

# In the Spotlight

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## LIVING HISTORY



by Gene  
Pisasale

### A railroad with no schedules: Barnard Station

*“According to one legend, two slave catchers tracking a fugitive through Kentucky lost all trace of the runaway when they crossed the Ohio River. In their bewilderment, they allegedly exclaimed, ‘There must be an underground railroad somewhere!’”*

*-William Kashatus, “Just Over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad”*

By Gene Pisasale  
Contributing Writer

From the 1820s through the 1860s, the southeastern Pennsylvania region was a hotbed of abolitionist activity.

Due to its location just over the Mason-Dixon Line from both Delaware and Maryland, this area became a haven for freedom-seeking slaves traveling from the southern states to safety in the north. Because they had a large population of Quakers, most of whom abhorred slavery, Kennett, Pocopson and other nearby townships had dozens of residents who opened their arms – and their homes – to those hoping for a better life.

Eusebius and Sarah Barnard were two of those people, supporting escaped slaves on their journey, making their house a “Station Stop” on the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad never published a train schedule; no flyers were printed for public distribution. They were clandestine pathways taken in the middle of the night. The couple’s story is now unfolding, with a museum planned in Pocopson Township to be named Barnard Station that will highlight their efforts.

According to the Barnard Station website, Eusebius Barnard was born on July 13, 1802 near Marlborough Village and attended the Westtown School. Noted Chester County historian Gilbert Cope said of him: “He was widely and favorably known as a strong abolitionist...” Eusebius married Sarah Painter in 1829 and through her parents, the couple was given some of her fam-

ily’s acreage in Pocopson Township with a house which became their home. In his landmark “History of the Underground Railroad in Chester and the Neighboring Counties of Pennsylvania” (1883), R.C. Smedley stated: “When the number of slaves that were forwarded by... Thomas Garrett to Philadelphia and other places became so great... Eusebius and Sarah P. Barnard, of Pocopson (sic), were among the first to make their residence an established station...”

Many of those seeking refuge in the Barnard home came through Wilmington, Del. The Barnards gave them food, clothing and shelter before moving them toward the next safe house in the region. Often done under cover of darkness, their young son Enos one time led a group of 17 men safely to his uncle William’s home nearby.

The Barnard house is estimated to have been built sometime between 1803 and 1823. Part of a 124-acre property, it was a two-and-one-half story stone structure with a gable roof and Federal period detailing. Eusebius and his family were among those local citizens who had petitioned the Court of Quarter Sessions in 1848 for the founding of Pocopson Township. He was also one of the original members of the Pennsylvania Yearly Meeting of Progressive Friends, which split off from the Kennett Meeting and later built their own meetinghouse in 1855.

Many of the Barnards were active “station masters” and “conductors” on the Underground Railroad in Chester County. Eusebius’ brother William was one of a group from the Progressive Friends

who met at the White House in June 1862 with President Lincoln, urging him to abolish slavery. The Friends strongly believed the move would assist him in the conflict engulfing the nation. Their urgent pleas appear to have had a positive impact. Just a few weeks later, Lincoln mentioned an idea to his Cabinet which would help him free thousands of slaves and eventually win the war – the Emancipation Proclamation.

Eusebius and Sarah Barnard on occasion met with some of the most prominent players in the abolitionist movement. Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Beecher Stowe and others spoke at the Longwood Progressive Friends Meetinghouse on a variety of issues, from abolition of slavery to prison reform, women’s rights and other topics.

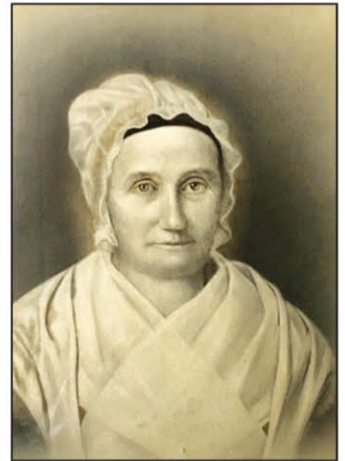
Harriet Tubman even stopped in the area. Noted abolitionist Thomas Garrett knew the Barnards and was also actively engaged in the freedom movement.

In 2018, a group of concerned residents came forward, dedicated to preserving the Barnard house for use as a museum and Heritage Center.

The Friends of Barnard Station was formally recognized in November 2020 as a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt organization. The group members donated their time, money and efforts over several years with the intent to refurbish the Barnard home in hopes of opening it to the public as a showcase for the incredibly rich story of the abolitionist movement which was a critical part of southern Chester County history.



Eusebius Barnard from “Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs of Chester and Delaware Counties” by Cope and Ashmead.



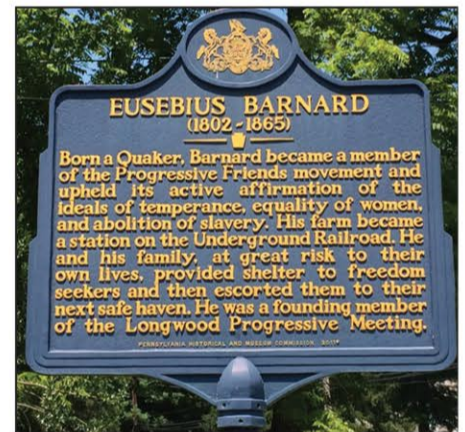
Sarah Painter from “Historic Homes and Institutions and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs of Chester and Delaware Counties” by Cope and Ashmead.

Two of their Board members—Richard Chalfant and Alta Hoffman—are direct descendants of Eusebius and Sarah Barnard. The home is now called Barnard Station and upon final completion of restorations, will allow visitors to tour the site along with nearby hiking trails featuring historical markers so as to learn about the heritage of the region.

Barnard Station is at 715 South Wawaset Road across from the Pocopson Home. There is public parking in the rear of the building. The Friends welcome inquiries about the plans for the structure, as well as donations to help fund ongoing work there. For more information, please visit their website at [www.BarnardStation.org](http://www.BarnardStation.org). If you have questions, you can e-mail the team at [barnardstation@gmail.com](mailto:barnardstation@gmail.com).

Gene Pisasale is an historian, author and lecturer based in Kennett Square. His 10 books focus on the history of the Chester County/mid-Atlantic region. His latest work is “Forgotten Founding Fathers: Pennsylvania

and Delaware in the American Revolution.” His books can be found on his website at [www.GenePisasale.com](http://www.GenePisasale.com) and on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com). Gene can be reached via e-mail at [Gene@GenePisasale.com](mailto:Gene@GenePisasale.com).



The Eusebius Barnard historical marker.



The Barnard house, circa 1890, with members of the Barnard family, courtesy of Barnard Station.



The Longwood Progressive Friends Meetinghouse—circa 1865.



The Eusebius Barnard house as it appears today, courtesy of Barnard Station.