



PHOTOGRAPH BY F. H. SHELTON.

BIRTHPLACE OF JOHN CASSIN.

## The Birthplace of John Cassin.

IN Ashmead's splendid "History of Delaware County" it is stated, page 674, that John Cassin was born "in Upper Providence," one of the twenty-one townships of the county. In a sketch of his life, appearing in the issue of "CASSINIA" for 1901, it is stated that he was born "near Chester." As these two statements are in conflict, and as it is both historically desirable and humanly agreeable, to know the spot that was the birthplace of—and pleasantly associate it with,—this eminent early American ornithologist, the writer undertook this last summer (1918), to "run down" or locate the old Cassin homestead.

In 1848 there was published, by Dr. Joshua Ash, a map of Delaware County, showing almost every feature of it, and amongst other things the locations and land-holdings of most of the early landowners of the 1800's. This map is accepted as painstakingly and wonderfully correct. On it, in the extreme southeast corner of Concord township, appears a land-holding of Thomas Cassin. Nowhere else does the Cassin name appear, and in the literature, maps and histories of the county, no other data bearing on the birthplace of Cassin appear, other than as mentioned above.

A search among the deeds, however, in the Registrar's office at the county seat, Media, gives ample evidence to locate and establish the Cassin homestead for at any rate three generations.

From these deeds it is evident that three successive Cassins—the grandfather, Luke; Thomas, the father; and John, the son, the ornithologist, owned and lived on a forty-odd acre tract in Upper Providence township, about a mile north of the present borough of Media, and about a third of a mile south of the old "Rose Tree" inn, on the west side of Providence road, at the intersection of what is now the Cemetery road, and on the south side of that road; *i. e.*, the southwest corner. For the deeds

show that it came into the possession of Luke Cassin, farmer, April 10th, 1806, having been sold to him for four hundred and fifty pounds by Thomas Worrall. And that, on September 10th, 1830, Luke and Ann, his wife, for "natural love and affection" and the sum of \$5.00, conveyed the tract to his son Thomas, also styled "farmer"—and all being rated as of Upper Providence,—reserving, however, four rooms for the use of himself and wife, wholesome food, suitable for a family, and keep in the style to which they were accustomed, and access, etc., for the rest of their natural life. And that, in turn, on January 15th, 1844, Thomas Cassin (this time rated as of Concord and thereby showing some land-holdings also in that township, and as evidenced by Ash's map as above mentioned) conveyed to his son John, also for "natural love and affection" and the sum of \$2,600. Values had perhaps increased, and anyway John had removed to Philadelphia and become a merchant! And that, John Cassin, styled "merchant, of Philadelphia," and his wife Hannah, on April 2nd, 1846, conveyed the tract to one Daniel James for \$3,025.

In Ashmead's history above named there are various lists of township officials and early school directors. In such lists for Upper Providence it is stated that Luke the grandfather was a Justice of the Peace in 1809; also that Thomas, the father of John, was a School Director in 1825 and a Justice of the Peace in 1838. All of which, and with the deed records quoted, clearly establish the family as resident on that tract in that township; owning the land and participating in the district government from 1806 to 1844 or '46.

John, the son, was born Sep't 6th, 1813. At the age of 20 he was one of the five men who started the Delaware County Institute of Science,—a small organization having a library, a museum, and regular meetings for the discussion of scientific things, etc. This first had headquarters in a small building at the present Sycamore Mills (then Bishop's Mills), and later in a building close to the Rose Tree, near the Cassin place, both in Upper Providence. In 1834 John Cassin removed to Philadelphia.

All of which leaves no room for further question as to where

the Cassin homestead was and but little question as to where the ornithologist was born.

On the Ash map, already referred to, the name of Daniel James appears as the owner of the tract, in 1848, after his purchase from Cassin four years before; and the present "oldest inhabitant" of that immediate neighborhood, Mr. E. E. Worrall,—a man now in his eighties, clear-headed, with faculties unimpaired—stated to the writer during this inquiry, that he had as a youngster often called at the James place, and knew it then as having shortly before been the Cassin place.

The house on it, as shown in the accompanying picture, taken November, 1918, is a frame structure, in contrast to the usual stone building of the early days. It is of no especial characteristic or feature; has evidently been somewhat altered and added to and ornamented with scroll-saw trims sometime in its life, and at present is in rather run-down condition. The fact that it, the house itself, is not marked on Ash's map, where other houses are, is quite clearly explained by the fact that the name "Upper Providence" in large letters appears across the face of the map on this township, and the "i" in "Providence" occurs where the house mark would be, and obliterates or covers it.

The location of the Cassin tract is on a main highway and much-traveled road and a post with suitable marking tablet thereon, reciting that this is the birth spot of the eminent early ornithologist, John Cassin, might with propriety be erected, and if so would be seen by many; and this number will steadily increase as this district becomes more populated.

F. H. SHELTON.

*Philadelphia, November 25th, 1918.*