

HERMITS GLEN GAZETTE

Official Newsletter of The Kelpius Society

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A Message From the President

Dear Kelpius Society Members,

I'm writing at the close of 2010, with great expectations for the Kelpius Society in 2011. We've had an interesting and productive year. As our membership has grown, attendance at our monthly meetings has slowly but steadily increased. And those attending our meetings are becoming actively involved in our work. I believe that it's difficult not to become involved, because our meetings are alive with discussion and ideas, and with proposals and plans to move our various project initiatives forward.

In 2010 we continued working with Temple University on the archaeological dig at the Lauriston Cottage site. We presented two highly successful programs in 2010 in collaboration with the Roxborough-Manayunk-Wissahickon Historical Society and the Philadelphia Archaeological Forum, and released two new volumes in our publications series. Meanwhile, plans are already underway for a new publication in 2011. Please check our website at www.kelpius.org for more information.

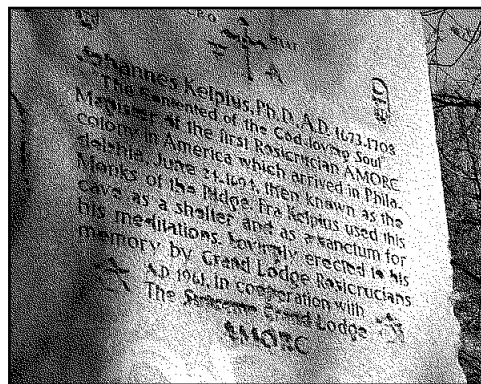


In November we initiated a comprehensive strategic planning process, which involved a review of our mission statement and by-laws, followed by an analysis of our strengths and capabilities, as well as our needs. We took stock of the many accomplishments achieved by TKS members so far beginning with the placement of the historical marker near the Kelpius site in Fairmount Park, and touching on our vigorous and highly successful research and publications program, as well as the splendid array of public programs offered by the Kelpius Society since 2003.

The strategic planning process will culminate in a written document that will be our road map for the next five years or so. It will set forward our objectives, list and describe our resources as well as our needs, assign responsibilities to meet objectives, and establish a time line. We'll review progress on a regular basis once the plan has been adopted, and make changes as necessary. The aim of the planning process will be to establish clear goals and identify the resources needed to meet those goals in a timely manner.

As our planning discussion developed, it became clear that our first priority is

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Bibliography Finds:

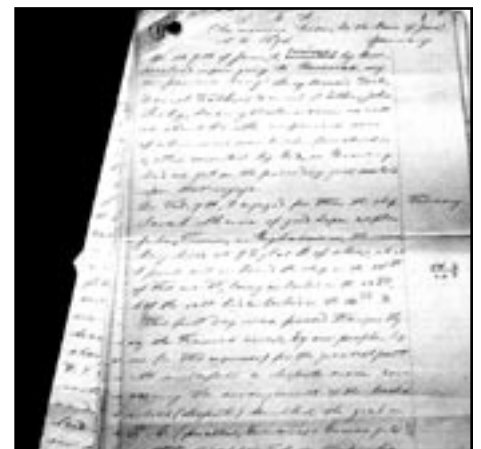
Who was Esther Palmer?

Catherine H. Michael
(cmich103@gmail.com)

[AUTHOR'S NOTE: As I compile a bibliography for the Kelpius Society, I thought I'd use this column to share with you some items of interest I have found.]

Julius Sachse, in *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania* (1895) pages 179-191, includes an important letter between Johannes Kelpius and Esther Palmer that describes Kelpius's philosophy of the *Threefold Wilderness State*. Sachse also mentions Esther Palmer's parents, Joseph and Sarah and verifies that they lived in Flushing, Long Island, New York where there is still a Quaker Meeting House. He also calls her a "public Friend": presumably, this refers to a Quaker who travels to preach. Beyond that, little is written.

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Julius Sachse's handwritten notes

(A Message From the President continued)

the Kelpius site, located in the Wissahickon Valley within Fairmount Park. In particular, we want to create and maintain a strong focus on the Hermitage, the 19th century mansion that stands at the gateway to the site. Some have suggested that the Hermitage may in fact have been built at or very near the site of the Kelpius tabernacle. In any case, the mansion is strategically located for our purposes, and is historically and culturally significant in its own right.



Our first task will be to establish a botanical herb garden at the Hermitage, which will be a reference point for the original botanical garden planted by Kelpius community members more than 300 years ago. Their herb garden was possibly the first of its kind in North America. We'll also create educational materials to help visitors understand the significance of the garden, and the multiple meanings of the overall site. Working south from the Hermitage, we'll establish a central corridor through the heart of the site, downhill toward what is now popularly known as the 'Hermit's Cave', where the Rosicrucian marker is located. Once the central corridor is established, we can develop surrounding portions of the site to create a significant destination for visitors to the park. This enclosure will be a place where visitors and tourists can learn about the hidden history of Philadelphia, pause awhile for rest and reflection, and knowledgeably explore the site and other nearby features of the park.

In December, we submitted a letter of interest to the Schuylkill Heritage Towns and Tours Grant Program. If we are invited to submit a full proposal, those grant monies will be used to develop our very ambitious program for the site, which would include informational literature and maps, an enhanced tour program, and site restoration and development.

We expect to post information about our strategic planning and site development processes on our website and in the newsletter throughout the year. Please check the website or contact us directly for updates (contact information is provided on the website). And please mention the Kelpius Society to your friends and colleagues. We are ever eager to welcome new members to our ranks, who will join us to continue the process of exploration and growth we have so hopefully initiated.

Be well, and have a happy and healthy New Year! I look forward to seeing you, or hearing from you, in 2011.

Thomas Carroll, *President*, The Kelpius Society ☸

A Member of the Kelp Family Visits the Site _____

Jonathan D. Scott

Early in 2009, Dr. Kirby Richards, former Chairman of the Research and Publications Committee of The Kelpius Society, was contacted by a young man from Germany named Richard Ackner. Ackner is a descendant of Georg Kelp, a brother of Johannes Kelpius.

Ackner had heard of my novel, *The Woman in the Wilderness*, based on the life of Kelpius. Ackner was able to provide Richards with valuable information on the early life of Kelpius, some of which refutes material Julius Sachse used in *The German Pietists of Provincial Pennsylvania: 1694-1708*, which has been considered the standard source on the subject for over one hundred years.

One of the more interesting items Ackner provided to Richards is a tribute poem Kelpius wrote to the mayor of his hometown, a man who later helped sponsor Kelpius' higher education. Richards is in the process of finding a suitable venue in which to publish his findings.

The following is a copy of an e-mail I received from Ackner, dated February 2009: (He did very well with his limited knowledge of English.)

Hi, Jonathan Scott,

Thank you for your message. I've got now in two languages. Many thanks to our friend Kirby.

But I think and I hope we can correspond one another without an interpreter - but naturally with dictionary.

Johannes Kelpius is a very interesting theme. For me it is a

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(Kelpius Descendant continued)

part of my genealogic research. George, an elder brother of Johannes, was my ancestor 10 generations ago. In 1993 I had the opportunity to visit the Kelpius-place above Schuylkill River. My stay there was during a bicycle tour from Philadelphia to Strasburg/PA and Strasburg/Virginia. Our group came from Strasburg/Germany. Stop in Philadelphia was too short. Time for Kelpius only 5 hours!

Now it is very pleasant for me to correspond with a writer of a Kelpius-novel. With Kelp-family in the 17/18 century I'm working on some years.

I'm very glad to correspond with you.

Many greetings from Neubrandenburg (120 km northern of Berlin)

Richard Ackner

Dr. Kirby Richards will be giving a lecture in the Spring of 2011 to the Goethe Society on German mysticism and philosophy. Part of his talk will concern the writings of Johannes Kelpius.

On behalf of The Kelpius Society, I wish to thank Dr. Richards for his continuing research. ☸

(Who Was Esther Palmer? continued)

The letter from Kelpius to Esther dated the 25th of May, 1706, is written in the affectionate yet scholarly style that is typical of his letters. It refers to a mutual friend, M—B— whom Jonathan D. Scott, in the “Historical Notes” to his biographical fiction, *The Woman in the Wilderness*, conjectured to be Maria Biedermann. He fictionalized the meeting between Kelpius and Miss Palmer in Chapter Nineteen of his book.

What seems apparent is that Miss Palmer composed a letter to her friend M—B— and mentioned her meeting with Kelpius in the post script. The warmth of the introduction indicates a special attachment:

Being presented lately with a letter of yours, directed to our beloved Friend M-B-, I found in the P.S. that the remembrance of mine was not yet slipt out of your Minde, inso much that you desired to see a few lines from by hand, which Desire is an evident sign to me that the said remembrance is in Love & in the Truth.

Assure yourself that it is with no less Fervency on my Side, but I finde as yet a double wall between us, which indeed seems to stop the current of this firey love-dream of which no more at present, lest we should embolden ourselves to break through before the time appointed by Him, who nourisheth the Woman in the Wilderness (Rev. 12, 14)

The romantic tone can be misleading. Upon a first reading I found myself wondering what the “double wall” and “firey love-dream” might signify. However, Kelpius was committed to attaining the third state of Wilderness which he deemed the “Wilderness of the Elect of God”. This perhaps became a self-created wall between himself and earthly love (as opposed to Sophia, Divine Wisdom); and perhaps the second wall was the one between man and God. In a letter to Reverend Magister Eric Biörck, Kelpius writes:

Although I proffer this common love in the brotherly love, yet the brother love, the Philadelphiac, remains with me on a firm foundation; whence I was wronged, if I have been called a Quaker on account of the former (common love), or even furthermore, a Papist, as has been done by the Quakers in this country, as I was unwilling to enter the married state, however advantageous the connection.... (Sachse, p. 227, letter undated)

This appears to refer to a marriage opportunity with an established Quaker family. Yet, as described in a dissertation by Willard Martin, Kelpius and Seelig sought to emulate Jesus and follow the advice of St. Paul (1 Corinthians 7.1-9) by remaining free (Martin, p. 75). Kelpius adhered strictly to this advice; therefore, though seemingly romantic, it likely emulates the passion for wisdom in the tradition of the *Song of Songs*, a book of the Bible often cited by Behmenists.

Although many in the Society are familiar with Sachse's core text, I had not found any contemporary scholarship citing resources about Esther Palmer herself. In fact, though I wondered what became of her, little did I know she wrote

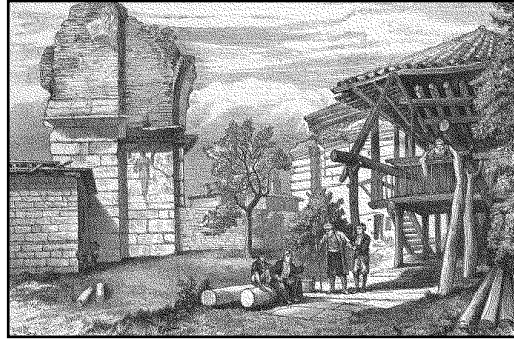
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Esoteric Philadelphia: The old, old story

Alvin Holmes

In the late 17th century a city named Philadelphia gained enormous influence in old Europe and in young America. This was the ancient city in what is now Turkey, written of by Saint John of Patmos in the fourth century as one of the seven churches in Asia in the *Book of Revelation*. Inspired by *Revelation*, many Christian separatist groups emigrated in those years to America where they believed the “new Heaven and Earth” were to be recreated in the wake of the immanent apocalypse. Among these millennialist communities were Puritans, Quakers, Mennonites, and the small group of German Pietists led by Johannes Kelpius. Quakers before them had settled in the land granted to William Penn who named the port city Philadelphia in honor of that notable city in Turkey. But even before there were Philadelphia citizens in the new world, there were Philadelphians in London, members of a large esoteric society led by Jane Leades and devoted to the theosophical doctrines of Jacob Boehme. When the Kelpius group assembled in London from various parts of Europe, they were hosted for a time by Jane Leades and her Philadelphians before setting out across the sea to the new American city of Philadelphia.



Today’s residents of Philadelphia all can repeat the guide book story that William Penn called the town “Philadelphia” because it meant “city of Brotherly love” in Greek. And that’s not bad for a loose derivation, but the esoteric story goes much deeper. In fact, Penn’s “Green Towne” and Leades’ theosophists both honor the ancient city in *Revelation*, and that story is doubly meaningful; first, in a literal Christian sense, and then in an esoteric mythological sense. And there is yet another sense in which I use the term “doubly”, as we shall see.

In the *Book of Revelation* we are told that the Lord spoke to John and directed him to write letters to “seven churches of Asia” which were in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. To each he gave a different message, mostly all critical of their behavior in terms of “keeping the faith”. Of the seven, only Philadelphia was singled out for praise, having held out against temptations and having remained true to the teachings. The Lord said, “Thou hast kept my word, and has not denied my name... [and to others he said] I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.” So alone among the churches of Asia, Philadelphia received an extravagant blessing according to the *Book of Revelation*. Hence in the millennialist temper of the times, Philadelphia became a lofty model for the likes of Leades’ and Penn and their respective followings.

And then there is a deeper esoteric aspect of the name itself, less literal, more mythological, and perhaps more meaningful as well. The story goes that two sets of
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(Who Was Esther Palmer? continued)

a diary that is available in a commercial database, North American Women’s Letters and Diaries: Colonial to 1950 (<http://solomon.nwld.alexanderstreet.com/>) (N.A.W.L.D.) as well as free online in Google Books. I discovered the entry for “Palmer, Esther” by browsing by years in the N.A.W.L.D. Each entry—and there are over 30—appears on a separate webpage. The source given for the diary is the *Diary of Esther Palmer, July, 1705* by Mary Lawson, Philadelphia, PA: American Friend Office, 1909. Oddly, I did not find this title in WorldCat (a catalog that indicates library holdings).

I then searched Google Books to see if I could find a free copy as it is out of copyright: http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search. To find the diary itself in Google Books, try searching “Esther Champion” in quotes. From the Advance search form, limit to the full view. You should find *The Friend*, v. 28 as the first result; this is the publication that includes a biographical sketch. Her faith and service are praised; her enthusiasm for Christ appears to match that of Kelpius. The remembrance ends with “to be continued”; I was unable to find the continued part of this article at this juncture. Further down the list of results you should find *The Journal of the Friends’ Historical Society*, Volumes 5-6; this includes a serialized version of the diary. I also bookmarked it in my bibliography here: <http://www.zotero.org/kelpius/items/116804588>. Since the pages of the actual text do not correspond directly to the pdf page, I’ve included the pdf pages in the citations below. Note that you must download the pdf if you would like to print pages.

One key difficulty in searching on Esther Palmer is the variety of ways her name appears: Esther Palmer (most frequently used in N.A.W.L.D.), Ester Palmer (*Journal of the Friends Historical Society*), Hesther Pallmer (Kelpius’s letter and Sachse’s index), Esther Champion (*The Friend*, v. 28), and Esther Campion
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(Who Was Esther Palmer? continued)

(*The Friend*, v. 19, p. 205). It is noted in *The Friend* (v. 19, p. 205) that Esther Palmer went to England in 1710, married Richard Champion of Bristol and died there in 1714. When searching her name, try the variant spellings mentioned above.

Reading the diary may be disappointing on two grounds. First, as printed, there is no mention of a meeting with Kelpius. Second, as was typical for such diaries, they are not descriptive personal reflections (as Kelpius's letters are), but mere accounts of places visited and people met. Here is an excerpt from October, 1704 (from N.A.W.L.D.):

...at Meeting at German Town 3 miles from Fair Hill, 5th day at Meeting at Philada 6 Miles from German Town, 7th day at Philadia at ye Meeting of Ministers, 1st day we parted S. Freeborn Stay'd at Philadelphia and E. Palmer went to Marion 6 Miles from Philadelphia where we mett again at ye Evening Meeting, 2d day we were at a Quarterly Meeting a Philadia, on ye 3d day we went wth Jos: Glaister to Harford General Meeting 10 Miles from Philadelphia, & on the 4th day went to Burlington 20 Miles from Philad and on ye 5th day were at Meeting there...

Regarding the omission of Kelpius, it may be worthwhile for a future scholar to examine the original diary to see if any significant material may have been edited out of the published version. Although I have not located the original unedited document you might begin the search by contacting a librarian at the colleges of Haverford, Bryn Mawr or Swarthmore: <http://tripod.brynmawr.edu/search~/>

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Esoteric Philadelphia continued

twins were born of Leda, one pair from union with Zeus and the other from her mortal husband, Tyndareus. Zeus came to Leda as a swan and the timing was such that two eggs were hatched, each bearing boy and girl twins. The offspring of Zeus were immortal of course and those were named Helen and Pollux. From the other egg came the mortal twins, Clytemnestra and Castor. Helen's fate is very well known, while Clytemnestra is far less famous. But the boys both were celebrated throughout Greece as mighty warriors, heroic brothers who were inseparable in battle, indominatable, fighting and thinking as one, and acclaimed for their love of one another. They were called the "Dioscuri" or "sons of Zeus."



One day, Castor was severely wounded and seemed to be near death. His immortal brother, Pollux, hurried to Olympus to plead with his father Zeus to spare his beloved Castor from death and let his own immortality be transferred so that he could die in his brother's stead. Zeus and the other Olympians were so touched by this act of fraternal devotion that unanimously they declared the boy be spared and that both brothers shall have immortality. They were then placed in the heavens as an eternal memorial to their love. The Dioscuri are now known better as the Gemini, and their constellation occupies an important role in the Zodiac today.

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(Esoteric Philadelphia continued)

As loving twins, acting as one throughout their noble lives, and now circling the sky forever as a single constellation, they symbolize the mortal and the divine in each of us. Philadelphia ultimately refers to “the loving brothers”, “the Dioscuri,” after which a number of ancient cities were named, as well as some in more modern times. Before the Quakers and William Penn, and before the German Pietists, there was the *Book of Revelation*. And way before that were the Dioscuri, and on and on and on. It’s an old idea, but it’s a good one to be reminded of.

For all “this too, too mortal flesh” the Gemini remind us, as Philadelphians all, of our very own immortal souls. ☩