

Biographical/Historical note

The Dillwyn and Emlen family was joined in 1795 when Susanna Dillwyn married Samuel Emlen, Jr. Both the Dillwyn and Emlen families were prominent in early America as Quakers and advocates for abolition.

William Dillwyn was born in Philadelphia on July 21, 1743, the son of John Dillwyn and Susanna Painter. According to Clarkson, William Dillwyn was “a pupil of the venerable [Anthony] Benezet, who took pains very early to interest his feeling on [abolition],” (Clarkson). A Quaker merchant, Dillwyn married Sarah Logan Smith (1749-1769) on May 19, 1768 in Burlington County, New Jersey. On March 31, 1769, their daughter, Susanna, was born, and roughly a month later, Sarah died.

In 1772, William Dillwyn traveled (by Benezet’s arrangement) to Carolina to further study slavery, which was “of great use ... in fixing him as the friend of these oppressed people, for he saw so much of their cruel treatment in the course of it, that he felt an anxiety ever afterwards, amounting to a duty to do everything in his power for their relief,” (Clarkson). By 1773, he, along with Richard Smith and Daniel Wells, wrote *Brief considerations on slavery, and the expediency of its abolition: with some hints on the means whereby it may be gradually effected*.

In 1774, he traveled to England in order to campaign against slavery. In 1777, he married Sarah Weston, making his stay in England permanent, and they lived at Higham Lodge, Walthamstow, Essex. Throughout his time in England, he helped to establish an anti-slavery committee in London in 1787 and toured parts of England and South Wales. In 1783, *The case of our fellow-creatures, the oppressed Africans, respectfully recommended to the serious consideration of the legislature of Great-Britain, by the people called Quakers*, was published, with William Dillwyn as author along with John Lloyd and Anthony Benezet. In 1803, he wrote, with Mary and Joshua Cresson, *Meditations written during the prevalence of the yellow fever in the city of Philadelphia, in the year 1793: which proved fatal to upwards of 4000 of its inhabitants*. During one of his tours of South Wales in 1807, he purchased the lease of the Cambrian Pottery, Swansea, Glamorganshire from George Haynes, who continued to manage the pottery works. William Dillwyn and Sarah Weston Dillwyn were the parents of eight children. He died, aged 81, on September 28, 1824 and was buried in the Friends’ Burial Ground in Tottenham, Middlesex.

William’s daughter from his marriage to Sarah Logan Smith, Susanna, was born on March 31, 1769 in Houghton, New Jersey, about a month before her mother died. She was raised in Burlington, New Jersey at Oxmead by her aunt Susanna Dillwyn Cox with the additional family support of her uncle and aunt, George and Sarah Hill Dillwyn who were travelling Quaker ministers. On April 16, 1795, Susanna, frequently called Susan or Sukey, married Samuel Emlen, Jr. (1766-1837) and they lived in Philadelphia. They moved to Burlington, to a newly built home, West Hill, during the 1797 yellow fever epidemic. Like William Dillwyn and his own father, Samuel Emlen, Susanna’s husband was “an influential Friend himself [and] concerned himself particularly with the issues of slavery and Indian affairs within the Society of Friends,” (Leavitt, page 70). As a result of their Quaker community, business connections, and extensive family relations, the Emlen household resulted in “a close-knit circle of family