

Upper Darby Underground Railroad Trail Guide



The Underground railroad station, Hoodland (Sellers Library), was the home of Abraham and Elizabeth Sellers Pennock.

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Thornfield (Garrett and Maple Road)

3218 Garrett Rd, Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Thornfield property was owned by **Samuel Levis**, who willed this property to his grandson, **Samuel Garrett**, when Samuel reached age 21 in 1796.

Thornfield was an important and busy station on the Underground Railroad. A PHMC marker was dedicated in 2007 honoring Thomas Garrett Jr. and his brothers.

Samuel, half-brother of **Thomas Garrett Jr.**, married **Hanna Davis** and their son **William Garrett**, who married **Rachel Coleman Sellers**, would later own **Thornfield**. Since Samuel Levis died before Samuel Garrett reached age 21, the house was in the name of **Thomas Garrett Sr.**

In 1800 Thomas Garrett Sr. added an addition for his oldest son Samuel Garrett, as as can be seen from the stone near the gable peak.

From Wilmington, Delaware, Thomas Garrett Jr. sent freedom seekers to Benjamin Price of West Chester who would move them to his cousins, Samuel Garrett, who was living here at Thornfield, Isaac Garrett at Fernland Farm, and Philip Garrett living at Cleveland Farm with his brother Edward.



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Riverview House / Cleveland Farm

475 Shadeland Ave, Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Thomas Garrett was born at Riverview House on August 21, 1789, to his parents to Thomas Garrett Sr. and Sarah Price. In 1790 the house was enlarged and a date stone with "G T S 1790" was inserted by the Garretts. The house, torn down in 1969, was located on the playground area of Holy Child Academy, on the back and left side property area. In 1822 Thomas Garrett Jr., his wife Mary Sharpless, and children would move to the slave state of Delaware where from his new home in Wilmington he would help approximately 2,700 people to freedom in the north, including members of **Harriet Tubman's** family.

Thomas Garrett Jr. would forward freedom seekers to his friends and relatives. In Upper Darby, this included **Edward Garrett** and his wife, **Abigail Sellers** (daughter of George and Ann Ash Sellers, owners of Sellers Hall). They inherited Riverview House and about 140 acres in 1839. In an 1858 letter from Thomas Garrett to Philadelphia abolitionist and Underground Railroad stationmaster **William Still** he states "a color'd woman and 7 children was taken to my brother Edwards in Upper Darby" This was Ann Maria Jackson and her children.

The year 1858 was a monumental one in the lives of **Ann Maria Jackson** and her family. In that year, she bravely took destiny into her own hands and escaped from her Maryland enslaver. With her, she took seven of her nine children, ranging from two to about sixteen years old.

William Still helped the family on their way north to Canada. In his book, *The Underground Railroad*, Still remarked how unusual it was to see a woman with so many young children taking such a risk in making a bid for their freedom.



Riverview House



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Riverview Farm / Fernland Farm NPS (Arlington Cemetery)

2301 School Lane, Drexel Hill, PA 19026

The current Arlington Cemetery property was originally part of **Riverview Farm**, owned by the **Garrett family**.

Riverview Farm, a farm of about 284 acres in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, was the location that set the ardently anti-slavery course of the life of young **Thomas Garrett, Jr.** who became one of the most important links in the network of Underground Railroad operatives in the Delaware Valley.

At his parent's farm, Riverview, Thomas Garrett Jr. came face to face with the tenuous existence of African Americans living under the oppressive slave system when a free African-American woman in the employ of his family was kidnapped to be sold into slavery. His participation in her rescue set him on a path to actively change the slave system by assisting approximately 2,700 individuals seeking freedom through the Underground Railroad from his base in Delaware. His importance extended to the entire Middle Atlantic region. He seemed to have his fingers everywhere, from a Maryland iron furnace, to Baltimore rescues, interrogatories in a Port Penn, a Delaware kidnapping case, a petition and visit to Lincoln in DC, and more.

At the death of **Thomas Garrett, Sr.** the farm went to Thomas Garrett Jr.'s brothers, **Isaac Price Garrett** and **Edward Garrett**, who later split the property. Isaac built "**Fernland Farm**" and Edward, "**Cleveland Farm**," and the two later became important Underground Railroad stations.

In his 1883 book, Underground Railroad historian, **J.C. Smedley** documented many agents in southeastern Pennsylvania, among them the extensive web of Garrett relations. One account traces freedom seekers from Thomas in Wilmington to his cousin, Benjamin Price in West Chester, and from there on to his brother Isaac at Fernland and cousins Phillip at Cleveland and Samuel at Thornfield.



NATIONAL
UNDERGROUND RAILROAD
NETWORK TO FREEDOM

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Museum at Arlington (Garrett Collection)

2900 State Rd, Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Housed in a Mt. Vernon replica building at Arlington Cemetery are several history museums. One is an Underground Railroad museum. The cemetery property was formerly part of Riverview Farm, a prominent stop on the Underground Railroad and the home of the Garrett Family. Harriet Tubman was a frequent visitor and friend of Thomas Garrett Jr.. Garrett is portrayed in the 2019 movie "Harriet".

On display in the the climate controlled museum are many Garrett family letters, pictures, and books. The collection includes a hat of Thomas Garrett Jr and pictures of his parents, Thomas Garrett Sr. and Sarah Price.

Many visitors have toured this museum over the years since it opened. It also has been a teaching location for students to learn about local history and the Underground Railroad. The building houses two other collections of interest on the theme of freedom, in the Kennedy and Lincoln Rooms.



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Hoodland (Sellers Library)

76 S State Rd, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Hoodland was the home of **Abraham and Elizabeth Sellers Pennock**. Abraham Pennock was an editor of the Non Slaveholder (1846-1847), a periodical promoting the boycott of all goods made by enslaved people.

This prominent abolitionist and patron of the arts was a leader in the **Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society**. He also fought for Woman Suffrage and was active in the temperance movement. Notable visitors to this home included American poets and abolitionists, **John Greenleaf Whittier** and **James Russell Lowell**.

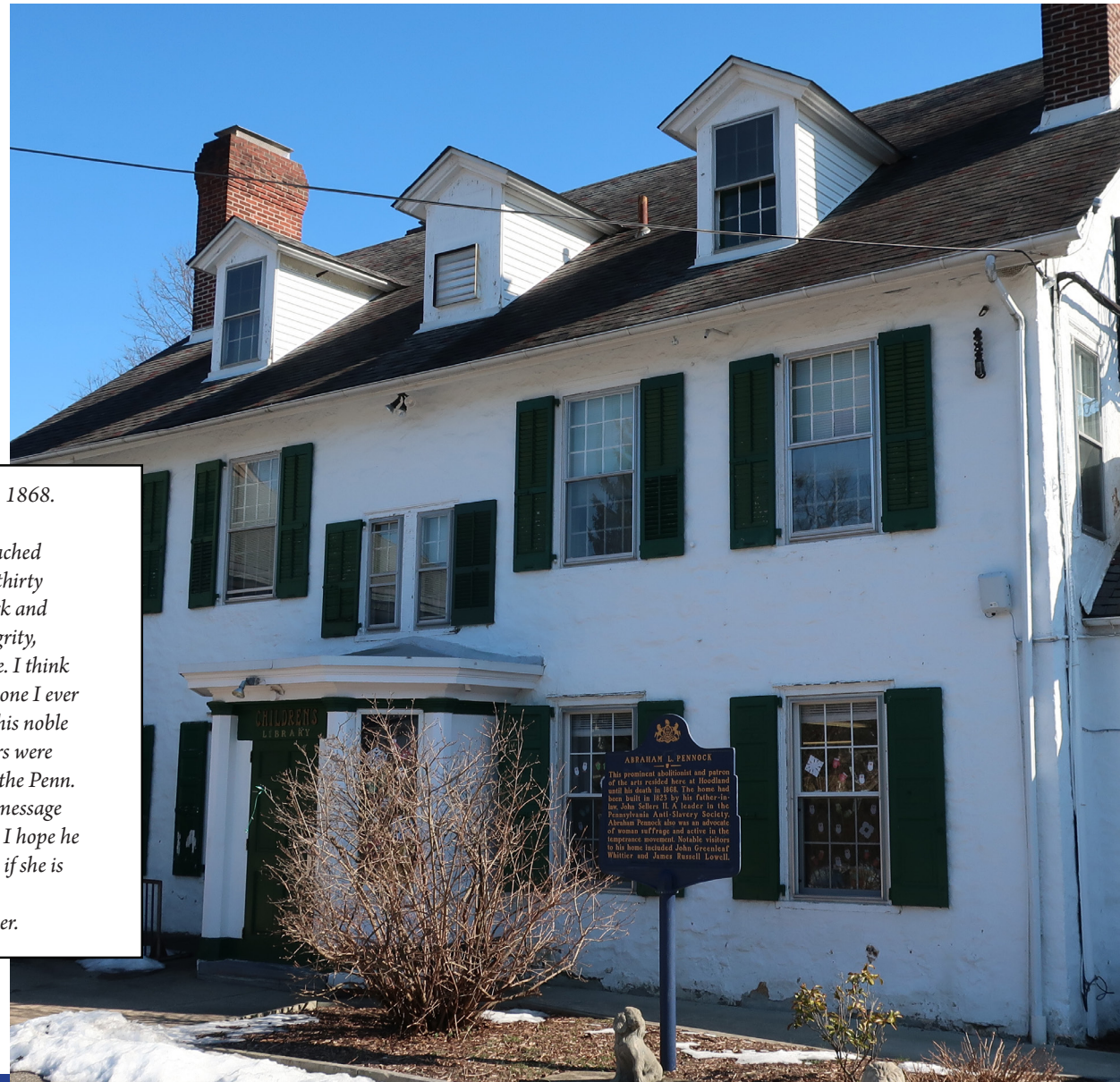
In 1848, Pennock was the first president of the West Chester Turnpike, which afforded him an enhanced opportunity to monitor the people traveling between West Chester and Philadelphia. In this letter below from John Greenleaf Whittier, Whittier talks about Abraham Pennock's involvement to end slavery.

Amesbury, 15.5 mo. 1868.

My dear friend,

Thy letter informing me of the death of thy honored father has just reached me, and I thank thee for thinking of me at such a time. It is more than thirty years since I first knew him. He was my friend and counselor in the dark and troubled times of 1838-39 and 40, a man of antique heroism and integrity, against whom the violent enemies of freedom could find nothing to urge. I think he came nearer my ideal of a true Christian gentleman than any other one I ever knew. How much he did by tongue and pen and press, the influence of his noble life and character for the cause of freedom, only those who in those years were closely associated with him could know. He was a tower of strength to the Penn. Anti-Slavery Society. I wish I could have seen him once more. I sent a message to him by a Philadelphia friend who called on me a few weeks ago and I hope he received it. Will thee remember me to thy sister Mary and thy mother if she is still living?

Believe me very truly, Thy friend, (Signed) John G. Whittier.



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Howard House (Pica's)

7803 W. Chester Pike, Upper Darby, 19082

Howard House was owned by **Abraham Pennock**. Many anti-slavery supporters living in Upper Darby area met here, including members of the **Garrett, Sellers, Rhoads and Pennock** families.

Like Abraham and Elizabeth Pennock, many would participate in the **Philadelphia Free Produce Movement**. This effort struck at slavery by not using anything produced by slave labor and therefore taking the profit out of enslaved labor.

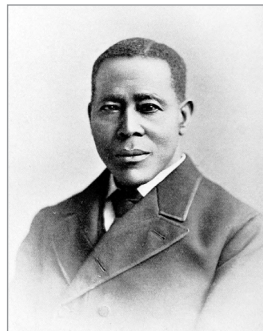
Many were also involved in the **Pennsylvania Abolition Society** and were present when Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground by an angry mob in 1838. Some were members of the **Pennsylvania Abolition Society**, which supported educating Black children, hiring lawyers to prevent or thwart kidnapping by slave catchers, and aiding fugitive slaves in the court system. The Howard House was located in what is now the parking lot of Pica's Restaurant.



HOWARD HOUSE

The Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society was established in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1838. Founders included James Mott, Lucretia Mott, Robert Purvis, and John C. Bowers.

In August 1850, William Still while working as a clerk for the Society, was assisting a fugitive slave calling himself "Peter Freedman". As the escapee's story was similar to many he had heard before, it took a while for Still to realize that Freedman was his long-lost brother. It was this incident that galvanized Still's resolve and compelled him to document his work with the Underground Railroad, later published in 1872 as The Underground Rail Road.



William Still of Philadelphia

The free-produce movement was an international boycott of goods produced by enslaved labor. It was used by the abolitionist movement as a non-violent way for individuals, including the disenfranchised, to fight slavery.



Photo: Andreas Praefcke

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Sellers Hall (St. Alice Church Property)

150 Hampden Rd, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Sellers Hall was owned by **George Sellers** and **Ann Ash** during the Antebellum period of the Underground Railroad.

Their daughter, **Abigail**, married **Edward Garrett**, youngest brother of Thomas Garrett Jr. and the couple lived at Cleveland Farm, now the property of Holy Child Academy.

The historians Cope and Ashmead¹ wrote: "Sellers Hall Farm, the home of Samuel Sellers and his father, was one of the stations on the Underground Railroad antedating the great Civil War. It is known that upon one occasion as many as thirty persons, men, women, and children, were secreted in the spacious barns of the farm."

¹*Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs, Cope and Ashmead, 1904.*



Sellers Farm, Charles Wilson Peale



Sellers Hall is fundraising to fully restore the site

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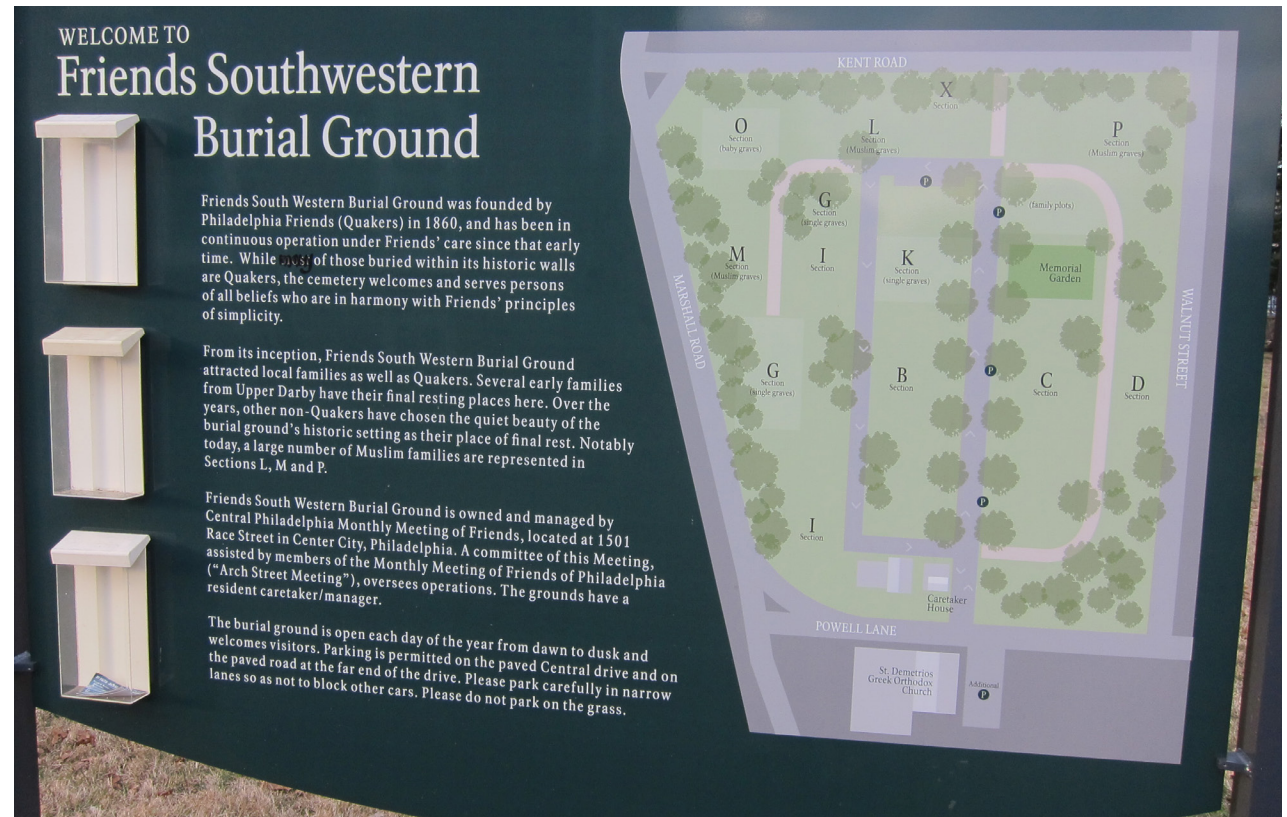
Friends Southwestern Burial Ground (1)

236 Powell Ln, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Many prominent abolitionists are buried in Friends Southwestern Burial Ground.

Mary Hewes Biddle C- 40 (1842–1874) lived in Wilmington, Delaware with her grandfather, Thomas and step-grandmother Rachel Mendinghall Garrett after the death of her mother Sarah Garrett Hewes (Sarah was most likely the first woman daguerreotypist who partnered with Samuel Broadbent). Mary and her two brothers were living with her grandparents during the time many people stopped for food, shelter, transportation, and money on their way North to freedom, including Harriet Tubman. Below is a letter to Mary from her grandfather Thomas Garrett, Jr.

Wilmington Feb 1st 1858
My dear Grand Daughter
Mary Hewes, I received late
by mail with a letter from Edward a copy
of the last letter thy dear mother ever wrote. It
is so excellent and manifests such a confidence
trust, and confidence in the mercy of him
who had been her support in all her trials
which were many, that I thought thou also
would be glad to have a copy. I therefore
have copied it and enclosed it to thee. Thy
little Brothers are good boys, diligent in their
attendance of school, and attentive to their
lessons, the teacher gives them a good name
and they conduct themselves well at home
they are obedient to their grandmother, and
anxious to obey her commands. Edward was
quite poorly on 7th day, with something like
the pleurisy, but was much better last even-
ing. The rest of us about as well as usual
we have Aunt Fanny, and her family, with
us this week, while she is down below are
trying to look up friends, leave to thy uncle and
aunt, with their sweet little babies, with much
love I remain as ever thy attached Grandfather
Th. Garrett



Abigail Sellers Garrett D-297 (1809–1890) grew up at Sellers Hall. Abigail was daughter of George Sellers and Ann Evans Ash, and wife of Edward Garrett, youngest brother of famed abolitionist Thomas Garrett, Jr. Edward and Abigail's home, Cleveland Farm, located on the property now Holy Child Academy, was a stop on the Underground Railroad.



Edward and Abigail Garrett

Edward Garrett D-297 (1800–1863) was the youngest brother of Thomas Garrett, Jr. After the death of his parents, Edward and his wife Abigail inherited the original Garrett home, Riverview, and about 140 acres of land. He called his property Cleveland Farm.

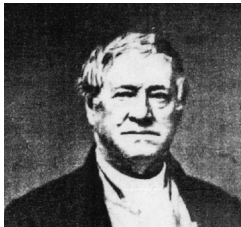
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Friends Southwestern Burial Ground (2)

236 Powell Ln, Upper Darby, PA 19082

Isaac P Garrett D-296 (1796-1869), brother of Thomas Garrett, Jr. and husband of **Phebe Rhoads Garrett D-296 (1793-1871)** lived at Fernland Farm, now Arlington Cemetery. His property was recognized as an important site on the Underground Railroad by the National Park Service.



Isaac Garrett

Samuel Rhoads, Jr. C-149 (1806-1869) was son of Samuel and Sarah (Garrett) Rhoads and cousin of Thomas Garrett, Jr. His property, now part of Cobbs Creek Golf Course, was a station on the Underground Railroad, as documented in letters written by Thomas Garrett, Jr. One of the Thomas Garrett Jr letters in 1846 to Elijah Penneypacker states "requesting me to have the woman and children forwarded to Samuel Rhoads ". When the letter was transcribed it stated he lived in "Waddingtonville" but should have read "Haddingtonville".

In the book *The Underground Railroad* by William Still, Still states "Once enlisted, he never wavered, but as long as slavery existed by law in our country his influence, both publicly and privately, was exerted against it. He was strengthened in his course by a warm friendship and frequent intercourse with the late Abraham L. Pennock, a man whose unbending integrity and firm allegiance to duty were equaled only by his active benev-

olence, broad charity, and rare clearness of judgment. Samuel Rhoads, like him, while sympathizing with other phases of the Anti-slavery movement, took especial interest in the subject of abstaining from the use of articles produced by slave labor. Believing that the purchase of such articles, by furnishing to the master the only possibility of pecuniary profit from the labor of his slaves, supplied one motive for holding them in bondage, and that the purchaser thus became, however unwittingly, a partaker in the guilt, he felt conscientiously bound to withhold his individual support as far as practicable, and to recommend the same course to others."

"In 1846, "The Non-slave-holder," a monthly periodical, devoted mainly to the advocacy of the Free Produce cause, was established in Philadelphia, edited by A. L. Pennock, S. Rhoads, and George W. Taylor. It was continued five years, for the last two of which Samuel Rhoads conducted it alone. He wrote also a pamphlet on the free labor question. From July, 1856 to January, 1867 he was Editor of the "Friends' Review," a weekly paper, religious and literary, conducted in the interest of his own religious society, and in this position he gave frequent proofs of interest in the slave, keeping his readers well advised of events

and movements bearing upon the subject...very considerable sums of money were transmitted to him, especially through A. H. Richardson, for the benefit of the fugitives. Often when



SAMUEL RHOADS,
STOCKHOLDER

the treasury of the Committee ran low, he came opportunely to their relief with funds sent by his English friends, while his sympathy and encouragement never failed. The extent of his assistance in this direction was known to but few, but by them its value was gratefully acknowledged. None rejoiced more than he in the overthrow of American slavery, though its end came in convulsion and bloodshed, at which his spirit revolted, not by the peaceful means through which he with others had labored to bring it about."

Anne Gibbons Rhoads C- 149 (1809-1890) was wife of Samuel Rhoads Jr. They were married March 15, 1837.

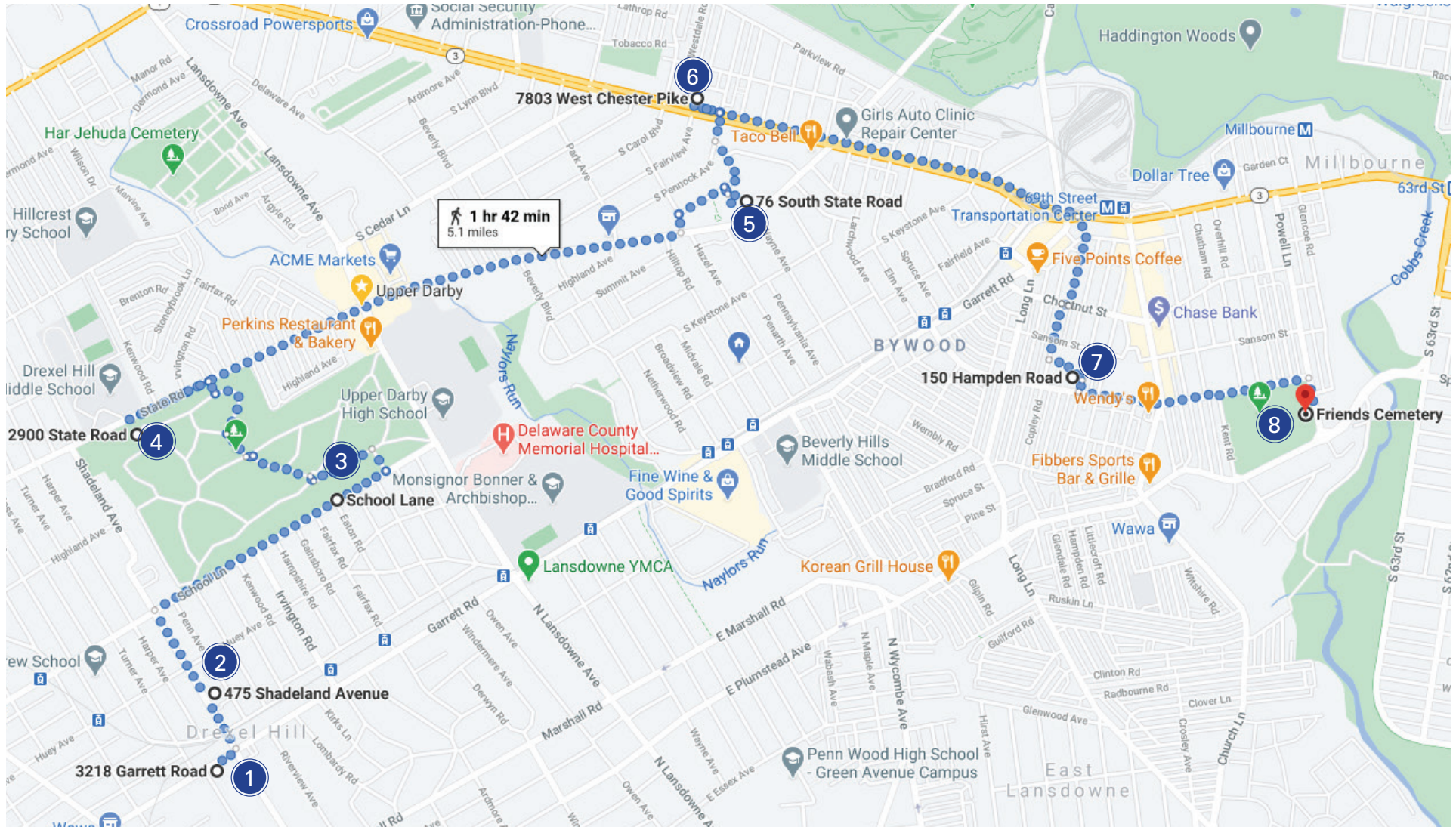
Wilmington, 7mo 5th, 1846
Respected Friend, Elijah F. Penneypacker,

Thine of the 2nd, as well as a former letter, came duly to hand, and I at once answered the first letter, which it would appear thee has not receiv'd. I wrote thee, I think, that a few days after the husband left here, a woman with two children came to town and inform'd me that she was the woman that was left by her husband at John Hunn's, to be forwarded to him as soon as he should get a situation. I then told her I heard nothing of him since he left. Some two or three days after, I received a letter from my brother, Edward, requesting me to have the woman and the children forwarded to Samuel Rhoads, near Waddingtonville. She and the children arrived safe there (the) next evening, one of my sons being there when they arrived. That was some 2 or 3 weeks since. There appears to be some mystery in this business, as I recollect no other man having a wife and children at John Hunn's. If there is any other person, I will make of John Hunn, inquiry—or thee has perhaps better write thyself to him. Direct thy letter to John Hunn, near Middletown, Delaware.

Thine respectfully,
Thos. Garrett

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Walking tour overview map



1- Riverview House/Cleveland Farm

2-Thornfield

3-Riverview Farm/Fernland Farm NPS (Arlington Cemetery)

4- Museum at Arlington (Garrett Collection)

5-Hoodland (Sellers Library)

6-Howard House (Pica's)

7-Sellers Hall (St. Alice Church Property)

8-Friends Southwestern Burial Ground

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In Upper Darby since 1688:

BLACK LIVES MATTER

Upper Darby Township Historical Commission, 2021

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