting married in diverse places.

August

9: A party of Irish came. The bride had been a bound servant to Penrose, in this vicinity, probably she was free, but refused to wait until one of the company should bring a certificate from him.

10: About midnight a fellow, by dialect Irish, waked me by rapping at the door, and insisted on my getting up to marry two couples, promising a liberal reward. I refused because of the improper time.

September

22: A negro wanted to be married to a white woman; he had commissioned a black woman to speak for him. The intended bride warmly pleaded her cause in person. She is a European, her father Irish and her mother English. I refused with complaisance on the ground of public opinion disapproving such wedlocks.

October

A young couple earnestly requested of me to ante-date the marriage certificate by some months, on account of premature intimacy, the man offering money, etc. They acquiesced finally in being married regularly, but could not be made to comprehend my reasoning on the impropriety and many bad consequences of such fraud.

13: A young couple, he 16 years, and she 1 or 2 years less, made earnest sollicitation to be joined. They were attended by a pair not much older. The female being sister of the intended bridegroom, and also, as himself, second cousin of the bride. These two female friends reside in a village 5 miles from Philadelphia, and keep house together. They pleaded the independence of both parties, her parents being dead, his father also, and his mother in the West Indies. The male witness had moreover privately, a few moments before, apprized me of a premature connection. I endeavored to convince them of the necessity I was under to seek information from their next friends or kindred, particularly from the bridegroom’s brother, a public officer of respectable character, but in vain. They were dismissed with suitable admonition and gratuitous offer of my future advice, if it should be required. The bride appeared much distressed.

December

26: Two women brought a sailor. He is a native of England, but came a boy to America; is 32 years old, sails from here. Being a little in liquor he was refused, although he and the bride’s attendant pleaded his going to sea to-morrow.

REMARKABLE OCCURANCES

February, 1801

21: Half-past 10 at night, two couples came, two of them as evidences. The intended bridegroom was said to be a sailor, who must go to sea next morning.
Being refused on account of the late hour, they knocked at the door and kept entreating for 15 or 18 minutes.

March and April some cases happened, and I omit particulars because of the similarity, and of my being engaged in other important affairs.

May
11: Being the second day of Vestry, a woman came in the afternoon, during the Vestry dinner, to prohibit the marriage of her daughter with a seaman. She said that said daughter had, at the age of 15, been married by Mr. Turner, to one Starke, a kind of Doctor, without her knowledge. That said person, being now at New York, had sent for her in vain; that she was going to be married to a sailor, therefore forbid the marriage. She also appeared extremely agitated. In the evening a young couple came to get married, after previous notice given in the afternoon. On examination I found the woman’s name to be Starke, and that she, on close examination, hung her head and would not give sufficient information; that the destined bridegroom had not been here more than 6 weeks from Hamburg. His Captain was with him. I represented the extreme want of order in America, and the great danger of strangers engaging in such contracts without previous knowledge. I told them how many men, without reason, leave their wives, etc., etc., but that the danger of marrying such women, before a legal divorce, is very great in case of the party injured suing, and advised postponing at any rate. Some of the company did say it might be some other person of the same name. I advised postponing at any rate, and so dismissed them. Spoke also to the captain and bridegroom in German. They departed. Some pleased, some not.

In the summer several refused.

October
29: Two men came, P.M., to bespeak a wedding. The bridegroom was represented as a very genteel, well educated young gentleman who had been appointed Chaplain for one of the Frigates, but on being out of service (the number reduced) had turned shopkeeper. The lady was under age and had not the consent of parents, but the said gentleman would give his bond for my indemnification in case of suit. They were dismissed.

November
5: Two couples of blacks refused for want of certificates. The next day one of the couples returned, the girl had her indentures as free, but the man was a slave, and showed a certificate of consent from his master which appeared suspicious by the badness of composition and hand.
10: A couple from Woodberry, in West Jersey, were refused because the girl, not quite 18, had no certificate from her parents, and the man was also of very disproportionate age, probably 60. Several persons attended them, one a housekeeper in this neighborhood. The girl was very desirous. The old bridegroom boasted of being one of the first men in the said place.

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES
January, 1802
12: A young Englishman, settled since a year in Philadelphia, came with a girl of 17, had a decent appearance. After a little demur he told me honestly that her
father knew of his addresses to her, but would not consent. I advised them to solicit his consent and in [the] mean time postpone the marriage, declaring that I would by no means join them according to law.

In the course of the winter and spring, several persons made earnest solicitations for ante-dating the certificates, and were told how impossible such grants are, how necessary true statements are in official records.

Some drunken men, brought or came by their own consent, to get married and were refused.

June

14: A company of 4 or 5 brought a man so drunk that he could not stand. He nevertheless expressed great unwillingness to be married. The company endeavored to persuade me that he had given full consent and was not much in liquor, etc. The intended bride was also very desirous, giving for one important reason that putting off the nuptials was an unlucky omen, as she had experienced in her first marriage (she being or pretending to be a widow). I gave to all proper reproaches and dismissed them. Two of the men were so angry at the bridegroom as to give him several thumps.

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES

January, 1803

Sunday before Christmas, in the evening, came a negro of the tawny kind, aged about 25 or more, by occupation a waiting man, but now going to set up for himself in New York, with a girl of 22, of good appearance and probably, by her name, of good family, perfectly white. Dismissed with suitable advice. He was very pressing, she less but willing.

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES

February, 1804

13: A young man came about 7, without any previous appointment, announcing his intended bride as remaining in a carriage at the gate. He said that he was about 25, in mercantile business: she about 19, from Maryland, having a mother there, but boarding in this city, that they must get married secretly, because he was not able at present to support her in the style to which both had been accustomed, making use of the word high circle. I warmly advised him against the dangers of this practice, however honorable his intentions might be, and endeavored to persuade him either to postpone the nuptials or to keep house in any simple manner practicable. He declared his firm determination to get married; went away dissatisfied, but not unmanly. I offered him any future advice gratis, as this according to my general rule.

May

7: A young couple applied, and had 2 young persons for evidences. Her father lives in Philadelphia, but had not given any certificate of his consent. They were consequently refused.

Same evening a couple of negroes came; they declared themselves free, and also mentioned persons in this city who would certify it. I dismissed them with request to bring these testimonies.
July
24: An Englishman, sailor, about 22, and a girl about 20, came with a large company, some of whom behaved with rude levity; particularly her half-brother, a young sailor. When I had performed one-half of the ceremony, this fellow, who was very groggy, and some others, broke into great irregularity, 3 or 4 of the males grasping the bride to get the first kiss. I dismissed them with severe reproof and rejected their entreaties to resume the office. They accordingly went off unmarried.

25: Came a fellow, about 36 years, barefooted, half drunk, with a woman and their child, 2 or 3 years old. He declared that his word was quite sufficient, but that he had granted her solicitation of the ceremony on condition that she could find one dollar for the minister's fee, which he deemed sufficient. He was the son of a Quaker preacher, and had also himself been a Methodist preacher. I drove him out and advised the woman to sue him.

27: A young couple were refused because she had no certificate from her father, who resides in this city. She and her attendant sister said that he had consented.

August
16: Between 11 and 12 at night, a couple, with 2 or more in company, came from the country over Schuylkill pleaded by one of the attendants, a man who said that I had married him, that want of a chair till a late hour had prevented their coming sooner, that she was a widow; he of age, a gardner from Ireland or Scotland. I spoke with them from the upper story, and refused on account of the unseasonable time, however good the match might otherwise be.

October
9: About 8 in the morning, a girl aged eighteen, came with four Irishmen, but no female companion. She acknowledged having a guardian, but said that he was a man of despicable character and now in jail for debt. I nevertheless declared that he must be heard, and the wedding in the mean time postponed. This did not please them, and they were dismissed.

November
A young man desired me to join a friend to a young lady, without knowledge of her parents, on the plea that she must otherwise go to service because they had become reduced from good circumstances, and that her sweetheart had sufficient property in New Orleans to support her, and intended carrying her hither directly. All my persuasion could not make him agree to an interview with the mother, therefore the refusal was necessary.

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES
January, 1805
1: Two men and two young women came, of genteel appearance. The intended bridegroom, 27 years old, told me in private of his premature intimacy with his future bride and of his firm resolution to conceal the time of wedlock from the parents, to save her reputation; seemed very afflicted and agitated, assured me of their perfect acquiescence, by his friend, a man of mature age and in trade, of descent behaviour, affirmed that all was proper. In this case there was considerable weight, the more as the woman was 19, and had also a cousin with her (one of the 2), yet I would not consent, but offered him gratis any advice.
March
10: A couple came with two young evidences, male and female. They looked decent. He said that he was a shoemaker, and of age; she is, by her own account, twenty-one, but looked younger being also small. They were refused til better evidence.

13: A young man from Darby to bespeak his wedding this evening, is by his account past 20, but free, having purchased the remainder of his apprenticeship to the hatting trade. His parents also are dead, as he says. The bride's father is living in that place, by his acknowledgment. I requested certificates of his consent and of his own freedom. He had none of either.

31: A middle-aged couple desired to be married, but the certificate to be ante dated by three years. The reason was that he had been at sea for that time but she had passed for his wife, and in his name, Dealth, kept a boarding house and transacted other public business. As usual, they could not comprehend the absurdity of such request. She declared that she would not get married in a regular way while there was hope of succeeding. She was uneasy, and told also that they had lived together a good while before the three years.

31: In the night about eleven o'clock, a company waked me by their noise. One of the men had climbed over the gate and come to the entry door, pleading much, and particularly that they would bed without the nuptial ceremony. Refusal and severe reproof was my answer.

April and May some cases passed over.

This May, deserves notice as an example of impulse without decorum. A party came after 11, on Saturday night, and begged very hard for the ceremony. I had a long conversation with them without opening the door. They came out from the country, as they said. The bridegroom gave as a strong reason for his importunity, that his love was so violent that he might suffer if he refrained from bedding with her that night.

June
A negro, hired to drive street carriages, came of an evening with a negro woman. They were probably both free, but brought no certificates. I desired of them to produce such if again applying to me, but they never returned. His excuse for giving no previous notice was that he seldom was at home in day time. However, he was not quite sober. She grew displeased because I would not join them, but did not speak anything offensive. He was in great earnest to persuade me that there was no impediment in the case.

29: A young man came and requested secret marriage because her parents withheld their consent on account of his inability to support her. He proposed going to Kentucky for employment, where his trade of Portrait Drawing had been represented to him, by some persons from there, as profitable. I advised him not to go there, but to stay here and acquire money by any kind of painting til he could afford to marry; by no means to contract a secret marriage.

July
15: A young couple refused because she had no certificate from her father, who lives in the Northern Liberties. They thought it very odd, as many others, having no idea of parental authority.

18: Refusal, because the bride, an Irish girl of good but young appearance, had no evidence of her being free and otherwise her own mistress. An Irishman of
middle age said that he knew her well in Ireland, having come from the same vicinity, and that she had no parents, etc., all which might be true, but not certain to me, as he was quite a stranger. Yet he wondered how I could suppose that he would come with a lie in his mouth.

22: A man of 28, decent, mariner, came to inform me of his intended marriage with a girl, native of the Cape, whose character was hurt by her own fault, or more probably, he thought, by slander. I advised him to make full inquiries. He did not return.

October

28: A young man, of respectable merchant family, proposed getting married to a young woman, whose family had long been intimate with his, privately, but said that the match would be agreeable to his parents. Refused.

November

2: In my absence, a company came in a carriage, the fellow who was to be married, tho' in dress appearing as a gentleman, was very drunk.

30: A young couple, came without company, of decent appearance. She candidly said that her parents were living in this city, and he, that he had not asked their advice. She was 17, and he 24. I refused without personal attendance of the father or mother, and gave proper admonitions.

December

A baker journey-man, about thirty, son of a respectable citizen in Philadelphia, came with a widow, of Irish decent, of good appearance and somewhat older than him. His behaviour was proper enough and he had also given previous notice, but he came in ragged clothes, and is given to intoxication, as himself and she confessed, therefore refused.

REMARKABLE OCCURRENCES

January, 1806

21: An Englishman, lately come to America, of decent appearance, and by conversation showing a genteel education, about thirty, desired to be married to a young woman about twenty, who had come in the same vessel. He said that she had no relatives here, nor any near one in England. She was not with him I refused until proper evidence.

February

16: A company, of decent behavior, came. The bridegroom was by appearance about 26, and the bride might be, as she said, 21, but I refused because she had no certificate from her parents who live in town, as she confessed. She also asserted that they had given consent. C. Ware and his wife were on a visit at that time, and had several times before witnessed my cautious conduct.

17: A young man, about 23, desired secret marriage with a girl of 21, living here with a sister that is married to a sea captain now on a voyage. Refused except she will attend. The parents live in New England. In the evening he came with the bride and another sister, a widow, for evidence, and got married.

23: A native of Norway, carpenter aboard an American vessel, sailing from this Port, came in the afternoon from Divine service in the church, and requested of me to come, in order to marry him, to the house of the bride. On entering this house, which as to furniture and cleanliness appeared reputable, I observed a man
well dressed, but looking stupid as by liquor, seated and stretching his legs; a woman, about 20 or more, soon appeared and claimed the man, who told her that she was better without him, but could not quiet her indignation. I soon left her quarrelling with the bride, bride's mother, etc., and advised this wretched man to consider that he was brought up in a Christian country, and to quite heathenish strumpets.

March
4: A young man came to bespeak marriage between a Swede (Hall), and a cousin of his. I told him that I never marry any Swede or Dane to a woman whose character is not previously ascertained to me, and told him of the above example. That a Swede who, as he said, was very clever and had sailed from this Port for 9 years, should have been known to me. That I would sue any person that inveigled a Swedish seaman to marry a strumpet. He promised to bring the man, but they did not come.

April
6: A young couple, having several young persons with them, refused because they brought no certificates. He is a tailor; both came, as they said, from the vicine parts of New Jersey.
7: A young man in the neighbourhood, rigger by trade, bespoke his wedding for next day. The bride, also in the vicinity, has her parents living there. I desired him to bring a certificate, from the father, of his consent; he said that trouble was needless, but did not refuse. Next day they did not come.

May
24: A young man applied for a friend, who is the son of a rich man, and fond of a deserving but not moneyed girl, and wishes to secure her by a secret marriage. He is 20 years and she 18. The necessity alleged is that he is going immediately to New Orleans and thence to England, so as to be absent for two years. I refused, but offered, without fee, to speak with his father, which was not accepted.
A couple came in the forenoon, to be married immediately, from Passayung. He was about 25, somewhat in liquor, she about 18 or 19. A lad and her sister attended. They said that her parents were dead but that she had an uncle and aunt. I requested a certificate from them. The bridegroom said it was immaterial, and that her sister as well as her brother, as he called him, could ascertain the legality. The lad said he was not her brother. On my desiring them to comply, and leaving them, I overheard the fellow saying "if he will not marry us let him kiss my back——". Ruffled by this outrage I could hardly forbear manual chastisement, but restrained myself, shook him several times against the wall and pushed him out of the house.

August
10: A young Englishman, by trade a shoemaker, came with a girl of 20. No impediment appeared, but as he seemed light-minded I required evidence.
A young couple came with two young persons for evidences. I told him that as he was of a good mercantile family, I would first speak to his mother. This he refused, saying that he was his own master and could, if he chose, kill himself to-morrow.
A young couple applied with another, who were married. The bride and all said that her father was dead 10 months ago, but as a man in the neighbourhood has the same name, I was doubtful and refused.

A man about 30, came with a widow, as she said. He was a little in liquor. A man who came as evidence was more so. On being refused the woman was very angry. Another married woman in the company behaved with decency.

September

A young man of German decent applied for secret marriage and was refused, but with offers of advice gratis. He did not return.

At night a company knocked at the gate to be married, but went off quietly on my calling out "it is too late."

October

A young cooper, of 22 years, bespoke marriage and desired me to ante-date the certificate on account of their previous cohabition, which I refused with proper admonition. They did not come.

An Englishman, sailor, came with a woman of decent appearance, and an American sailor and a young married woman. The intended bridegroom, his friend, the female attendant, all said that she was a widow, that her parents were dead, but as by her own and their account her grand-mother is living, and in Vernon street, I refused until she could be heard as evidence.

November

In the evening a young man came with the intended bride and her sister. He is by his own account 22, and appears to be so, served his time to a shoemaker in New Ark, in East New Jersey, and left his indentures there. The girl is 22 also, as she and the sister said, and looks so, both also have a genteel appearance. The mother is living. I told them that my only doubt was whether the young man is free, as impositions are common, and requested some good evidence, as the shoemaker with whom he works. This he refused with miff, saying he was free and independent. He behaved otherwise civilly, but has no idea of civil order. If one or two other clergymen refuse he will probably quit the woman, or live with her without wedlock. I have observed several suspicious cases of a man coming alone with two women, in this the female partner more willing than the male.

December

A widow, in the vicinity, middle-aged and having children, who keeps a boarding house, came with a man to be married, in the evening about 8. He is mate of a vessel that is going to sail to-morrow, native of Boston, past 30. I demanded evidence but they had no time for it; were therefore refused with proper disapprobation of this assured but common custom to marry in the hour of departure. There was probably no impediment, but still he might already have a wife.

MARRIAGES IN GLORIA DEI CHURCH

January, 1795

Mathias Weaver, son of Mathias and Susannah Weaver, now or late in Germany, p. 35, and Hannah Cabellaw, d. of dec. Henry and Eliza Cabellaw, of Germany, p. 29, both of Philad. 36

George Adams, son of the dec. George and Nelly Adams, late of the island of
10: John Michael Burckhart, son of dec. Philip and Margret Burkhart, heretofore of Philad., p. 41, and Ann Mary Musgrove, d. of Charles and Margret McKea, now or late of Ireland, p. 34, widow. Ev. p. David Clemons, Mary his wife. All of Philad.
29: Wiljam Trump, son of Daniel and Mary Trump, in Philad., p. 22, and
Mary Tilford, d. of dec. Robert and Jane Tilford, heretofore of Philad., p. 16.

February
4: John McGonnigel, son of Philip and Marget McGonnigel, in Ireland, p. 25, and Biddy Brislin, d. of dec. James and Hannah Brislin, in Ireland, p. 20. Ev. p. John O'Donnel and his wife, the bride's sister, John McCannan. All of Philad.
8: Samuel Carson, son of John and Jane, in Africa, p. 32, and Sophia Hand, d. of James Hand, in Trenton, N. Jersey, and Tinna his wife, in Philad., p. 24, both Africans. Ev. p. Tinna her mother, Cesar Pickering, Africans. All of Philad. He [is] a servant of Paul Cox, she [servant] of Joseph Warner; from both certificates of consent were presented.
16: Wiljam Crotty, son of Morris and Cathrine Crotty, now or late of Ireland, p. 24, and Cathrine Furey, d. of Thomas & Eleonore Gibbons, now or late in Ireland, p. 29, widow. Both of Philad.
22: Charles Dobbin, son of the dec. John and Marget Dobbin, heretofore of
RECORDS OF GLORIA DEI CHURCH

Ireland, p. 18, and Christiana Montgomery, d. of dec. Hugh and Christiana Montgomery, of Ireland, p. 24.

22: Thomas Britt, son of Marcus and Cathrine Britt, in Ireland, p. 30, and Mary Price, d. of Wiljam and Sarah Carell of Ireland, p. 26, widow. These two couples all of Philad., and evidences to each other.


26: Jacob Smith, son of Conrad and Hester Smith, in Mifflin City, Pensilv., p. 22, and Cathrine Houston, d. of James Houston, in Philad., and his dec. wife Cathrine, p. 18. Ev. p. John Baxter, widow Margret Stuvdeune, the bride's aunt. All of Philad. Her father is at sea.


March


5: James Shaw, son of the dec. Ezechiel Shaw and his relict Jemima, in Bucks City, p. 21, and Rebecca Smith, d. of the dec. Robert Smith and his relict Seiah, in said City, p. 18. Ev. p. said Seiah her mother, Joseph Wills. All of Bucks City, in Pensilv.


12: Peter Fox, son of the dec. Ephraim Fox, and his relict Elizabeth, in W. N. Jersey, p. 32, and Elizabeth Hutson, d. of John and Mary Hutson, in Maryland, now or late, p. 25. Ev. p. Robert Levick John Palmer, all of Kent C'ty in Delaware St. N.B. They brought a child named Jonathan, near a year old, whom they declared to be their common child.

12: Thomas Cummans, son of George and Elizab. Cummans, in Ireland, p. 23, res. of Philad. City, and Hannah Berry, d. of dec. Redman Berry, and his relict Eleonore, now wife of George Alms, in Montgomery City, Pensilv., p. 18, resident of said City. Ev. p. Martha Berry her sister, Hugh Hart, of said Montgomery C'ty. N.B. His name may perhaps be Cummins or Cummings, but his own mode of spelling is as above.

15: Wiljam Durvis, son of James and Jane Durvis, in Ireland, p. 20, and Mary Durvis, d. of Oliver and Ann Durvis, in Ireland, p. 20. Ev. p. Thomas Hamilton, Mary his wife. All of Philad.

15: George Griffith, son of Griffith and Sarah Griffith, in Philad., p. 24, and Mary Truck, d. of dec. Thomas Truck, and his relict Mary (now wife of Francis
17: James Jockum, son of the dec. Andrew Jockum, and his relict Hannah, in Montgomery City, p. 24, and Deborah Eagens, d. of George and Jane Eagens, in said City, p. 20. Ev. p. Isaac Eagens her brother, all of Montgomery City, Pensilv.

April
RECORDS OF GLORIA DEI CHURCH

Watts, of Philad., p. 34, widow. Ev. p. Jacob Rumpff, Elizabeth his wife. All of Philad.

11: James Altemus, son of James and Sarah Altemus, in Bucks City of Pennsylv., p. 23, and Sarah Aeger, d. of the dec. Leonard Aeger and his relict Charlotte, in Kensington, p. 20; both of Kensington, near Philad.


21: Andrew Cox, resident of Philad. City, in Pensilv., son of the dec. Andrew and Hannah Cox, heretofore of said place, p. 31, and Ann Currie, resident of Philad., d. of the dec. Archibald and Rebecca Currie, heretofore of said city, p. 22.

26: George Charles Bennike, son of the dec. Philip Fredric Bennike and his relict Ann (now wife of Thomas Wiljams), in Philad., p. 23, and Marget Shoemaker, d. of George Shoemaker and his wife Christina, in said city, p. 20. Ev. p. the above Thomas Wiljam and his wife, with said Christina Shoemaker.

NOTES


5. May 11, 1801.

6. Nov. 8, 1806.

7. April 3, 1795.


11. May 29, 1797.

12. May, 1805.


14. June 17, 1797. Mr. Thornhill used a false priest in order to marry a number of wives; see Oliver Goldsmith, *The Vicar of Wakefield* (New York, 1955), 403.

15. July 2, 1800.

16. June 1, 1796, Gloria Dei Marriage Register.


21. We would like to thank Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Church and the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Hall of Historical Society, Philadelphia for their permission to publish these records.

22. The “banns” refers to the notice of a proposed marriage proclaimed in order that any person may object to the ceremony in advance.

23. That is, he would avoid publicizing the marriage.

24. That is, a new marriage certificate.

25. The prospective groom was still an apprentice or indentured servant.

26. They arrived in a horse-drawn carriage.

27. That is, the banns for her marriage had been proclaimed.

28. Both the man and woman had reached their age of majority.

29. That is, she was a Quaker.

30. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* was one of the newspapers published in Philadelphia. Advertisements for runaway servants, slaves, and apprentices will be published in a future issue of *Pennsylvania History*.

31. “Country born” meant that he was born in America.

32. Reverend Collin is referring to the meeting of the persons responsible for administering the temporal affairs of the parish of Gloria Dei.

33. The Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers intersect one another in Philadelphia.

34. To “go to service” was to become a maid.
35. The Northern Liberties formed the northern suburb of Philadelphia.

36. Collin recorded information about the marriages he performed in the same format for each ceremony. Thus, on January 1, 1795 Collin married Mathias Weaver, who was past 35 years old, and Hannah Cabellaw, who was at least 29 years old. Mathias was unaware if his parents, who lived in Germany, were currently alive or dead. Hannah’s father was deceased, while her mother, Elizabeth, resided in Germany. Both Mathias and Hannah were residents of Philadelphia.

37. “Ev. p.” means that evidence to support the bride and groom’s claim was presented by Arthur Davison and Rebecca Mela, the witnesses to the marriage.

38. That is, the bride, groom, and their witnesses were all residents of Philadelphia.

39. “Relict” is a widow.

40. “N.B.” is an abbreviation for a Latin phrase meaning “note well.”