

*Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery Inventory*

State and Water Streets, Dover DE 19903

Lot Number: 300 Space: G93 C

Find A Grave # 27602868 **Old Swedes Churchyard, NOT in Christ Church Cemetery**

Name: **Vining, Mary**

Birth date: August 20, 1756 Death date: Good Friday, April 20, 1821 Burial Date: Age: 64

Spouse: not married, at one point was reputed to be engaged to General Mad Anthony Wayne. She was also known as "The Belle of Delaware". Never married after Gen. Wayne's death.

Children: none

Parents: Col. John Vining Esq. (1724-1770) and Rachel *Ridgely* Vining (1715-1753)

**Siblings:** John Vining (1758-1802); Abraham Vining (1762-1764) Benjamin Vining (1751-1785)

Residence:

Cause of death/Burial/Obituary: see next pages

Service/occupation information: Took care of her nephews after the death of her sibling John Seton, who left them destitute.

**No Marker: recorded with brother Benjamin's grave**

**John Vining and several children are listed as buried in Christ Church Cemetery, without markers. They have been assigned to spaces in Lot 300 93, where John's son Benjamin Vining is buried. He is the only child to have a marker.**

Mary Vining is buried in Old Swedes Churchyard, Wilmington, DE, marker #16. See Find A Grave # above. She IS NOT in Christ Church Cemetery.

Photos from Old Swede's Burial ground, found on Find A Grave.com




Inventory date: January 9, 2022

Recorder: Nancy Quinn

Old Swedes Churchyard Walking Tour

## 16. MARY VINING



Over 15,000 people are buried here at Old Swedes. Many, like Miss Vining, are buried in unmarked graves. Her grave is believed to be in the southeast area of the yard.

Mary was the daughter of John Vining, a Chief Justice and Speaker of the Delaware Assembly. During the Revolutionary War era, she was known as the belle of Wilmington. She was courted by General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, sketched by Major John André and was a lifelong correspondent with General Lafayette. She became well known within the courts of Europe through these contacts.

Mary Vining never married. In her later years she cared for the orphaned sons of her brother, a former U.S. Senator. She outlived her family and her economic and social status declined.

The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in the State of Delaware

## Excerpt from Genealogy of the Fisher Family:

60. MARY MANLOVE, b. Apr. 10, 1770; m. Dec. 7, 1809; m. CHARLES FISH.  
 61. MATTHEW MANLOVE, d. unm.  
 62. JEMIMA MANLOVE, d. unm.

23. PHEBE WYNKOOP<sup>4</sup> (Esther<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, John<sup>1</sup>), b. Oct. 28, 1729; d. Sept. 17, 1800; m. Jan. 16, 1755, John Vining.

## Children:

63. MARY VINING, b. near Dover, Del., Aug. 20, 1756; d. Good Friday, 1821.  
 64. JOHN MIDDLETON VINING, b. Dec. 23, 1758; d. 1802; m. Anna Maria Seton.

"Mary Vining was born at the house of her father, and was, with her brother, heir to a very large estate. Little is known of her education, but from the position which she occupied it is evident that she must have had the benefit of the best advantages the time afforded. Her winning manners were not reserved for society alone,—she was the light of her home and was adored by her mother and all in her own domicile, and gained an ascendancy over every one she met. Late in 1777, or early in 1778, Caesar Rodney, the Signer, was elected Governor of Delaware, and, being unmarried, was glad to have his house and table presided over by this young cousin. She was particularly attractive to La Fayette and the French officers, as she spoke their language with perfect ease and purity, and the fame of her charms was carried to the court of Marie Antoinette, who was eager to find out from Thomas Jefferson, Minister Plenipotentiary to France in 1784, whether the extravagant admiration and compliments of the French officers had been exaggerated. On being answered in the negative, she replied she would be glad to see her at the Tuileries. She was also well known to the British officers, and her name was heard at the English and German courts as well as the French.

"She had many offers of marriage from British and French officers, but for many years could not persuade herself to relinquish her independence. If distinguished foreigners visited the vicinity of her abode an introduction to Miss Vining was solicited. Among her guests were the Duke de Liancourt, the Duc d'Orleans, and the late King of the French, Louis Philippe. The celebrated Spanish patriot, General Miranda, once passed through Wilmington in the mail coach at night, and left his card in the post-office for Miss Vining.

"When she was no longer young she engaged herself to General Wayne, which caused much comment in her circle, since she had refused so many more polished aspirants. The marriage,

however, never came off, owing to the death of General Wayne (on Presque Isle, Lake Erie, December 15, 1796), and for the remaining twenty-five years of her life she never again entered into society.

"Her seclusion was absolute, and she saw very few people. Indeed, there is only record of her leaving her house three times in all those long years,—once to go to church, once to dine at Governor Dickinson's, and once to take one of her nephews to Philadelphia.

"From this time domestic troubles began to thicken around her. After the death of her sister-in-law and brother, in 1802, he having previously lost all his own and her fortune, she was left in very straitened circumstances, with four orphan nephews to bring up. She proved herself a wise, considerate, and devoted guardian, hesitating at no sacrifice to benefit them, and giving her time and talent to their education. Three of these nephews preceded her to the grave.

"Had Miss Vining been a man and educated for the law, with her powerful intellect she would have lived in history as an eloquent orator. Without an effort, the choicest language and the most appropriate words flowed freely at her bidding.

"The only likeness known to be taken of Miss Vining was a miniature, when she was nineteen years of age, but it was said by one who knew her in later years not to do her justice. The painter was unable to catch the subtle charm of expression. She had fine dark eyes, an abundance of brown hair, beautiful white teeth, an erect and graceful figure, and a most beautiful voice.

"She died on Good Friday, 1821, and was buried in the old Swedes' burying-ground on Easter Sunday, with fitting honors, in which all the inhabitants of Wilmington partook.

"At the time of her death she was engaged in writing a history of the Revolutionary War, which, most unfortunately, was destroyed by fire some years after."\*

24. BENJAMIN WYNKOOP<sup>4</sup> (Esther<sup>3</sup>, Thomas<sup>2</sup>, John<sup>1</sup>), b. Nov. 23, 1734; d. Sept. 2, 1803; m. May 18, 1767, Sarah Wooddrop Sims, d. Dec. 31, 1814, dau. of Joseph and Ann Sims.

## Children:

65. JOSEPH WYNKOOP, b. Dec. 3, 1768; d. Mar. 24, 1814.  
 66. ESTHER WYNKOOP, b. May 18, 1771; d. Nov. 20, 1774.  
 67. SARAH WYNKOOP, b. May 15, 1773; d. Sept. 24, 1777.  
 68. ANN WYNKOOP, b. Dec. 30, 1775; d. June 18, 1849, unm.  
 69. BENJAMIN WYNKOOP, b. Nov. 15, 1778; d. Sept. 10, 1789.

\* Extracts from a Memorial of Miss Vining, by Mrs. Charles Du Pont and Mrs. H. G. Banning.