



# PARRISH - JAMES HOUSE "RED GABLES"



## *Two approaches to ending slavery*

Just two families owned this house for 90 years, each acting differently to end slavery. The Quaker Parrish family had long worked tirelessly toward peaceful abolition. The next owner, William Levis James, served in the Civil War for the Union Army, achieving the rank of Brevet Brigadier General.

## *William and Elizabeth Parrish*

William Dillwyn Parrish was born in Philadelphia on February 19, 1815 and was of the seventh generation of his family in America. He was one of 11 children of Dr. Joseph Parrish, an eminent physician, and Susanna Cox, who had grown up on a Burlington County farm. William married Elizabeth Wright Miller in 1836.



William and Elizabeth Parrish  
Coll. of Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College

Elizabeth was born March 8, 1817, to Daniel Leeds Miller Sr. and Hannah Nicholson of Salem, New Jersey. Her father was a financier and the founder and long-time president of the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company.

They had seven children, of whom five lived to adulthood.

William Parrish had great energy and many successes from early adulthood. He manufactured boilers and steam engines, ran an iron foundry, bought and sold real estate, and ran an engineering practice in the gas industry, where he held at least one patent.

For many years he operated a bookbinding and paper business on Fifth Street just above Market.

Coll. of Library Company of Philadelphia

Like his siblings and other founders of Riverton, William Parrish was active in the abolition effort as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society. He published at least one book on the subject. He was a friend of Lucretia Mott, who mentioned him in her letters.

William and Elizabeth invested in the founding of Riverton in 1851, building this house to a design by Samuel Sloan, which they used as a summer home. Five of the other nine founding households included siblings of either William or Elizabeth.

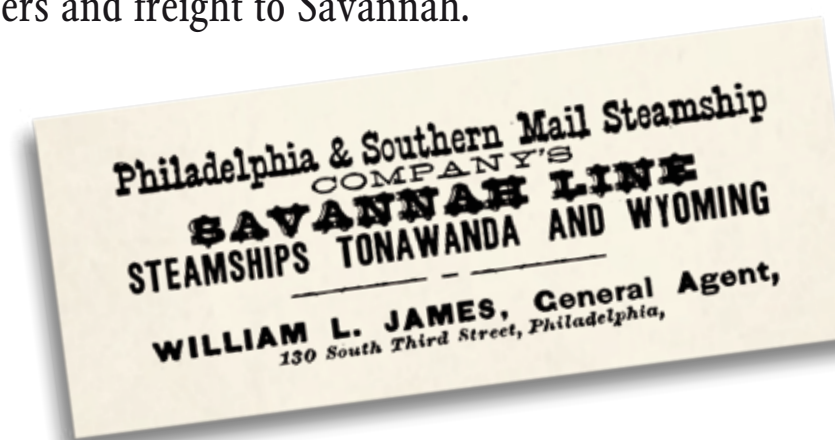
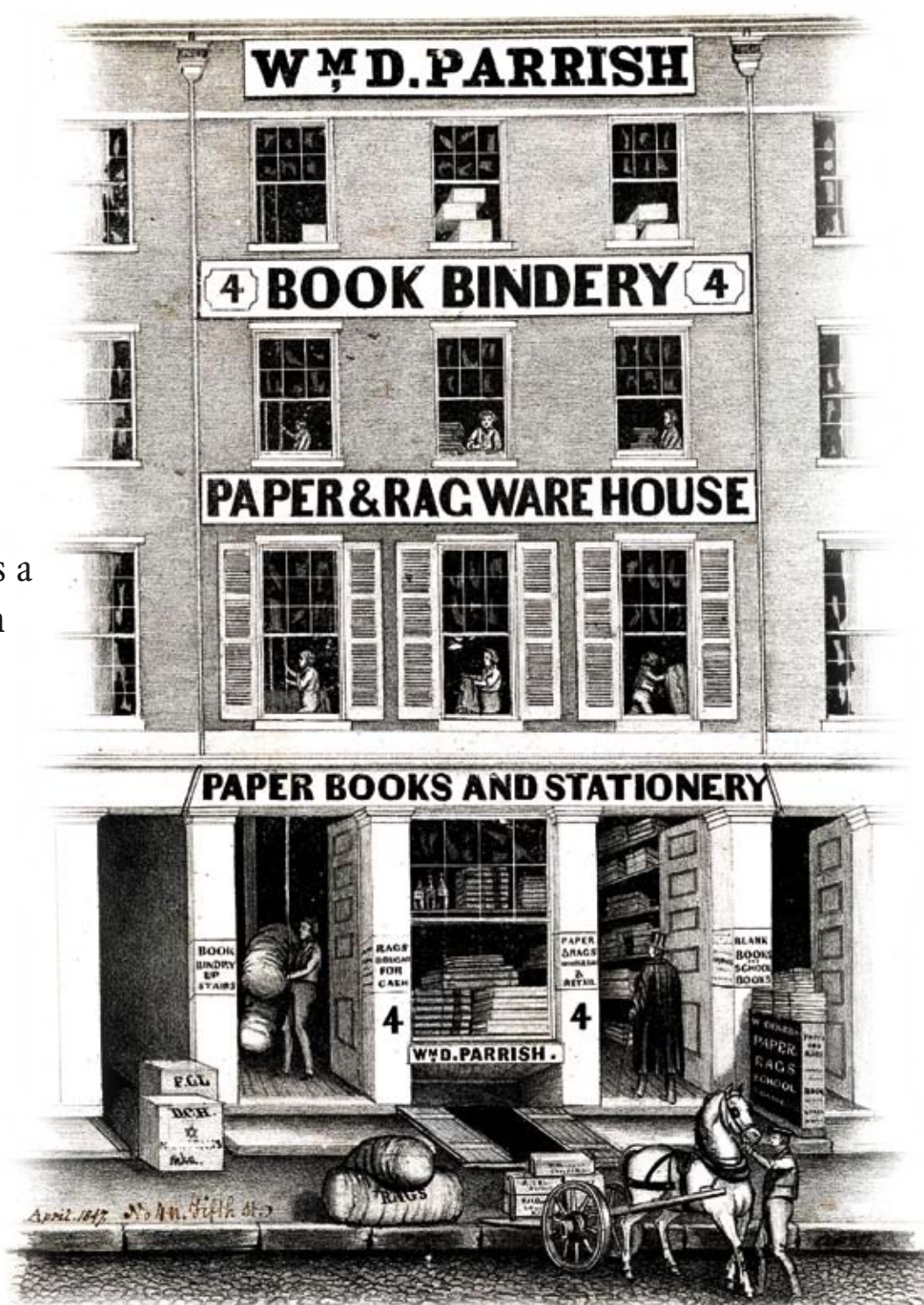
William Parrish died on Christmas Day, 1863, of typhus fever at the age of 48. Elizabeth sold this house in 1878 and died in 1891.

## *Anna James and General William L. James*

Anna Thompson James (1839-1922) bought this house in 1878 and the James family lived here for at least 62 years.

Anna had married retired Brevet Brigadier General William Levis James (1833-1903), and they raised their family in this house. Gen. James had risen in rank rapidly during the Civil War and served as the Union Army's Chief Quartermaster for operations in Virginia.

After the war, Gen. James made his career in Philadelphia managing the affairs of a steamship company carrying passengers and freight to Savannah.



Brevet Brig. General William L. James  
Courtesy of US Army Heritage and Education Center

General and Anna James also operated this house as a genteel summer guest house. They named it "Red Gables," and painted it a glowing barn red.

Poignantly, the old soldier died here on the Fourth of July, 1903, at age 69. Surviving him by 19 years, his wife Anna died here in 1922 at the age of 83.

Their two daughters, one recently widowed with a small child and one unmarried, continued to run Red Gables through the 1920s. They evidently struggled financially, encumbering the property with more and more debt. One daughter still lived here at least until 1940.

## *Three apartments*

At some time prior to World War II, the James family divided the house into three spacious apartments, as it remains today.

*This interpretive sign was made possible by the Historical Society of Riverton and current owners, Mike and Mary Kate Kearney, who have named the house "Sundance".  
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