

A London Quaker in Woodford: Silvanus Grove and the Origins of Elmhurst

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History is sometimes hidden in plain sight. The office complex and adjoining restaurant at 98–106 High Road, Woodford, UK, appear to be in a building with a retro Georgian appearance, to lend a patina of respectability to the businesses. The building is actually what remains of an 18th-century mansion, built by a wealthy London businessman for his large family. One of only three remaining 18th-century houses in Woodford as of 2012, the building, now called Elmhurst, is today situated alongside the North Circular Road. The original outbuildings



Figure 1. Elmhurst, March 2012

of the once-large estate, with gardens and farmland, no longer exist. In the mid-1900s, some of the grounds of the estate were used for the development of off-campus housing for Queen Mary's College, London, now apartments. A 2002 appraisal stated that the house had been allowed to fall into disrepair, and the gardens had become overgrown. The appraisal, part of a scheme to redevelop the historic section of Woodford, recommended that the garden and house be repaired as part of an adaptive reuse plan. The main house and its 19th-century addition have been subdivided into offices for a number of companies, and the south wing, added after 1800, is an Italian restaurant.¹ (figure 1)

Silvanus Grove and Woodford

Swedish botanist and traveler Pehr Kalm visited Woodford in April 1748 and described it as “a parish or large village with a church in it, which lies in Essex, eight miles N.E. of London.

The houses in this place are not built so close together as in several other parishes, but more scattered about. They are all of brick, several stories high, well built, and some of them handsome. The inhabitants are partly Farmers, but still more Gentlemen. The means of livelihood are various. The gentlemen live mostly on their money, which they get from their property ... The country round Woodford is charming ... a diversity of beautiful villages, magnificent mansions, fruitful fields, meadows, orchards, plantations ... which here delight the eye. This is also the reason why some of the inhabitants of London partly have their own houses here, and partly hire houses here, especially in the summer time.”²

As early as the 15th century, Woodford was a suburban retreat for wealthy London businessmen.³ Bankers, merchants, and traders bought or rented houses in Woodford in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The wealthiest City men built grand estates as an architectural representation of their accomplishments and a symbol of their prestige, showing that these men could afford the labor and materials to do so. A number of these City men lived in Woodford. Anthony Aubert, a director of the London Assurance Company; William Raikes, a director of the South Sea Company and a governor of St. Thomas Hospital; Job Mathew, a director of the Bank of England and a governor of St. Thomas Hospital; and John Langston, a director of the Sun Fire Office, all had homes in Woodford in 1790.⁴ (figure 5)

Silvanus Grove too kept a country house in Woodford. Grove’s Woodford house is a classic Georgian mansion built in the late 1700s. No records exist to show what year Grove moved to Woodford, though his residence is listed as London in 1766 and Woodford in 1783. There is reason to believe that he had the house built in 1771: an entry in the memoir of architect Joel Johnson (1720–1799), transcribed by his daughter, reads “Designed Mr. Grove’s House, Woodford.”⁵ Johnson is known for his civic and religious designs, including the Magdalen

Hospital and St. John the Baptist church in Wapping, London, but he did design residential buildings, as well. His April 1799 obituary states that “there was no enterprise for the benefit of the publick, or his friends, which he had not the resolution to undertake, judgment to plan, and perseverance to execute.”⁶

Silvanus Grove’s house has been perennially confused with other houses in the area, namely “Grove House” (later called Essex House), “Grove Hall,” and “Grove Lodge.” According to an 1833 *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Grove House “stood on the open common at Woodford in Essex” and was torn down in the “autumn of 1832.”⁷ It had been located “at the corner of Snake’s Lane” and was a multi-gabled rural mansion built in the late 1500s, “said to have been a hunting seat of the Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, a favorite of Queen Elizabeth.”⁸ Woodford’s



Figure 2. Main house, March 2012

Grove Hall was built in the 16th or 17th century as a private residence but was renovated with a Georgian facade in the 18th century. It had two stories and nine bays.⁹ Grove Lodge, also a private residence, was not built until the 1830s.

Grove’s House

Silvanus Grove described his estate in his will as a “freehold mansion house messuage buildings lands hereditaments and real estate at Woodford in the County of Essex with their appurtenances.”¹⁰ The property included stables and formal and kitchen gardens.¹¹ What remains

of Grove's estate today are the house and the front garden, though both have been altered since Grove's day. The front garden appears to hold the pediment for what was likely a sundial. There have been at least two additions to the house. The entrance door and the windows have been replaced. The interior has been altered significantly. The house was converted over time into a hostel, a university dormitory, and finally an office complex.¹²

The key Georgian features of symmetry and elegance are still evident. The exterior of Grove's house is designed in the classic Georgian style. (figure 2) The symmetrical brick building in the form of a rectangular box has three floors and has two prominent chimneys, one on each end. The front door is centered, with an elaborate arched doorway. Each of the three floors has five multi-paned windows across the length of the front facade. The windows on the ground floor and first floor are the same height, but the windows on the upper floor are only half as tall. The upper floor of the houses of the day was usually occupied by servants, and it is likely the smaller windows reduced the window tax of the property. The front entrance has rusticated quoins on a Gibbs surround. The first floor central window has an architrave surround and a cornice supported by molded brackets. Below the first floor windows there is a belt course and a sill band, and beneath each window is a balustrade. There is a parapet with a pediment, and below this is a cornice with mutules.



As is typical in Georgian architecture, Grove's front door opens onto a spacious entrance hall that is flanked by columns, at least a foot in diameter at their base. The high ceilings, about ten feet, and the wall

Figure 3. Entrance hall, March 2012

space above the doorways, about four feet, add to the cavernous feel. The left wall has four columns, about four feet apart, but the right wall has only three columns. The columns on the right and left walls are perfectly parallel with one another, except for the missing column on the right. However, the light that streams into the hall from the fanlight above the entrance door catches the third column in such a manner that the shadow creates the appearance of a fourth column parallel to the fourth column on the left. (figure 3) The Georgian style is also evident in the interior design. The Ionic columns are capped by an entablatures consisting of a cornice with an alternating floral rosettes and dentils that protrude from the waving ribbon along the edges, a cornice molding of egg and dart design, a frieze with a series of alternating anthemias, and an architrave with a sort of basket motif on top and a waving ribbon on the bottom. (figures 4a and 4b) The entrance hall appears to be the only original interior area of the house.



Figure 4a. Entrance hall, March 2012



Figure 4b. Entrance hall, March 2012

Silvanus Grove, Professional

The story of the Grove family and that of Silvanus Grove in particular fits nicely into the Quaker paradigm. Quaker doctrine barred Friends from politics, the military, the church, and the legal profession. The limitations on career choices and the Quaker tenets—moderation,



Figure 5. 1790 Woodford

prudence, sobriety, responsibility, dependability— led many of them to become successful businessmen.¹³ In fact, because their beliefs required Quakers to pay all debts, they were well known both inside and outside the Quaker community to be financially reliable. London Quakers generally began in the late 17th and early 18th centuries as small businessmen, such as drapers or brewers, or as small wholesalers of textiles or metals, primarily iron, copper, and gold. Some became active in the transatlantic trading world. Many of these Quakers

became large overseas traders, amassing fortunes. During the war years of the 1740s, and then again in the 1760s and 1770s, the Quakers moved away from overseas trading and went into the financial industries, such as banking and insurance, a number becoming quite successful, such as Silvanus Bevan, who was founder of companies that later became Allen and Hanbury's pharmaceutical company and Barclay's banking company.¹⁴ In two to three generations, these Quaker families became financially successful and moved away from the confining Quakerism, choosing to enter careers such as law, military, or politics, and even to marry outside the Quaker community, risking disownment or expulsion.

Silvanus Grove was among the wealthiest of the London Quaker merchants, described by contemporary Joshua Johnson as “the only merchant in the trade ... who always had cash enough to pay the duties.”¹⁵ Freamer-Barclay bank records from 1755 show Grove's annual balance to be £12,751 (over 2.5 million dollars in 2003).¹⁶ How had he achieved such success?

Silvanus Grove's father, also Silvanus (1677–1717), was a director of the New Pennsylvania Company, chartered in 1702 by a group of wealthy London merchants, which procured pork in North Carolina for sale in the Chesapeake and to supply ships returning to England.¹⁷ Silvanus Grove the elder was by trade a London merchant. He received shipments of sugar from his brothers, Joseph and John, both merchants and slave traders in Barbados.¹⁸ Joseph (1652–1714), an active participant in the transatlantic trade, purchased supplies in the North American colonies for Barbadian plantations and then shipped sugar to England. For example, Joseph Grove purchased a variety of supplies from Newport, Rhode Island, Quaker Walter Newbury, including beef, mutton, and pork (in the winter months), butter, onions, oil, flour, staves, shingles, hoops, horses, water casks, sheep, candles, lumber, tar, hogs lard, and cranberries.¹⁹ John (d. 1717) was one of the largest slave traders in Barbados. In fact, between 1701 and 1704, at least 1,362 slaves were consigned to John Grove, but as he was a Quaker, he “would give noe acct” of his sales.²⁰

In October 1708, in order to settle some of his debts, Quaker William Penn mortgaged the province of Pennsylvania along with land along the Delaware River to a consortium of Quaker grandees in England, including Silvanus Grove's father, for £6600, at a rate of 6% interest per annum. With little of the mortgage repaid in 1711, the mortgagees appointed a group of leading Philadelphia Quakers as powers-of-attorney to sell the lands for the best price possible.²¹ (The mortgagees were not paid in full until sometime about 1740, by which time Silvanus's son had become trustee.)²² Grove's father remained a friend of the Penn family until his death in 1717. In a letter to her husband Thomas, one of William Penn's sons, Hannah Penn wrote that she was “heartily afflicted at the loss of dear Silvanus Grove, in whom we have all lost a most capable and valuable friend.”²³ There appears to be no extant copy of the elder Silvanus Grove's will, but he would have left his children a great fortune upon his death.

The Silvanus Grove (1710–1799) whose house stands in Woodford was a metropolitan agent in the Chesapeake tobacco cargo system, a form of consignment trade in which the London merchant dealt with a local colonial rather than a factor sent over from Britain.²⁴ Like other import-export merchants, he was an important figure in the 18th-century Atlantic marketplace. He occupied the area between the retailer and the manufacturer, and he performed a variety of functions, including insurance, credit, transport, and marketing. Additionally, he was the planter’s metropolitan contact for news, business, and other information. Chesapeake planters shipped tobacco to Grove in exchange for goods and credit. Grove purchased goods in London and then shipped them to large planters such as Samuel Galloway, who operated a merchandising house in Maryland. Galloway would receive tobacco from local farmers for their purchases, and then ship the tobacco to Grove, who likely stored it in a warehouse until sold to buyers in continental Europe, possibly through brother-in-law Andrew Grote.²⁵ As such, Grove shipped a variety of goods to his tobacco clients in the Chesapeake. Between February 26 and March 16, 1749, Grove purchased a large variety of goods in London for shipment to Samuel Galloway, including

2 dozen pinch ring & bubble butt twisted wine glasses	Brown Ozenbridge [plain rough cotton fabric]
1 dozen Ivory combs	raysins
2 dozen jelly glasses	Corded Demitie [dimity, a lightweight cotton]
Pickle bark	Fine Hyson tea
1 dozen syllabub glasses with one handle	Kenting [a fine linen originally from Holland]
2 gross flat white coat buttons	Sal volatile [ammonium carbonate, smelling salts]
2 Girls’ stays	Cambrick [fine quality linen]
18 largest hardmetal plates	6 gross corks
cinnamon	2 dozen square Ivory pocket knives & forks
1 hardmetal barbers bason	1 strong copper saucepan
cloves	10 brown thread
2 large hard chamber pott	1 large fishkettle cover & plates
mace	
Topsail	
currants	

1 fine coloured thread	white welsh cotton [coarse woolen fabric]
1 dozen girl's Neat Moroco turn pumps	2 pair youth's best color'd lam
8 Scotch threads	4 Candlewicks
4 boys neat turn shoos	1 neat carv'd ivory fan ²⁶
4 pair woman's best glazed Lam gloves	

In addition to his own accounts, as an executor of his father-in-law's estate, Grove took over the merchant business of Joseph Adams in 1748 in trust for his minor sons, John and Humphrey. Joseph Adams had been a director of the South Sea Company and a London tobacco merchant, importing colonial tobacco from Chesapeake planters. Adams, and then Grove, were in addition supplying weapons and ammunition to the Maryland colonists. On one occasion in August 1755, Grove shipped "Twenty half Barrels of Gunpowder, a Black & Yellow Flagg 24 feet long and 16 feet broad with the Union in One Corner and a Barrel of flints to contain about four thousand" to Annapolis.²⁷

Silvanus Grove, along with fellow Londoners Osgood Hanbury and James Russell, was a trustee for the state of Maryland and was appointed to handle the Maryland-owned Bank of England shares. In 1732, Maryland established a loan office to provide loans to small farmers and merchants using their land as collateral. Maryland used the interest from the loans to invest in the bank shares. In 1783, though at peace with the budding United States, the British government recommended to the trustees that they refuse to transfer the funds, estimated to be £29,000, to Maryland. In retaliation, Maryland confiscated the lands of the trustees, though they based the confiscation on the 1780 Confiscation Acts. Grove agreed to pay the funds, but Russell brought suit against Maryland for having confiscated his Nottingham Iron Works, barring Grove from paying the funds. Grove turned his funds over to the court, and Russell's suit was settled some fifteen years later.²⁸

Silvanus Grove was first a director and then a sub-governor of the London Assurance Company, one of two marine insurance companies established in 1720.²⁹ British marine insurance institutions developed in the early 18th century in response to the increase in foreign trade, in order to protect ships, cargo, and men. Pirates, war, change in seasons, character of the captain, and destination of voyage caused marine insurance rates to fluctuate during this period.³⁰ A good deal of the London Assurance Company's business came from the prominent merchants who were the directors of the company or business partners of the directors. Directors of London Assurance had to "make a deposit as security"; so they both made premium payments and owned stock. For example, Grove was a director and would have insured his own cargoes and those of his business associates.³¹ By the 1774, the London Assurance Company was insuring houses and goods in addition to ships and cargoes.³²

Grove invested heavily in financial companies. In his will, he listed stock and annuities in the Bank of England, South Sea Company stock, Consolidated Bank annuities, and London Assurance Company shares. Grove also concerned himself with philanthropic institutions such as St. Thomas's Hospital. Grove was a governor of St. Thomas's Hospital from 1751 until 1783 and was a taker-in for admissions to the hospital on a rotating basis through 1797.³³

Silvanus Grove, the Man

Southwark, a "stronghold of faction and dissent" in the late 17th century, was home to the Quaker Southwark Monthly Meeting, to which the Grove family belonged.³⁴ Little is known of the Grove family before 1700, but the Quaker records of births, marriages, and burials provide some information. Silvanus Grove's grandfather John died at the age of 56 in 1677 and was buried at the Worcester Street Burying Ground in Southwark.³⁵ Silvanus's father, the sugar merchant, died at the age of forty, leaving his widow Elizabeth at age 43 with five young

children, including seven-year-old Silvanus. In 1719, when Silvanus was nine, his grandmother Ruth died at age 85, and it is possible that she told the young man tales of English history, having been witness to the English Civil Wars, Cromwell's Commonwealth, the Restoration, the Great Plague, the Great Fire, the execution of a king, the rebuilding of a capital, and the early years of England's empire.

Figure 6. Portraits of Silvanus Grove and Jenny Grove, 1755–1756



Silvanus Grove

remained a Quaker and a part of the Quaker business and familial network for much of his life. The Quakers were socially endogamous, and frequently married within even smaller

communities, which ensured the accumulation and safeguarding of wealth. The Quaker marriages created tangled networks. For example, Silvanus Grove married Jenny Adams in 1739. Jenny was the daughter of Anne Scarth and Joseph Adams, one of London's Quaker merchants, who had a lucrative London-Chesapeake tobacco trading business. Silvanus' sister Ruth married Jonathan Scarth, an East India Company supercargo, in 1729, making Ruth both Silvanus's sister and aunt. (see appendix)

The Quakers preferred to marry and do business within their rather exclusive Quaker community. Silvanus Grove and his father-in-law Joseph Adams were both London-Chesapeake merchants, who imported tobacco from the colonies and then exported it to continental Europe, likely through Andrew (Andreas) Grote, who exported tobacco to Holland and Germany. Grote,



Figure 7. Quaker London, 1746 (line indicates Grove's street)

who had emigrated from Bremen and who was married to Ann Adams, was Silvanus's brother-in-law and Joseph Adams' son-in-law. Grove and many of his friends, family members, and business associates lived and worked in the streets around the Gracechurch Meeting at the east end of Cornhill, the heart of Quaker London in the early 18th century. Grove's city house was at No. 2, St. Martin's Lane, Cannon Street, Eastcheap, London. (see map, figure 7)³⁶

Silvanus and Jenny resided in Quaker London on St. Martins Lane from at least 1744.

Between the summer of 1755 and the early winter of 1756, Silvanus and Jenny sat at least seven times for the renowned portrait artist Joshua Reynolds, who had rooms on the same street for a short period early in his career.³⁷ (figure 6) Sometime between 1756 and 1766, Jenny Grove died from unknown causes. There is no record to explain the transformation of Silvanus Grove from Quaker to non-Quaker, but he married outside the Quaker faith when he took Anglican Louisa Hillersdon as his wife at St. Clement in Eastcheap in 1766. Louisa (1742–1823) was the sister of Silvanus's business associate and neighbor Edward Hillersdon of St. Martin's Lane. At age 57,

Grove had his first child with Louisa. Over the next decade, the couple had an additional nine children.³⁸

The Quaker paradigm continued to hold true. After becoming extremely successful, the second-generation Silvanus withdrew from Quakerism and married outside the faith. He purchased property and built a country estate in Woodford. A brief note about Silvanus's children will complete the picture. His son John became a director of the London Assurance Company and a governor of the London Lead Company, and changed his name to John Hillersdon in 1807 by permission of the King in order to bear the Hillersdon coat of arms.³⁹ Son Joseph became a magistrate for Essex County. The third Silvanus Grove entered the Merchant Taylor's School. Daughter Harriet married Anglican Daniel Spurgeon of Welwyn, Herts, the son of a Grove family domestic. Son Henry Grove became a lieutenant colonel in the light dragoons and was awarded the Waterloo Medal. Daughter Diana married surgeon George Snowden of Ramsgate, Kent. Daughter Louisa never married and lived to be seventy-eight. Daughter Caroline, son Charles, and son George all died young.⁴⁰

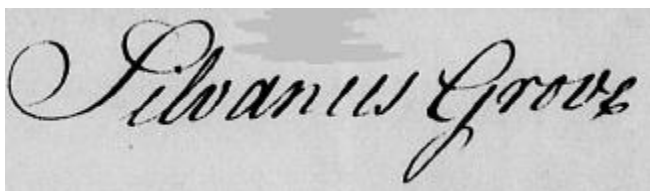
Silvanus Grove, Details

From September 1743 until late 1744, the young American colonist Benjamin Chew (1722-1811), later to become an eminent American jurist, attended the Middle Temple in London. During his stay he spent a good deal of time with Grove. Chew was likely introduced to Grove by his father-in-law, Joseph Adams, who was Chew's guardian while he was in England. Chew spent the first few weeks of his England trip at Adams's country estate in Edmonton, returning to London to begin his studies on October 24, 1743, at which time he began a journal which he wrote in daily until July 4, 1744.⁴¹ On October 29, Chew dined with Grove at his

London house. Chew usually dined with Grove once or twice once a week while he was in England. Chew spent most holidays at the Grove house, including Christmas, Restoration Day, Lord Mayor's Day, and Twelve Night. Grove introduced Chew to a number of his friends and business associates. Some evenings after dinner, Grove, Chew, and other guests would play card games, such as Quadrille. On other evenings, Grove and Chew would go to a tavern or walk through a public garden or attend a sermon. Grove took Chew to Ilford in December 1743 to go fox hunting with brother-in-law Jonathan Scarth. Also in December 1743, Grove and Chew went to the House of Lords where they saw the King, who had gone there to give his assent to some bills. While there, they saw the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland, and saw Samuel Sandys and Henry Arthur Herbert created barons. Though Chew's journal ends in July 1744, letters written to Chew by Adams show that during October 1744, Grove and Adams spent time traveling through the downs near Portsmouth. Chew felt a close bond with Grove which he remembered fondly even forty years later. In an October 21, 1783, letter to Grove, Chew wrote "Altho' all correspondence between us has slept for many Years, yet my Friendship for you has been ever awake, and I frequently have & still do look back with Pleasure to the many Happy Hours I have spent with you. The very active & laborious Scenes of Life in which I was till of late engag'd, so wholly engross'd my Time that I had scarcely Leisure to do more than think of my Friends at a Distance among whom I can with Truth say you have always stood the first in my Affections."⁴²

Extant letters offer a glimpse into the life Silvanus Grove. Most letters deal with business

Figure 8. Grove's signature from letter to Samuel Galloway

A photograph of a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature reads "Silvanus Grove" and is written in dark ink on a light-colored background. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent initial 'S'.

matters. In July 1763, Henry Ridgely of Elkridge, Maryland, wrote to Grove asking Grove to insure the goods being shipped to

him from London and adding a list of additional supplies to be purchased and shipped by Grove. Ridgeley also requests that Grove insure a tobacco shipment for a new shipper at the same rate that Grove had previously given to Ridgeley.⁴³ In March 1766, Grove wrote to Samuel Galloway to congratulate his colonial associates on their success in getting the Stamp Act repealed. Grove gives a status on Galloway's accounts and then requests Galloway's assistance in expediently settling some of the outstanding accounts Grove has with some of Galloway's neighbors.⁴⁴

Some letters mixed business with more personal matters. Grove wrote to Samuel Galloway in June 1767 to inform him of the status of his accounts and to inform him that the market was currently flooded with supply, so the price being paid was lower. Grove also informs him that his son John, who was in London to attend school, is spending the holidays with the Grove family rather than at school.⁴⁵ Grove wrote to Sam Galloway in July 1767, again to give him an update on his accounts, and inquires about giving John more "pocket mony," as the weekly amount he is currently giving to John, per Sam's instructions, is unsatisfactory to the young Galloway.⁴⁶

But a few of the letters are of a more personal nature. In November 1750, Benjamin Chew wrote to his brother-in-law Samuel Galloway, who was departing Maryland for London and would be residing at Grove's house. Chew writes that he has failed to maintain a correspondence with Grove and asks Galloway to tell Grove that he still feels a sincere friendship for him. Chew wrote to Grove himself in October 1783. He again apologizes for his lack of correspondence, though in this letter he explained that the "very active & laborious Scenes of Life" of recent years have made it difficult for Chew to write, and he assures Grove that he still holds a deep regard for their friendship. Chew writes that he is aware that the war had

“prov’d enjurious” to Grove, and asks him to please write of his family and his “situation in life.”⁴⁷

From 1783 until 1786, Benjamin Chew Junior, like his father before him, studied law at the Middle Temple and spent much time with the Grove family. In fact, in a letter written shortly after his return to the United States, he writes that he feels a part of the Grove family and thinks of the Grove children as his own brothers and sisters.⁴⁸ Between 1787 and 1798, many letters went back and forth between Benjamin Chew Jr. and both Silvanus and Louisa Grove, some just providing family updates, such as who got married or which child had the chicken pox, and news of mutual friends. Some of the letters dealt with mundane issues, such as the early peaches that Chew sent to Grove. He wrote to tell Grove that he had sent them, but he did not think they were canned as well as could be, and so warned Grove to be wary.⁴⁹ Grove responded a few months later that he had never received the peaches or the hams that Chew had sent, as they had not survived the journey. Apparently, the rats had eaten the hams, and somebody had eaten the peaches.⁵⁰

Silvanus Grove’s letters to Benjamin Chew Jr. tell us a great deal about his thoughts, his life, and his world. In a letter to Chew from Woodford dated August 3, 1786, Grove writes to tell him that “your kind letter from New York with the account of your landing safe gave us all great satisfaction.” He continues that he is aware he will likely not see Chew again and that it “is not the first time from your [Chew’s] family acquaintance that I have been in the like situation for your father my dear friend after contracting an intimacy was obliged to be separated forever it’s true he made me the only amends in his power by sending his son though it’s difficult to say whether the parting don’t over balance the short pleasure received from your acquaintance.” He writes that “after we saw you last we went to Bath was there about six weeks but Mrs. Grove

received no benefit from the waters and for some time after our return was very indifferent has been better the last fortnight little Henry had the measles while we were absent got well over it has since had an intermitting fever and is much reduced hope he is getting better the rest are all well.” He then goes on to local gossip. “Mr. Angier has left his house next door but one to us and Mrs. Hillersdon is come into it so that we are now near neighbors, Miss Simpsons are in Cumberland at a friend’s house. Mr. Richardson with their father they did propose staying two or three months but Louisa has received a letter from them saying their father likes the place so well he has thoughts of settling there which they are much alarmed at as they like London and dislike the country as they say there is no company for them.”⁵¹

Writing to Chew from London on February 17, 1787, Grove states that the entire family misses Chew. He then sends his congratulations to Chew’s sister who has recently married John Galloway. Grove writes that the family “were at Ramsgate the latter part of last summer for the benefit of sea bathing for my [Grove’s] leg which I think was bad before you [Chew] left England it has been worse since but is now a little better though far from well.” He then moves on to local gossip. “Our neighbors continue much in the like situation as when you left them not any marriages amongst them, although the Angiers are removed a little farther from us we are still within the reach of visiting and Mrs. Hillersdon coming so near us gives very great pleasure to Mrs. Grove.” He continues with current affairs, writing “our Parliament is now met and the charge renewed against Governor Hastings, Mr. Sheridan upon the occasion made a speech of five hours and forty minutes said by Mr. Pitt and other members to be the finest they ever heard it is expected it will be printed if so will send it you the House on a division resolved to impeach him almost three to one Mr. Pitt joined in it the Public in general seem to give him up.” He adds

“as it is uncertain if Sheridan’s speech will be printed I send you the Chronicle which contains the heads of it.”⁵²

Writing to Chew on February 28, 1788, from London, Grove begins by apologizing for his delay in responding to Chew’s letter, explaining that he had been waiting to receive the peaches and hams that never arrived. He then tells Chew that he should not send any more items, as importing ham is “prohibited” by law. He writes that the family are at present in London “as customary at this time of year.” He informs Chew that Harriet, Diana, and Henry have all “lately had the chicken pox but have got quite over it and are now at school. He tells Chew that “our friend John Barclay died about two months ago after a confinement to his chamber about twelve years.” He then turns to current affairs, writing “People here are much taken up at present with the tryal that us going on by the impeachment of the House of Commons against Mr. Hastings late Governor of Bengal before the House of Lords Westminster Hall being fitted up for the purpose at a great expense the prosecution carried on principally by Burke Fox and that party it is thought it will continue many weeks the crime laid to his charge are numerous and heinous how it will end time must shew the Commons are also preparing charges against Sir Elijah Impey late chief Judge in India if you was here these tryals would cause you great attendance I am much obliged for the copy of your Convention I don’t doubt but your country may become very great though it may require time to bring it to perfection Rome was not built in a day.”⁵³

From Woodford, Silvanus Grove begins his letter to Chew on August 3, 1789, by observing that this is the first letter he has written to Chew the married man, congratulating him and wishing him “many years of happiness.” Grove writes that at present his son George is in Bristol, and Grove expects “to hear of his death every post.” He relates that Mrs. Grove and daughter Louisa are with George. Harriet is home helping Grove, and on the “holydays” sons

Charles and John will return from school. He continues that Mr. Spurgeon's son was "ill with spitting of blood and though now tolerably well it's thought he may go into consumption and if he does his father will be miserable." He then turns to current events, writing "you have no doubt heard of the revolution in France the whole nation in arms for liberty the army joining the people the King has lost all his power a reward for his assistance to the Americans."⁵⁴

Writing from Woodford on June 1, 1790, Grove informs Chew that his son George has died at Bristol and that Mrs. Grove's health is not good —she has been confined to bed for five months and there seems "no prospect of her getting better." He then goes on to write that his son Joseph, then fifteen, has gone to Scotland to pursue his religious studies. Grove writes that Mr. Spurgeon, who had been in his employ for forty years, has retired and moved to the country, buying a house at Welwyn in Hertfordshire. Mr. Spurgeon's son had been ill, and they hoped that country life would help him recover. Grove informs Chew of the local gossip, writing "as you know many of our Woodford neighbors very likely you may remember the family of Colepepers as some of the daughters were pretty they lived in rather high style were desirous of appearing above most other people without the means to support it they are now reduced and pay five shillings in the pound." Grove adds, "I think they had ten or eleven children." Grove then turns to current events, writing "I don't doubt but you have as you say a fair prospect under your new modelled Constitution and I believe you will become a great and powerfull empire if your several provinces keep steadily united. We are at present in a very precarious situation with respect to war or peace a large fleet is fitting and a strong press to man them the dispute is with Spain they having taken some of our trading ships on the northwest coasts of America, some thinks we shall be drawn into assist the Prussians against the Austrians and Russians certain it is

we are making great preparations both by sea and land notwithstanding many are of opinion we shall not have war.”⁵⁵

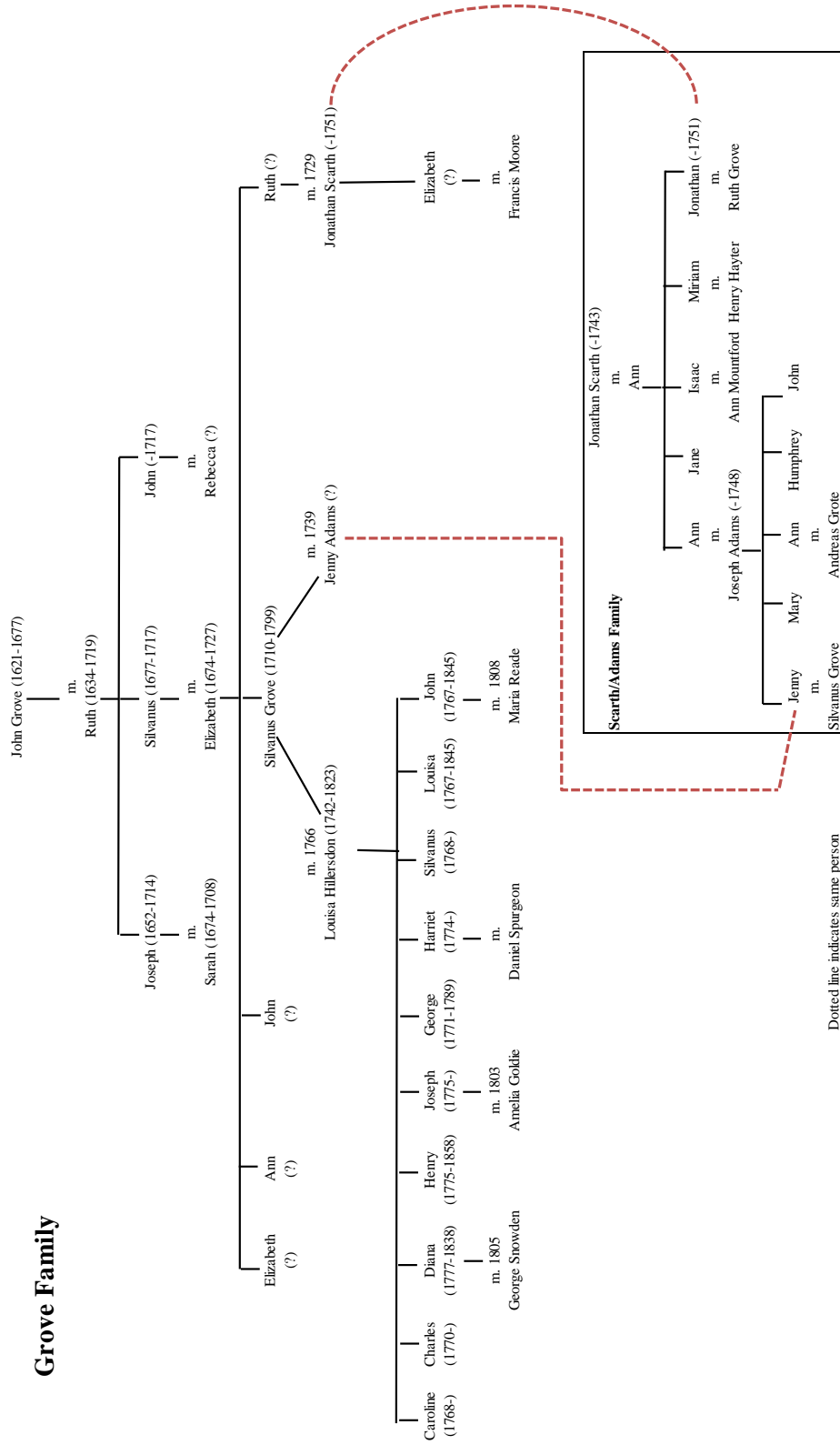
Conclusion

Silvanus Grove exemplifies the London-Chesapeake merchant, one who rose to wealth and prominence through transatlantic trade in tobacco and other goods, and investments in America. He exemplifies the second-generation 18th-century London Quaker, one who moved away from the Quaker world and into the world of the English gentleman, building a country estate, going fox hunting, and having his portrait painted by Joshua Reynolds. His business associates and friends were among the who's who of 18th-century London. He had business associates, family, and dear friends around the globe—China, Barbados, Portuguese Madeira, and the American colonies. Silvanus Grove found success both professionally and personally. Letters and other documents attest to the high regard his friends and family held him in during his lifetime and after his death.

If you should have the opportunity to drive by Silvanus Grove's house on the High Road in South Woodford, pull over and take a long look. Try to ignore the carpark and the wonderful smells emanating from Prezzo. Imagine the smell of the flowers, especially the many roses, that bloomed throughout the 18th-century summers. Try to block out the sounds of the superhighway and cell phones, and imagine the sound of horses trotting along the High Road. Imagine the house in front of you with the windows all open, curtains blowing in the wind. Imagine ten children playing in the garden. Grove's country house, even in its modern incarnation with office space and restaurant, is a piece of history. It not only holds interior and exterior Georgian architectural treasures, but it also holds a unique story, the life of Silvanus Grove.

Appendix

Grove Family



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- ³ "Transactions," Part 14 (Woodford and District Historical Society, 1982), 6.
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- ²¹ Charles Huston, *An Essay on the History and Nature of Original Titles to Land in the Province and State of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: T. & J. Johnson, 1849), 211–22.
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- ²⁴ David Hancock, "The Triumph of Mercury: Connection and Control in the Emerging Atlantic Economy" in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500–1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 114.
- ²⁵ Joseph Adams, will dated December 16, 1748, PROB 11/766, Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Public Records Office, TNA; Grote (1710–1788), immigrated to London from Bremen about 1730 and established himself as a merchant, purchasing Chesapeake tobacco for export to Germany and Holland (Price, *Capital and Credit*, 70).
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- ³⁸ *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle* 68, part 1 (June 1798): 538.
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- ⁴⁵ Silvanus Grove to Samuel Galloway, CG Papers, MSA.
- ⁴⁶ Silvanus Grove to Samuel Galloway, CG Papers, MSA.
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- ⁴⁸ Benjamin Chew Jr. to Silvanus Grove, letter, May 2, 1789, CF Papers, Series IV, Box 96, folder 22, HSP.
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- ⁵⁰ Silvanus Grove to Benjamin Chew Jr., letter, February 28, 1788, CF Papers, Series IV, Box 111, folder 21, HSP.
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