Lady Keith
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THE WIFE AND CHILDREN OF SIR WILLIAM KEITH

By CHARLES P. KEITH, Litt.D.,
President of The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania

The picture reproduced facing this article, date and artist unknown, has been preserved among descendants of Governor Keith and his wife as a portrait of the latter, who was properly styled Dame Ann Keith or Lady Keith from his becoming a baronet. The photograph was sent over by the family with copies, not literatim, of letters and parts of letters, which we will quote, hoping that they will be found interesting supplemented by data from other sources. The portrait is indeed different from the rough and almost comic sketch in the possession of the Historical Society, attributed to John Watson, a Scotch artist, who died at Perth Amboy in 1760, who, by the way, is not known to have been related to Watson the Annalist.

It is to be regretted that Sir Robert’s inquiry in one of his letters as to his mother’s progenitors is not answered. We cannot verify the statement in one of her letters that she was “born of a noble family and once heiress to a very large fortune.” Her maiden name was Ann Newbury, and she was born in 1675. The late William J. Buck found a memorandum, that Ann Morgan, evidently her mother, was born in England in 1625, so fifty years old at this daughter’s birth, and died in 1697, aged 72.
Ann Newbury first married Robert Diggs, who is spoken of as a Counsellor, by whom she had a daughter Ann, born July 22, 1700, at St. Alban's, England, who married in Philadelphia Dr. Thomas Græme. There is some suspicion that Governor Keith's father had hid at the Græme family seat, Balgowan, Perthshire, after the battle of Sheriff Muir in that county. Græme came with Keith and his family to Pennsylvania. Dr. Græme and his wife Ann Diggs had three children who survived their grandmother, viz., Thomas, Collector of Port of Newcastle, and two daughters, Ann and Elizabeth. Ann Græme married Charles Stedman from Scotland, sea captain, merchant and iron-master, who built the house now numbered 244 South Third Street, Philadelphia, subsequently known as the "Powel House." Elizabeth Græme had an unhappy career; jilted by Benjamin Franklin's son, William, who was afterwards Governor of New Jersey, she sought solace in literature, becoming quite a poetress; in middle age married Henry Hugh Fergusson, a Scotchman, who went to England during the Revolutionary War, and never returned, she dying in 1801, childless, poor, and unpopular from her connection with British attempts to induce Washington and Joseph Reed to forsake the American cause.

When a young widow, Mrs. Diggs, née Newbury, made her second marriage, which probably in the end depleted any fortune she had, and which at the time could not have been looked upon as prudent, however distinguished. She married William Keith, heir apparent to a baronetcy, who had embroiled himself with the exiled king and his party, having spent some years at St. Germain's, in the hope, says Bishop Burnet's History, of becoming Under-Secretary for Scotland in the event of James II.'s restoration. Returning to Eng-

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1 Charles P. Keith, Provincial Councillors of Pennsylvania, pp. 157–166.
land, where he was admitted to the Inner Temple on July 3, 1704, he had been used by the enemies of the Duke of Athol to give evidence of the latter’s connection with Fraser's scheme. The only post that young Keith received from the Tories when in power was Surveyor of the Customs for the southern district of America, and this was lost at the accession of George I. Meanwhile Keith's father, the third baronet of the line, contracted great debts, increased by his joining in the insurrection of 1715, so that at his death, his estate was insolvent. For the eldest of his three children, the Lieutenant Governorship of Pennsylvania would have been a sufficient support; but a high style of living, unsuccessful speculations, and a political course antagonizing the leading men, not to mention slips in morality, caused the loss of the earlier savings and subsequently expected stipends, and sent him back to England in unsuccessful search of better fortune. He was Lieutenant-Governor of Pennsylvania and Delaware from his arrival, May 31, 1717, until superseded on June 22, 1726, and left America in 1728, never to return. His wife and second son neither accompanied nor followed him. There was no quarrel; in fact the letters of all the family indicate union of affection and interests, not lessened by there being two illegitimate children of Sir William, a boy and a girl, of the former of whom the fate is unknown, but the latter, after the death of a fiancé, died unmarried. The sons Robert and James were sent for by their father to be put to school. Lady Keith pities herself in after life as “deprived & stript of a tender husband,” and says that she would “most joyfully rather have endured death than have parted with him.” After for a short time making a home with her son, she lived at Horsham on the plantation taken from the widow of Samuel Carpenter, the Treasurer, in satisfaction for the money voted to the Queen’s use. There Sir William had built the
The Wife and Children of Sir William Keith

house, which is still standing. By deed dated April 23, 1731, Keith conveyed this with 934 acres 10 perches to his eldest surviving son and others in trust with power to sell for Lady Keith, and to pay her the proceeds. They soon sold 100 acres. After repeated attempts to dispose of the balance to one of the family, they put it up at public sale on August 12, 1737, and Turner, who bought it for £750 Pennsylvania money, conveyed it in December following to Dr. Graeme, from whom what is left is known as "Graeme Park," although Sir William once called it "Fountain Low." It is now (1931) owned and occupied by Welsh Strawbridge, who lives in a more modern house upon the place. Watson's Annals, perhaps on the authority of William Rawle², gives a deplorable account of Lady Keith's last years, incorrectly calling her this Governor's "widow," and saying that she "lived and died in a small wooden house in Third Street between High Street and Mulberry Street, there, much pinched for subsistence, she eked out her existence with an old female, and declining all intercourse with society or her neighbours. The house itself was burnt down in 1786." It seems unlikely that Dr. Graeme and his wife and children, surviving her, left her to starve. She died July 31, 1740, aged 65 years, according to the tombstone in Christ Churchyard.

If Watson's account is true, very remarkable is the following letter dated the month before the Lady's death.

Letter of Lady Anne Keith (more properly Ann Lady Keith) to her daughter Mrs. Jane Yeeles, Philadelphia, June, 1740.

My dearest child

I must now let you know I have lately received a very long tender & affectionate letter from your dear Father, who enjoys a great share of good health blessed be God he also wrote a very kind letter of thanks to Doctor Graeme for his respect & care

² The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XXIII. 533.
of me. I have likewise heard from your brother Robert, who was then in France with General Keith who had gone there in hopes of finding relief from a wound he received in an engagement with the Turks, for which he can have no cure & that I am under great apprehension of your brother losing so great & generous a friend who is not only so, but like a Father too, as your Brother writes me. he desires his affectionate love to you & says he can never forget the affection you always expressed for him. He is your own brother indeed, he has a most noble & generous way of thinking, & expresses ye so great a duty & regard for his Parents & so much tenderness & concern for me in particular that it is moving indeed & I can but think myself Blest with such children but oh! then what must be my trial never to hope to have the happiness of seeing them more O my dear how does he revive the memory of my dear son William My dear daughter I can only recommend you & yours to the great God . . .

Sir William and Lady Keith had the following children, with possibly others who died in early childhood:

1st. William, mentioned in the *Votes of Assembly* as secretary to his father, went to Jamaica, where he married a widow named Barham, and d.s.p. before December 5, 1727, at "Mesopotamia," Westmoreland, Jamaica.

2nd. Alexander Henry, possibly the Henry Keath in a list of "departed saints of the law," was styled eldest surviving son and heir apparent of Sir William in deed of 1731; was collector of port of New Castle, Delaware, as early as 1729; died without issue about October 5, 1741, buried at Christ Church, October 6; married Thomasine, daughter of Anthony Palmer, afterwards President of the Council of Pennsylvania, which marriage was objectionable to Lady Keith, probably because Thomasine's prospective inheritance would not be sufficient to support a baronet; Thomasine Keith founded Palmer Burying Ground for Kensington.

3rd. Jane, born about 1708, marriage ceremony performed by the well-known non-juror, Dr. Richard Welton, out of which fact Keith's enemies made political
capital; she died before September 5, 1760; married (date from *American Weekly Mercury*) December 10, 1724, William Yeeles of St. Elizabeth, Goshen, Jamaica.

**Issue of William and Jane Yeeles:**

Deborah married, in 1747, William Senior of Westmoreland, Jamaica, and was ancestress of several officers in Army and Navy.

Jane.

Mary married —— Brooke.

Thomas died 1753.

Catherine.

Arabella.

Elizabeth married John Merrick Williams of Jamaica, and was ancestress of Valentine Rowe, Col. R. E., lately deceased, and his daughters, of Torquay, England.

4th. Robert, born 1714, who succeeded as the fifth baronet, when he had already served in the Russian army under the patronage of his kinsman James Keith, and had followed him into the Prussian service, where the said kinsman became a Field Marshal. Robert married Margaritha Albertina Conradina von Suhm (misprinted Suchen in Burke’s *Extinct Baronetcies*). In later life, Sir Robert entered the Danish army, and was Colonel commandant at Rendsburg, and became a General. He died in 1771.

**Issue of Sir Robert and wife; besides two daughters who died infants:**

Frederick William Henry Ferdinand, born 7.10.1751 (this means October 7); four of the Prussian royal family were sponsors at his baptism; became the sixth and last baronet; rose from ensign to major in Danish army; died unmarried, 8.11 (or November 8), 1798.

Robert George James, born 16.10. (October 16), 1752; captain Danish army; died unmarried 12.1. (Jan. 12?), 1791.

5th. James, born on shipboard May 10, 1717, while his parents were coming to Pennsylvania; baptized at Christ Church, Philadelphia, June 19, 1717; went with
Robert to their father in England; entered the British navy; was later in Prussian army; appears to have died childless before November 3, 1753, from Sir Robert's saying at that date, "I am the only representative of the family."

Although there are letters from Sir Robert of later date, the following is selected to close this article:

Sir Robert Keith to Mrs. Yeeles

Potsdam Nov. 3, 1753

My dear sister,

It was with the greatest pleasure I received your kind letter, as it had been so long that I had not heard any news of yourself & family; tho' I must own on perusing it my joy was much abated by the account it gave me of the death of your only son & the more so as I had already been informed how hopeful a youth he was. I am by the blessing of God myself the father of two boys & tho' their infancy does not permit me to guess whether they will answer my expectations by their conduct when of riper years, Yet I know what I & their Mother should have felt had we lost either of them; a loss that we lately much apprehended as they both were ill of the small-pox. The oldest who among the many names by which he was baptized is known by that of Frederic (after the King of Prussia who was his chief Godfather) was before this accident but sickly through this misfortune of having had two different nurses, so that when he was seized with the small Pox we thought we should have lost him and this apprehension greatly affixed his mother whose darling he is but God be praised, our fears are happily over, as he is now in good health. He is two years and one month old and as sprightly a child as one can find, so you may judge how dear he is to us. The youngest is called Robert. He is one year & two months old, is entirely recovered and a very fine boy, but I think my wife's health affected and the Physicians have frighten me by telling me she may fall into a consumption, and I can assure you that I have so good a wife that to lose her would be an affliction unsupportable, but I hope in God, not to live to know such a loss. I have the greater obligation to her as she could have had much better matches by far when she married me. She even lost by her marriage a Pension, which the King gave her, as daughter of a man for whom he had a great friendship besides her own fortune. She has several relations to whose inheritance she will have an undoubted right. I shall not neglect to send you our pictures. I would willingly have a picture of my Father & Mother. I wrote last year to our sister G. [Graeme] beging her to yield me those two large pictures at full length which were at Horsham, and as I am the only representative of
the family I think she can not refuse me, but as she has not yet answered my letter, I am afraid my demand has not been agreeable. I own, as I have no picture of either Father or Mother I should be very thankful to her for such a present as they are very good ones. There is one thing I would willingly know, therefore if you are not sufficiently informed beg you will endeavor to get as particular an account as you can from Sister G. the thing is, I am desirous to know what family our dear Mother was of. I know she was a young widow of a Councillor Diggs when my Father married her, but I would willingly know her maiden name, who & what her Father & Mother were, in what part of Britain they were settled, whether people of landed estate or otherwise. There are particulars I am entirely ignorant off and about which I should not have troubled myself were I not settled in this country, but as it is, I would willingly be informed on account of my dear children . . . my reasons are these. Here is a Protestant order called the order of St. John into which a number of Nobility enter as it sometimes when the turn comes procures a Revenue of 500 and even 1000£. In order to be entered one must prove one's Nobility both of Father & Mother's side for eight Generations. I can easily get my children's Nobility proved of the Father's side, as the family of Keith is known throughout all Europe . . . but I must equally prove it of my Mother's side, and as I should be glad to enter my son into this order I should wish to be informed of these particulars . . . the only difficulty I have to get my Genealogical Table drawn and when I know the family of which my Mother was I shall write to England for further particulars. My wife's family is one of the ancientest in Germany so that I have on that side no difficulty.

When you write address your letter thus: Sir Robert Keith Bar Colonel & Adjutant General to his Majesty the King of Prussia Potsdam. Mr. James Stephens is my correspondent at Hamburg.

My wife makes you many compliments. I have promised her to excuse her to you for not writing at this time, but as she has not yet learned English I told her I would write for her & give you a particular account of our family. I have however made her write to my niece Mrs. S——- She first wrote her letter in French. I translated it & then she copied it. I beg you will write me in what part of the Island you live & particularly how to address you, for tho' I have the means of Geo. Barclay yet perhaps I may find a nearer way by direct shipping from Hamburg. My kindest compliments to Mr. Y——- Adieu my dear Sister. God Almighty grant you & your family long life & all manner of happiness, such are the sincere wishes of, my dearest sister, Your most affectionate brother & obedient . . . Servt.
The "great migrations" and "great embarkations" of the Palatines, Salzburgers, and other Germans to the English colonies in the first half of the eighteenth century have received considerable attention from historians. Contemporary news sheets, official and family records, diaries and journals have been made available by publication for the historian's use. The two letters that follow were published in an obscure German periodical in 1927, and have, so far as the present writer is aware, escaped notice in this country.¹ They were written at the height of the immigration wave that set in during the 1730's, just when indications pointed to a break between England and Spain; the "War of Jenkins' Ear" actually broke out in 1739, about a year after these letters were written. The author of the first letter is J. Christopher Sauer, a printer and later a publisher by trade, famous as the printer of a German edition of the Bible, which appeared in Germantown in 1743, the first Bible printed in the English colonies in a European language.² An interesting reference to what was perhaps his first

¹ In Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte und Heimatkunde Wittgensteins, vol. 7, fasc. 1, appeared an article by K. Hartnack on "Wittgensteiner in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika." The letters here published in translation were published by W. Luckert-Berleburg in the periodical Das schöne Wittgenstein (Laasphe, 1927, fasc. 1). They were brought to the writer's attention by Dr. E. Schulte, archivist in Münster, Westphalia.

² On Sauer's activities as a printer, see A. B. Faust, The German Element in the United States, I. 144f.
printing venture, a miscellaneous collection of hymns dating from 1738, appears in the second (anonymous) letter. John Wesley is not mentioned by name, but the religious revival with which he became identified is referred to in the same letter. In his Journal, Wesley records his spiritual debt to the German pastor Boehler, with whom he sailed to Savannah in 1736, and expresses his admiration for the fortitude exhibited by the German passengers during an ocean storm. Whites, en route for the colonies on the Atlantic seaboard, and packed like herring aboard the sailing ships, apparently fared little better than the blacks who were being brought to the West Indies from the Guinea Coast.

Germantown [Pennsylvania]
18 October, 1738.

The great numbers of people who have been prevailed upon this year to come to this country are raising a considerable lamentation in the land. Moreover, since so many hundreds have sickened and died on board ship, the members of families remaining behind must pay or go into service; so that there is an unusual shortage of money and a degree of privation among the people that can scarcely be described. And then the captains get hold of the little silver and gold that is to be found here and there in the country as payment for shipping immigrants over everywhere. And still, despite the great drought of the past summer, which has dried up nearly all plants and vegetables, grain and wheat enough has been produced, but it is not being exported at present. So the farmer has nothing with which he can make headway himself or help others; hence borrowing, also among manual laborers, is becoming more and more frequent. What the outcome of this will be, remains to be seen. A great many are regretting bitterly and with tears that they ever came here, especially those who could have got along in some fashion over there. They have left everything, they have been unable to get started here, and are without sufficient help. Many who have never done a day's work, or intended to, must beg. How miserable will it not be this autumn, especially for people with such habits! Oh, if the people on the other side would only consider what they do, and not let their minds be inflamed by cunning and false rumors or by deceiving letters (or by enticing letters—
Lock-Briefe—of which, if one in twenty gets results, it makes good business! As above mentioned, a severe drought has persisted throughout the whole summer, so that very many, indeed most, of the wells have dried up. And thus it has been in Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, and in New York, as well. The rumor has been in circulation daily that the war between England and Spain will break out in Carolina or Georgia, but thank God, it has not taken place up to this time. But the embers are glowing strongly. The Elsoffers have not yet arrived. Everybody is wondering where their ship is, and besides that vessel, three or four other ships with people are expected. According to report, these have already been on the sea for three months. The people who have arrived in Georgia are having a hard time of it there. They have little good water. The Savannah river region is reported to be a waste of sand. The people cannot get farther into the country because of the many bogs, morasses, cane [brakes] and dense woods. It takes an unbelievable amount of work to make roads. So too, it is going to take a long time before the soil can be prepared to raise good grain and wheat. More than half of the Salzburgers who have got there have died; likewise the Swiss. The people here have it from reliable witnesses that between here and Virginia is a stretch of country on the Susquehanna which may be reached through Maryland, in which Annapolis, the capital, is situated,—a large strip of uncommonly fertile land. Into that region, people from here and from neighboring lands which are already filled up, have been moving annually for the past five years, and have found things to their liking. The poor people who have been persuaded this year to leave Hesse for Georgia will find themselves sadly disappointed, for they do not even have oat bread there. The chief diet there is Welsh or Indian corn, with rice and melons. Butter, milk, fresh meat, wheat and grain are exceedingly scarce there, when not in season (nach der Zeit); all such provisions must be brought there from this country (i.e., Pennsylvania). I have permitted myself this digression for the sake of others who may have a great desire to emigrate. So I close with greetings, etc.

J. Chr. Sauer.

Germantown [Pennsylvania]
16 November, 1738.

The Elsoffers have recently arrived, as well as Olhausin’s daughter, who lost three children in England and her husband at sea, and brought with her only two boys. But she is very miserable, and, with many others who have come over, is still
Two Germantown Letters of 1738

quite ill. This ship lost 160 persons; another that arrived the
day before lost over 150; and one that came the day following
was said to have had only 13 well persons on board.⁸ Meantime
another has arrived, in which out of 300, only 50 fares are left.
They have mostly died from dysentery, skin sickness and inflam-
matory fever; likewise some of the captains and many seamen.
It appears indeed that of 15 ships with passengers only two have
arrived this year with those on board tolerably well and healthy.
Many of the survivors die after landing, and thus diseases are
brought into the country, so that many inhabitants and landlords
become sick, are seized by the epidemic and quickly carried off.
The survivors have a hard enough time to keep solvent, especially
where there are families, because of the great lack of money.
From all this may be seen the great need and misery attending
these immigrants. It is pathetic to see the people in such a
condition, as it is going to be extremely difficult until a few of
them really get started. The crowding in of people in need is
exceedingly heavy at present. The young Rösers are doing a
good deal, and more particularly the Elsoffers. They have
been given the use of a large room. By conservative estimate,
of those who have made the journey hither on 15 ships,
some 1600 have died. These deaths place a heavy blood guilt
on the immigration agents (Hinaus-Lauffer),—a number of
whom have also died at sea,—and on the hard-hearted captains
who pack their fares so terribly closely together. It seems curious
to me that there is such extraordinary eagerness in Europe to
get away, and that next year an even larger number is reported
to be likely to leave. It is also remarkable to me that those re-
aining [alive] on the sick ships, where deadly maladies often
prevail, are so brutally malignant, contentious and violent that
it is astonishing to hear how they execrate and curse out the
land and people when they do not find what they had expected,
so that Divine justice is still further outraged. And all kinds
of peculiar religious revivals, also among the English, have been
making their appearance lately, the precursors of a great revo-
lation for which the mighty Mover will prepare us! Further-
more, grain is fairly cheap this year, but fodder for the live
stock because of the prolonged drought, is scarce. We now have
a German print shop here, put up by Sauer, and the Seven-day
Baptists are printing a song book with a miscellaneous collec-

⁸A. B. Faust, op. cit., I. 71, gives Sauer credit for reporting the
same figures as here given, but does not indicate where the report
appears.
tion of old and new songs. News is daily expected that the war between England and Spain has broken out. We have received a new governor who has been provided with fairly strict orders. The proprietary Penn has sent a man out to explain to the Germans (as I have been reliably informed) that they should not continue to come in such numbers, as there is not very much more land for sale. In the regions of Maryland and Virginia may still be found great unoccupied districts and better soil than here, and a great many are migrating thither from here. The boundary strife between this land [Pennsylvania] and Maryland has reached some sort of settlement under royal orders. On the other hand, the spiritual struggle between the smaller Protestant groups continues strong. One group seeks to overcome the other and to aggrandize itself, until the Stone-without-hands who appears to put factions great and small in confusion on his approach, loses his patience and all strife and hardness will be abolished and done away with, that the Lord and his name and his glorious creed may be the same everywhere. Yes, Lord, Thy kingdom come, according to Thy will, Amen!

I remain herewith, etc.

Professor William J. Hinke, at the request of the editor, writes:

"There is not much in the letters to identify the various parties who are mentioned, but all the evidence points to the ship St. Andrew, which arrived October 27, 1738. The second letter refers to Olhausin's daughter with her two boys. I identify them with Johannes Althaus and Johann Krist Althaus, who arrived on that ship. There is also a reference to the young Rosers. In the captain's list of the St. Andrew were Tewwis (Tobias) Rözer and Johan Rezer; the latter appears as Johann Kraft Röser in the other two lists of this ship. The Elsoffers who are mentioned in the second letter are people from Elsoff, which is a village in the former County of Wittgenstein, now Westphalia. The Hiester family comes from the village. In one of the numbers of the Pennsylvania German is an article by Professor Hiester, of Franklin and Marshall College, on Elsoff, with a picture of the old church there. I have sixteen ships of the year 1738. The ship St. Andrew has 119 names in the A list, and 78 names in the other two lists. The ship Thistle of October 28, 1738, has 141 names in the A list, and only 42 in lists B and C. But the question of sick people or those who died is passed over with complete silence. The new governor referred to in the second letter is Governor George Thomas, first mentioned on July 27, 1738, in connection with the Brigantine Catharine, which arrived on that date. Dr. Thomas Graeme was appointed, in 1718, to visit and report on all incoming vessels. But no reports from him are on record until 1738. On September 14, 1738, Governor Thomas laid before the Provincial Council reports from Dr. Graeme "setting forth the condi-
tion of four ships lately arrived here from Rotterdam and Amsterdam; And it being observed from one of the said reports that were the Passengers on Board the ships Nancy and Friendship (arrived Sept. 20, 1738) allowed to be immediately landed, it might prove dangerous to the health of the inhabitants of this Province and City, It is ordered that the masters of the said ships be taken into Custody for their Contempt of the Governor's Order, signified to them by Thos. Glenworth, pursuant to a law of this Province, to remove to a distance of one mile from this city, and that they shall remain in Custody till they shall give security in the sum of Five Hundred Pounds each, to obey the said Order, and not to land any of their passengers Baggage, or Goods, till the Passengers shall have been viewed and Examined, and until they shall receive a Licence from the Governor for so doing" (Colonial Records, IV. 306f). From the tenor of the second letter I conclude that the writer was one of the Wittgensteiners himself. Perhaps he also came from Elsoff. It is interesting to notice that the Hüster brothers arrived on the ship St. Andrew one year earlier, on September 26, 1737. It is, therefore, not beyond the range of possibility that the letter was written by Daniel or Jost Hünst. But that is merely a guess. But another fact that might be mentioned is, that Sauer, himself, had come from Wittgenstein. Hence his interest in the coming of the people from Elsoff.