



French Creek Boarding school for girls:

Description-Although a Quaker by faith, Emmor Kimber opened his boarding school for girls in 1818 to children of all denominations and is located in French Creek Valley, near Yellow Springs, twenty-eight miles north-west from Philadelphia.. The curriculum evolved over the years to include reading, writing, English grammar, history, geography, arithmetic, delineation of maps, astronomy, botany, chemistry, and sewing. Kimber also offered, for an extra five-dollar fee, courses in drawing, oil and watercolor painting, French, Greek, and Latin. In addition to all of those courses, students could also learn about mechanics tools, gardening, husbandry, etc. The children who traveled from Philadelphia to the school came by organized stage coach for a fare of a \$1.75 roundtrip. In addition to local students and the ones from Philadelphia, students also came from New York, Wilmington, Baltimore, and cities in adjacent states.

Unlike many schools of that era, Kimber's school had no petty rules of discipline or dress restrictions. Most schools at the time emphasized rote memory and strict discipline, often enforced with corporal punishment, but at Kimber's school, the Golden Rule governed behavior; hours were regular; methods were systematic, and within those

limits personal freedom and curiosity were encouraged. Students were each required to bring their own bibles and wash basins for worship and laundry. French Creek boarding school also only entered students in courses for a quarter at a time, even students who would have paid for a longer term were asked to leave if they did not meet the School's educational and financial standards. The tuition fee for students was seventy-five dollars, payable in advance, or \$37.50 at entrance and \$37.50 on the first of the month. Vacations worked like this: there were two weeks in April and two weeks in the October month. There was originally vacation time allotted in August, But Kimber chose to omit that time, in favor of making the students better educated by eliminating large breaks in between learning. The strategy would prove effective in following years

Students were free to enjoy the gardens and groves surrounding the school, and those in botanical classes gathered rare plants near French Creek, some of which were catalogued by William Darlington in his 1826 *Cestrica*. Students swam in the nearby millrace, using the bath house that Kimber had built for them. As a model of progressive education for its time, the boarding school drew young scholars from a wide geographical area, as distant as the West Indies.

In 1837 the new school building was completed and used. It had an 80-foot frontage and contained twenty rooms; the basement was well lit, opening out on falling ground. A large room with three long tables served as the dining room. Over this was a forty-foot-square schoolroom and above this were dormitories of equal size on the third and fourth floors. The school closed in 1849, two years before Kimber's death. In 1852, Kimber's daughter, Abigail Kimber, sold the building, but it was later returned to academic use. Although the former boarding school is now a multiple-family residence,

private education still flourished at Kimberton Farm School, two-thirds of a mile to the north of the district.

In this new building, three of Kimber's daughters taught various courses, which included Greek and Roman history, geography, chemistry, botany, algebra, water-colors, grammar and composition taught by Abigail, Geography, reading, French and fancy work taught by Pattie, and cartography among other subjects taught by Mary. Another one of his daughters; Gertrude was a student of the school for some time. She would join the anti-slavery movement, and was a close friend of the admired abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison. She married drifter Charles S. Burleigh and would die at age 54 in Florence, Massachusetts. Other teachers of the school included Jane D. Minster, Margaret B. Hubley, Sarah C. Minster, and Sarah Jane Harriss.

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