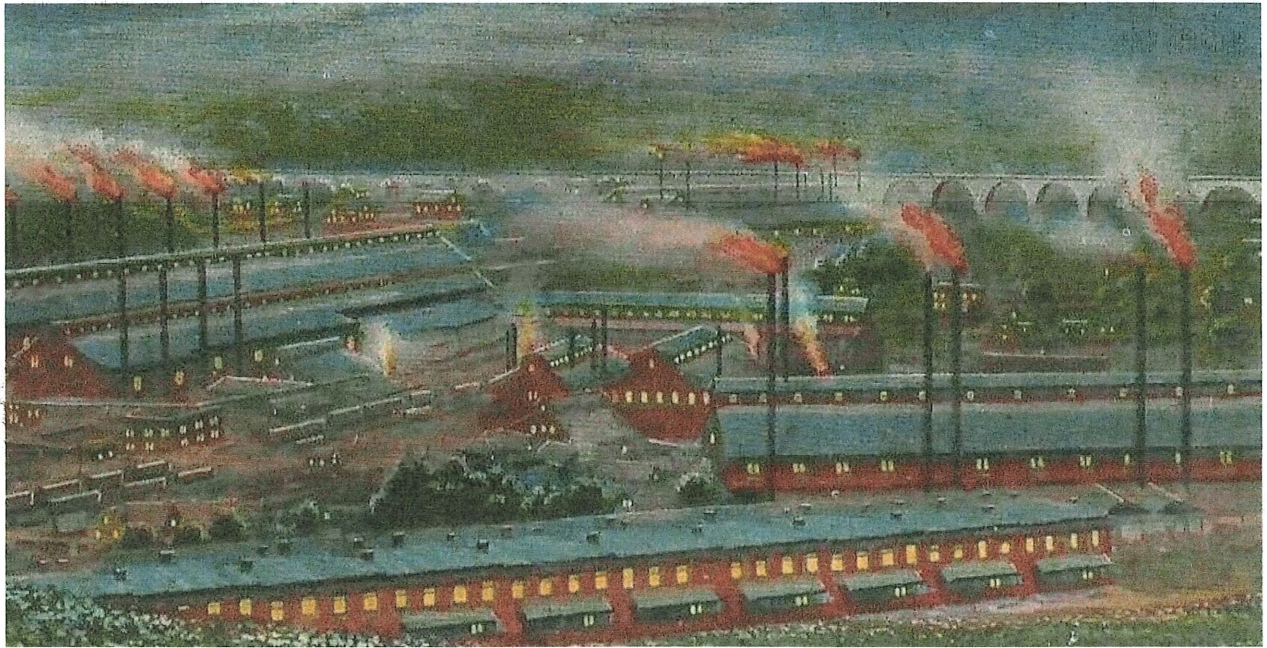


# Chester County

## A MODERN HISTORY



MARK R. ASHTON

## INTRODUCTION

In 1872 a lawyer and future Pennsylvania governor named Samuel Pennypacker published a book called *Annals of Phoenixville*. It was kind of an informal history of the region covering a vast array of subjects, mostly in the northern part of the county. Half a century later another prominent lawyer, Wilmer MacElree hopped in his car and drove around Chester County reporting and collecting stories of places and things that happened over time. These are enjoyable books, albeit somewhat dated, and like many local histories, sometimes written for the amusement of the locals rather than as a broad general history of the place we inhabit. Eighty years after MacElree published, I thought it worth energy to try to collect and present some of these stories and to compile the two dozen or more local histories which have been published in the last few generations.

One further note and an invitation. When William Penn mapped Pennsylvania he divided it into three counties, one of which is Chester. As Penn's surveyor Thomas Holme drew it, Chester County incorporated not only our current geography but modern day Delaware, Lancaster and Berks counties. Thus, do not think I have lost touch with geography if this tour takes you into some foreign places. A deed dated July 30, 1683 conveys to Penn "the west side of the Delaware River "as far as a man can ride in two days with a horse." If you are asking price for this parcel, it gets a bit complicated. 20 guns, 20 fathoms of matchcoat, 20 fathoms of stroud water, 20 kettles, blankets and pounds of powder, 100 bars of lead, 40 tomahawks, 100 knives, 40 pairs of stockings, 1 barrel of beer, 20 pounds of red lead, 100 fathoms of wampum, 30 glass bottles and an equal number of pewter spoons. The list goes on and on, but lest you think your ancient relations got their land cheap, the price included 100 jewsharps, 30 combs and 60 looking glasses (mirrors). Quite the price for land approximating the size of the state of Delaware.

Now, this invitation. I have used hundreds of sources to investigate, confirm and write this text. What has been fascinating is the differences one discovers in what should be plain historical facts. Some are expected such as the legends of the highwayman Sandy Flash or that of Indian Hannah. On the other hand, I saw many references to land that families acquired from William Penn decades after the proprietor met his maker in 1718. If you discover errors like that, I would be happy to learn of them so that any subsequent edition can be more accurate.

Along the way, I read an inspiring quote from MacElree in his 1907, *Along the Western Brandywine*. He attributes the words to James Russell Lowell:

"Men should be familiar with their own villages before they go abroad."

To promote that concept, the text endeavors to provide the reader with addresses where the events occurred and people lived so that a visit is possible. One of the things to celebrate about Chester County is the fact that in many instances, the buildings where history was made

still exist. And, a drive along Route 345 through French Creek State Park will remind the traveler of the immense forest early settlers found when they arrived four centuries ago. History lives.

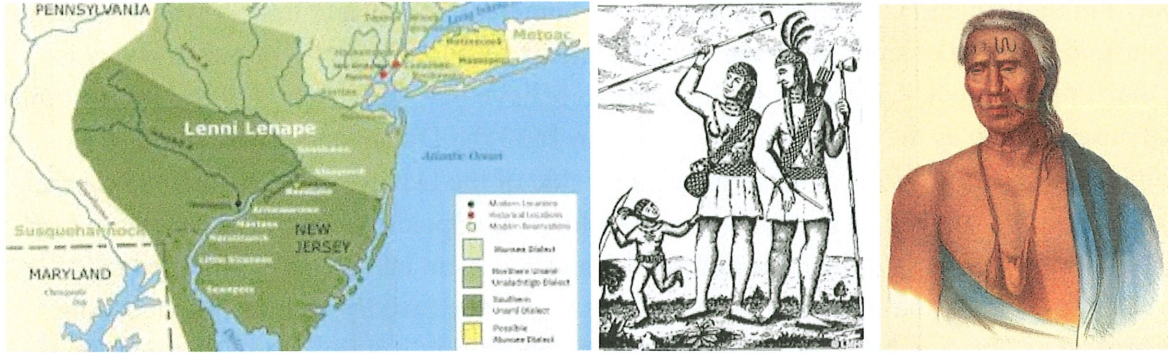
## 1. NATIVE AMERICAN DAYS

Our story, or more precisely, our history begins with an immense problem. The first settlers who came to our region did not write anything down. My reference is to the Native Americans who crossed the Eurasian land bridge long, long ago and dispersed throughout North, Central and South America. They formed into tribes and by the time of European arrival, had formed confederations of tribes. Native American history in this region is measured in thousands of years. European settlement represents a tiny fraction of that; roughly 400 years. Unfortunately, what we know about ancient settlements and what occurred up to the time of European arrival is the work of archeologists and not conventional historians.

It is easy to bypass this chapter in history, yet the mark Native Americans left on this region remains part of our experience today. The most important and enduring legacy from this lost culture is our system of roads. Anyone who drives our region's major roads will inevitably retrace an ancient Indian path. The reason is simple. Native Americans traveled extensively up and down the entire Eastern seaboard, especially from the "capital" of the Six Nations at Onondaga (near Syracuse) south all the way to Georgia. To accomplish this, they carefully selected paths or trails which would remain largely dry throughout the year and be on higher ground where it was possible for travelers to see any enemies that might approach.

I do not profess expertise in Indian history. From my reading, it is complicated to say the least. There were hundreds of clans on the Eastern seaboard organized loosely into what we like to call tribes. They interacted with each other, battling over land and dozens of other matters. These battles can best be described as akin to intramural sports. On other occasions, the engagements could become quite deadly. In 1661, a large party of Iroquois traveled south to attack and conquer the Minquas along the Susquehanna River in northern Maryland. During William Penn's proprietorship (1681-1717) there was persistent conflict between the Iroquois and Delaware tribes. In 1720 the Iroquois became suzerains of the Delaware, granted the right to control land transactions and warfare in Delaware held territory. Europeans were not entirely different, but when Europeans went to war, they did so with far greater determination and with far larger consequence, perhaps because their weapons were far more destructive.

In our own region, the tribes inhabiting it were not inclined to build permanent settlements. Rather they traveled from place to place, moving on as game and crops became scarce. They might return to familiar places particularly near rivers like the Schuylkill and Brandywine, but they did not aspire to build permanent villages. This region was the province of the Delaware or Lenni Lenape Indians (Lenape being their word and roughly translated as "common people"). At the dawn of European contact (Henry Hudson; 1609) they are estimated to have numbered roughly 11,000 divided into 40 autonomous clans). Their range is shown here with the Unami in this county.



The Unami occupied lands regularly in various places around the county including three miles south of what is today Chadds's Ford. But, even the center of the Iroquois confederation of Six Indian nations occupied several different locations over time in central New York. Meanwhile, if you lived anywhere along coastal North America in the east and you had business in Onondaga, chances were that you would travel through Chester County en route..

During the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century a variety of distant tribes investigated and then moved into Pennsylvania. While this was Lenape land, Southeastern Pennsylvania has place names that include such tribes as the Shawnee. Despite a mere half century stay in and around Pennsylvania, their fierce fighting and willingness to cannibalize those whom they killed or captured made their presence noteworthy and may have contributed to the anxiety western settlers developed toward all Native American settlements. Another tribe known to be in the "neighborhood" was the Susquehannocks, sometimes called the Minquas or Conestoga. They inhabited the Susquehanna River basin in both Maryland and Pennsylvania. Their numbers were small and dwindling by the time the English arrive in Pennsylvania. The Nanticokes were found on Maryland's Eastern shore but friction with Marylanders (who tried to enslave them) prompted them to take up Shawnee held lands around the Susquehanna as the Shawnee moved on to Ohio. Later they would move back east into the Wyoming Valley near Wilkes-Barre. What seems to have prompted these migrations was the perception that William Penn's descendants and purchasers would adopt his policies of peaceful coexistence. That perception was undercut by the Penn sponsored Walking Purchase of 1737 and the crowding of central Pennsylvania by vast numbers of German and Scotch-Irish immigrants in search of arable land at and about the same time. These immigrants had little interest and no practical ability to evaluate the threat presented by natives walking the same trails in Chester, Lancaster and the other counties formed east of the Susquehanna River. The traffic on these trails was constant, as all of these tribes communicated with the Iroquois confederation in central New York.

## 2. THE FRENCH, DUTCH, SWEDES & FINNS

The French began to inhabit what is today Nova Scotia and Quebec in 1605. They established permanent settlements but the French never really aspired to settle America in the

same way the English and Germans did. They were hunters, trappers and traders whose range of travel is astonishing, as evidenced by the fact that one of Chester County's principal rivers is named the "French Creek." Thus, we have reason to believe that they learned of the Indian trails and made use of them as they plied their business. In 1633 the Dutch landed just south of Philadelphia and erected a fort on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River. In 1638 parties of Swedes and Finns arrived and erected their own forts on opposite sides of the Delaware near today's Wilmington. Many of the immigrants of Finnish descent had actually migrated to Sweden before deciding that America was the place to be. The Swedes claimed all land from North Carolina to Trenton, NJ. But claiming land and occupying it were quite different things. Neither group aspired to do more than trade for fur and local natives were content to exchange pelts for things such as iron cookware, weapons and distilled spirits. The plantation never got much beyond 200 souls and in 1654 when a new shipload of passengers arrived on the Delaware many of the existing residents opted to leave. While the relative absence of formal government made things among the inhabitants contentious (the governor's own guard threatened to kill him) relations remained peaceful with the natives. They actually taught the Europeans to grow maize, squash and beans. Yet there was little to be found on the banks of the Delaware that signaled any intent to colonize this land. The Swedes are credited with bringing us the "log cabin" a dwelling that could be quickly erected. There is such a dwelling at 9 Creek Road below Garrett Road near Drexel Hill which dates to 1638-1650.



In 1655 the Dutch settlement at New Amsterdam (New York) sent 600 troops south to dislodge the Swedes. The result was the latter's capitulation leaving the Dutch in charge. A few Swedes remained and were permitted to retain control of land on the west bank of the Delaware. While it appeared that the Swedish era was finished, under Dutch supervision the Swedes actually expanded their population to 1,000 and began to farm wheat and rye. We should add that in 1712, shortly after Penn demanded that Swedes in the colony secure new titles to their land claims near Philadelphia, a 35 year old named Mats Holstein led 32 settlers inland to a tract of land next to modern day Bridgeport where they established Swedesburg or Swedesboro as it was later called. The Schuylkill River was shallow at that point allowing a ford across the river. Thus the Swede's ford across the river gave rise to Swedesford Road that today starts in central Montgomery County near Gwynedd and then passes near the King of Prussia Mall ending a mile or so west of Exton where it intersects with Whitford Road. If you travel the road today starting at Rte. 252 (near Howellville or the Westlakes Corporate Park) it not only bisects the Great Valley but features early Chester County homesteads many of which are situated only a few feet from the road itself. Not far off the road are the Great Valley Gristmill (Valley Rd. first erected 1710) Great Valley Presbyterian Church (Brantford Ln.; 1720); St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley (Church Rd.; 1720); Three Bottles Tavern (261 Swedesford

Rd at Conestoga Rd; 1720): Malin Hall (74 Malin Rd; 1700): Long Pull Farm (309 Swedesford; 1729) and White Horse Tavern (606 Swedesford; 1721).

We mentioned the French Creek. We don't have an early history for Peter Bezaillion but he is believed to have been born after 1650. He was a trapper and trader in and around Chester County who arrived in this region about 1688 and set up a trading post at the mouth of the French Creek, near Spring City. Bezaillion with his brother, and a trader named Peter LeTort, were Huguenot refugees who established trading connections with the Conestoga Indians around Lancaster well before the arrival of the English. By 1701, we see these Frenchmen labeled as dangerous although that may have more to do with their familiarity and lucrative trade with the natives than any objective threat. The Bezaillions and the LeTorts were French, Protestant and well established; prompting English traders to complain of their monopoly in the fur trade. Meanwhile, Peter's skills as interpreter and negotiator soon resulted in his employment by the same province that demanded bond for his good behavior and jailed him in 1711. A year after his incarceration, Peter is officially licensed by the province as a trader. In 1718 the General Assembly engages him to create a road from today's Downingtown west to the Susquehanna River (Paxtang). There is today an "Old Peter's Road" which formed the basis for the King's Highway from Thorndale to Lancaster, built in the 1730s and today known as Route 340. As Professor James Merrill reports in his *Into the American Woods* (1999), the English distrusted and resented these well established French fur traders, but they won grudging respect for they spoke many native languages and were trusted (somewhat) by the tribes east of the Susquehanna.

When Bezaillion dies in 1742 he is worth £575 and his estate includes eight slaves. He lived in many places but ended his life in East Caln Township. His final home was near 12<sup>th</sup> and Olive Streets in modern Coatesville, two blocks south of Lancaster Avenue. He and his wife are buried at St. John's Episcopal, a church on the border of Chester and Lancaster Counties which was established just as Lancaster County was incorporated in 1729. That village, then called Compassville, and today Compass was the intersection of many Indian paths including the one named "Old Peter's Road." Today it is labeled Old Philadelphia Pike and it intersects with the King's Highway. An inn, the Sign of the Mariner's Compass was licensed there in 1774. The Bezaillion family name, spelled in many iterations, is still common in this part of the county.

### 3. TRAVELING INTO THE FRONTIER

In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedes, Finns and French shared a common goal; to exploit the region for its bountiful resources, primarily fur pelts. Just as the French traveled south from Canada in search of those resources, the Swedes and Finns ranged both east and west in search of fur, metals and wood. When headed west, the most efficacious route was the Allegheny Path. It ran from Wiccao in today's Central Philadelphia to the forks of the Ohio (present Pittsburgh). In Chester County it would have followed Rte. 30 west to Exton, then up Ship Road north to Rte. 100 and west along Little Conestoga Road, near the present turnpike. By 1762 the road is so heavily travelled that the innkeeper of the Red Lion Inn (Lionville) laid out residential lots for

purchase; 60 feet in width and 250 feet deep, a plan similar to the village of Germantown. The proposed Village of Welshpool never materialized but the inn and the nearby Uwchlan Meeting did later give birth to today's Lionville. Another route inland was known as the Great Minquas Path. It traveled from Gray's Ferry in South Philadelphia west through Delaware County, West Chester, Parkesburg and Atglen along today's Strasburg Road ending at a Shawnee village on the Susquehanna River near Columbia. The Shawnee had come east from Western Pennsylvania late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but were driven west by the 1750s along with the Lenape (Delaware) tribe. The French Creek Path ran from present day Phoenixville west along Rte. 23 to a Conestoga Indian village south of Columbia on the Susquehanna. On a north-south axis Chester County also had a path which ran from Newport, Delaware northwest through Avondale and Cochranville to Gap. It is today Route. 41.

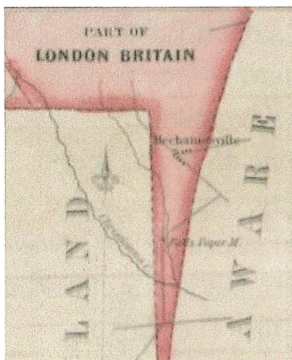
Until the English arrived, their predecessors expressed little interest in living anywhere but along the Delaware River. Agricultural historian Stevenson Fletcher suggests that 98% of Pennsylvania's land mass started out as forest so dense that little vegetation existed below the canopy. An early visitor to Chester County, recounted that he could drive a horse and cart in almost any direction on the forest floor without obstruction. Meanwhile, there were Indian villages throughout Chester County including areas such as modern Exton, Coatesville, Elverson, Honey Brook and along the Brandywine River near the Big Bend below Chadds Ford. As a stream that was not navigable, its attraction was limited until European settlers realized that its flow easily accommodated the engine of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the waterwheel.

#### 4. THE ARRIVAL OF THE ENGLISH

With the overthrow of Charles I as England's king in 1646, the Calvinists come to power. While once dissenters themselves, they brooked little dissent while in control and there was widespread suppression of any religious sect that did not swear allegiance to the government. In England, George Fox started to organize a group known as the Religious Society of Friends in northern England and Wales. They would not take oaths and wanted religious faith to be more collegial than hierarchical. Fox and his followers including a young patrician named William Penn spent a fair amount of the 1650s onward in English jails for their unorthodox beliefs and dissent from practices of the established Christian faiths. Many Quaker families left England and migrated to the more tolerant Netherlands. Even in that country their status as foreigners and dissenters from mainstream Dutch churches left them isolated. So, over time, another refuge was identified in what was then called West Jersey. Two Quakers bought the western half of today's New Jersey from Lord Berkeley and then promptly began to fight among themselves. William Penn was asked to arbitrate the dispute and thus learned much about the region. The first 800 emigrants sailed to New Jersey in 1677. While still living in Britain, Penn was one of the managers of this colony. Penn's father was a British admiral who had commanded navies for Charles I, Cromwell and Charles II. Along the way he loaned a significant amount of money to the crown. At that time and for much of history, the King of England was not cash rich and after

his father's death in 1670 young William Penn made a deal with Charles II by which he received Pennsylvania in exchange for the debt Charles owed his father, the Admiral. The conveyance indicates that Penn is granted an area west of the Delaware River and north of the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel with deference to the Dutch settlement of New Castle. An arc is drawn 12 miles around New Castle so that Dutch land remained outside Penn's grant. This explains the circle like boundary that runs from London Britain township near White Creek State Park all the way to Marcus Hook on the Delaware.

Penn's English colonists begin to arrive in Pennsylvania in 1682. Within two years they number 4,000. At the time, the area of Chester County is claimed as the land of both the Dutch, based in New York, and the Catholic colony established in Maryland in 1632. Penn's ship the *Welcome* docks at Upland (now Chester). His plan is a far reaching one as his grant from Charles II appears to extend throughout the territory occupied by modern Pennsylvania. But for almost a century after the colony was established, Penn and his descendants faced claims from both New York in the north to Maryland in the south. Meanwhile, based upon a lease he formed with the Duke of York, Penn also claimed to control what is today the state of Delaware. Pennsylvania's southern border is not really confirmed until Mason & Dixon survey that boundary in 1765. The land disputes were not finally resolved until 1921 when it was decided that 680 acres of land called "the Wedge" would belong to Delaware. The wedge came about because of the 12 mile arc around the New Castle court house that had been surveyed in 1701 as the border of Delaware. This small parcel was the site of a famous duel in April 1880 between two feuding members of America's oldest military unit, the First Troop Philadelphia City Cavalry. Surgeon J. William White and Robert Adams Jr., travelled with friends by train and then carriage to the wedge where they exchanged shots with each other on land which arguably was not the property of either state. No one was hurt and the men returned to their homes a block apart in Philadelphia. In Eakin's famous 1889 painting, *The Agnew Clinic*, it is Dr. White who is performing the surgery while Dr. D. Hayes Agnew lectures the Jefferson Medical students.



The Wedge in 1847



1682 map showing 1<sup>st</sup> Purchasers. Vincent River is French Creek

Unlike his predecessors on the Delaware, William Penn's plan was to "develop" inland Pennsylvania. He promoted land sales throughout Europe, especially to groups, like Quakers and German dissenters who experienced religious discrimination. He acquired land from local Indians and offered that land for sale supplemented by an annual quitrent. A 1682 map shows that land in Chester County was widely purchased. Many of the buyers were passive investors, like the King's physician, Daniel Coxe, who never came to the colony. What the local tribes, principally Lenape, understood of these land transactions is not clear. They had tolerated the Swedes, Finns and Dutch who preceded the English, but these groups confined themselves to a few villages hugging the shores of the Delaware River. As we know, Penn's "purchasers" were coming not to trade but to occupy and farm the land Penn sold them. And, for European purchasers occupancy meant exclusive use. Native Americans did not understand that concept because land then seemed to be an unlimited resource providing an inexhaustible supply of fish, game, and plant life.

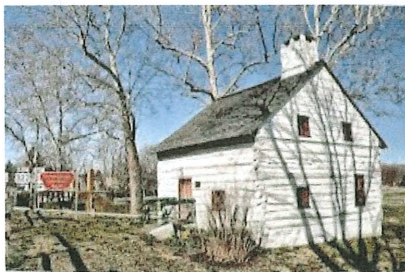
To settlers coming from England, Wales and parts of northern Europe inland Pennsylvania seemed to offer limitless opportunities. As with the rest of Pennsylvania, Chester County was heavily forested, providing ample fuel for fire and to erect homes, barns, fences and outbuildings. Once cleared the land was fertile; a fact readily communicated by settlers to their families in Britain and Europe, where farmland and forest were in short supply. Two other advantages not found in Europe were that the land could be purchased outright rather than merely leased and, even better, the Penn family was not having much success in preventing squatters from clearing and using the land without payment of any kind.

Homes began to appear inland by the 1690s. But, they were occupied by the intrepid. Indian affairs had deteriorated significantly since Penn first returned to England in 1684 to defend his land from claims by New York and Maryland. The Indian tribes with whom Penn had formed treaties understood that the land they yielded to the settlers was "shared." Penn had granted land to purchasers subject to *Certain Conditions or Concessions* which required that 20% of all land grants remain forested (his Green Countrie as he called it) and that natives were to retain "the liberty to do all things... that any planter shall enjoy." The settlers still saw this as exclusive ownership. These differences produced understandable friction. Robert Proud's *History of Pennsylvania* (1797) notes that Indians were accused of slaughtering three families living along the Brandywine as early as 1688. That friction was augmented by another consequence of immigration. As European settlers increased, natives became more and more exposed to Europe's communicable diseases to which they had no immunity. These included smallpox, typhus, cholera and influenza. The effect of smallpox which first struck in 1663, was particularly devastating. How smallpox was transmitted was not understood, but it was clear that these infectious diseases decimated native villages near European settlements. The native population declined precipitously as did the beaver population which was the basis of their trade. The Germantown minister Daniel Pastorius wrote in 1694 that three quarters of the native population had disappeared since he arrived a decade before. Modern scholarship suggests that

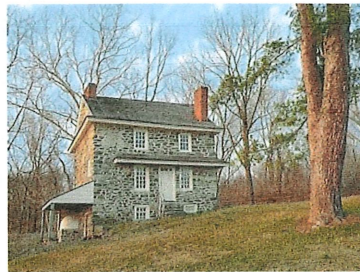
entire Delaware Valley may have had no more than 500 Native America inhabitants by 1700, which may help account for the description of the few remaining natives as “friendly.”\

Penn would return for a second visit to his Peaceable Kingdom in 1700, but by this time he was besieged with claims from unhappy first purchasers, settlers, creditors and others. He returned to England before any issues with the native community were addressed. Moreover, it was clear by 1700 that Penn’s grip over management of the colony was disintegrating. Truth is, that like all absentee landlords (he had been in England from 1684-99), his grip had been tenuous from the start.

By the early 1700s we see homes, mills and outbuildings which survive to today. Perhaps the best example of what homes looked like early on is found along Route 30 in Downingtown built about 1700. The Chad House dates to sometime after 1712.



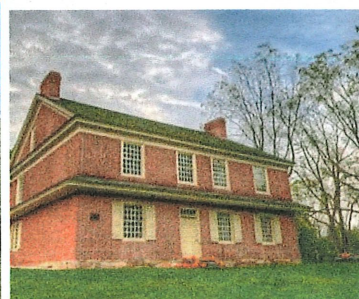
Downingtown Log



John Chad



1704 Brinton

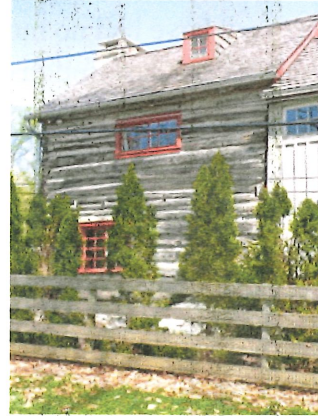


Pennock’s Primitive Hall

A more ornate version of Chad’s home is found in Birmingham Township near Chadds Ford in the 1704 Brinton House (above left). The restoration, done in the 1940s was to reflect how the home might have appeared in 1750. By 1714, another Quaker family, the Pennocks, moved to West Marlborough and in the 1730s they constructed a similar house of brick called Primitive Hall (page 8). The differences in the houses speaks to the comparative levels of security. The log house was almost windowless so that attackers had few ways to get inside. The Brinton House has large windows, signaling that its inhabitants felt more secure although the windows are somewhat elevated. By 1719 a German settler Christian Herr had built a simple stone dwelling in Willow Street (then Chester, now Lancaster County). Obviously wealth had much to do with both style and construction as is evidenced by the 1800 Lapp Log House on Conestoga Road (Rte. 401) just west of Bacton Hill Road in East Whiteland.



1705 Beehive House. 1375 S Concord Rd, West Chester



Lapp Log House. Conestoga & Spring Valley Rd., E. Whiteland

Readers should also be aware that many stylish homes from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are built around and thereby incorporate simple log and stone structures. You just can't see the colonial portion of the structure any longer.

As land was occupied, cleared and made productive, petitions were delivered to the court in Chester requesting surveys for and construction of new roads to carry grains to mills and finished products to the Philadelphia market. Residents of what came to be called Goshen petitioned the court for approval of a road from Downingtown to Philadelphia. It was approved for construction in 1705 and reached its inland destination by 1715. Goshen Road was extended in 1719 and by 1724 it crossed the Brandywine into Bradford and Caln Townships. Providence Road would run from just outside Chester to Malvern, where it stops today near Historic Sugartown. It was approved in 1710.

Goshen itself was part of the Welsh or Welch Tract that appears in the earliest maps of Pennsylvania and is shown on page 8. This land was acquired by Quakers from Wales who provided us with many of the picturesque names that befuddle people from outside the region, including Tredyffrin, Bala Cynwyd, Bryn Mawr, Uwchland and Nantmeal. Most of the first purchasers who came from Wales remained close to Philadelphia but as their children grew older and needed land of their own, many owners conveyed this frontier land in Goshen and Whiteland Townships to their progeny. By 1702 a petition was presented to the Providence Quaker Meeting in Media to establish an affiliate meeting in Goshen. Seven years later a log meeting house was erected and a village started to form where Paoli Pike meets the Chester Road (Rte. 352) along a path that dates to 1687 and was completed as far as Frazer in 1693. The blacksmith shop is still extant but has not been used since 1940. Historic Sugartown, a collection of largely 19<sup>th</sup> century buildings brought to that site, is located on Boot Road a mile east of the meeting house and school at Sugartown.

As immigrants arrived and moved inland to the fertile lands of Chester and later Lancaster County (1730) they wanted roads built to convey their crops to markets in

Philadelphia, Chester and New Castle, Delaware. The Boot Road began at Powell's Ferry near Fairmount and traveled west through Haverford past the "Sign of the Boot" north of West Chester (at Phoenixville Pike) and ending at the East Branch of the Brandywine Creek. The Providence Road dates to 1710 and begins in Chester and ends near Historic Sugartown just south of the Boot Road in East Goshen Township. The Goshen Road is not far away and dates to 1719. In the 1730s we see the emergence of the King's Highway. It runs from Lancaster east toward Malvern where it merges into Route 30. In Lancaster it is termed the Old Philadelphia Pike

Particularly irksome to the Indians was the purchase in 1724 of a large tract of land by Nicholas Newlin in the township which today bears his name. Native Americans had long occupied land near Northbrook Road on the west branch of the Brandywine where a canoe rental company is located today. There is actually a native burial ground on Brandywine Drive which was excavated by local students of anthropology in the 1870s and deeded back to the Lenape nation in 2022. Newlin subdivided what he saw as "his" land and made clear that he had no intention to share it. The Brandywine Indians took this dispute to the colonial Assembly. This is a complex story described in C.A. Weslager's 1953 book *Red Men on the Brandywine*. Suffice to say that preservation of written instruments recording their property rights was not something the natives were adept at and many of the newer settlers from Europe had little interest in assisting them in preserving land grants the Indians thought Penn's agents and family members would honor. The fact that Penn visited his lands only twice before his death in 1718 also signaled that he had little authority over his woods. By 1729 the Indians who were trying to preserve land rights in the region joined with long time adversaries, the Susquehannocks, in departing the Brandywine Valley for the frontier of central Pennsylvania.

While native claims to land ownership were viewed by Penn's successors as a nuisance, the claims of first purchasers and their grantees were also mired in problems. Penn acquired more than 40,000 square miles of land that had never been surveyed. He sold it to investors who, at best, acquired undefined "shares" of his grant. Those investors then made an application for a survey; a survey (warrant) and a survey return culminating in a patent (deed). The process was cumbersome as can be seen from how some early Pennsylvania maps show entirely regular lots and some lots which appear as if surveyed by inebriates. Early land patents can make for fascinating reading; often beginning with words like "from a hemlock tree North of the mouth of the French Creek thence west 40 perches (or rods) to a rock...."

As noted, purchasers had to subscribe to a document known as *Certain Conditions or Concessions agreed upon by William Penn and those Who are the Adventurers and Purchasers*. Some of these were land concessions typical to England while others, like the references to woodlot preservation and Indian rights, represented Penn's views on planning and sharing his grant. For example, those acquiring 1,000 or more acres needed to occupy that land with others within three years. To attract settlers from less affluent classes, land was available to lease for

modest prices. Under this scheme Penn had sold some 700,000 acres to investors throughout Britain and Europe before ever boarding the *Welcome* to sail here. In the early days of incorporation he had also formed a joint stock company called the Free Society of Traders. Philadelphia historians focus upon the land purchases in today's "Society Hill" section of the city but the same group also acquired large parcels in modern Chester County including New Garden, Newlin, and London Grove to the south as well as the Vincent and Pikeland townships in the north.

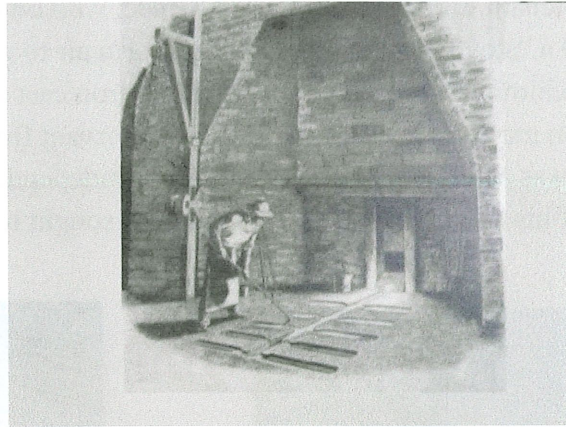
## 5. THE DISCOVERY OF IRON

Economic opportunity was not limited to agriculture and husbandry. In 1716 the iron industry begins at Rutter's Bloomery just beyond the northern border of Chester County on the Manatawny Creek in modern Pottstown. One year later, the Grace and Potts families open the Coventry Forge in Bucktown, just west of where Rtes. 100 and 23 intersect. Coventryville is worthy of note because many of its early buildings are largely unchanged from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This stretch of modern Rte. 23 from Valley Forge all the way to the Susquehanna River would become a center of the American Iron industry from 1716 until the days leading up to the Civil War. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries historian Arthur Bining observed that a person travelling west on Rte. 23 at night could following the light emitted from the furnaces and forges lining the road. This image was captured in novelist Joseph Hergesheimer's 1917 novel about the region, "The Three Black Pennys."

Iron pits can still be identified in areas such as Chester Springs although today they may appear as small ponds. The iron found in this region was superior to that in most of this country and Europe. It was also not far from the land surface. To process iron required a furnace into which were loaded the iron ore, limestone and charcoal. The charcoal was obtained by lightly burning wood so that it exuded heat rather than be consumed by flame. It required half an acre of hardwood to produce each ton of iron and to do this forest was cut at the rate of an acre a day. Limestone was found in large quantities in a belt of land along the Swedesford Road extending from King of Prussia west through Coatesville and to the border with Lancaster County. The limestone would be heated to produce quicklime which can also be used as a form of cement or mortar. The iron furnaces would be heated for several days and then the seal at the bottom of the furnace would be breached so that molten iron would run out into "pigs" or small trays cut into sand. This "pig" iron was quite brittle but when taken to a forge and hammered repeatedly with large mechanical hammers, the result was a much more durable wrought iron. Wrought iron was highly purified and if you walk Bridge or Church Streets in Phoenixville and look up to the second and third floors of the buildings, many 19<sup>th</sup> century examples of wrought iron balconies and rails remain today. There are similar examples found in central West Chester such as the Everhart Building at 28 West Market Street.



The Everhart Building from 1833 with ironwork porch.



Iron running from the furnace into the “pigs”.

The northwestern corner of Chester County bordering Montgomery and Berks County remained, until the late 1850s, a center of the iron industry in this country. Families named Rutter, Potts, Morris, Lincoln, Bird and Nutt intermarried and presided over the construction of more than 50 iron furnaces and forges in a region that extended seventy miles from Valley Forge west to Lebanon. These factories or plantations as they were sometimes called, included Reading (or Redding 1720), Warwick (1730), Colebrookdale (1720), Coventry (1720), Warren Point (1753) Isabella (1835), Joanna (1792), Hibernia (1793) Hopewell(1770), Laurel (1793) Mt. Hope (1805) and Elizabeth (1750). They produced cast stoves and hollowware such as pots and kettles. Pig, cast and bar iron were shipped to forges to make other products.

Iron production in this region helped to make Philadelphia the leading manufacturing city in ante-bellum America. Iron production contributed to the ordnance that fought the Revolution and then shifted to make boilers for locomotives and other steam driven engines as well as the rails on which they travelled. By 1790 Pennsylvania was producing almost half of the nation's iron, much of it in the northwest quadrant of Chester County. By 1845 the iron business was shifting west to places like Armstrong and Allegheny Counties. Isabella Furnace was the last iron furnace erected in the region at 261 Bollinger Road, Elverson. It ceased operations in 1894.

Along the way, a personal friendship seems to have given birth to a remarkable invention. Anna Rutter was the daughter of Thomas Rutter, the fellow generally credited with starting the iron business in this region. Anna married Thomas Savage, another iron magnate. That produced several children, one of whom was Rebecca Savage, born in 1718. When Thomas Savage died in 1720, Anna was left with six children and an ironworks to manage. So, in 1726, she married again into the business, this time to Samuel Nutt, Jr. These families grow even tighter when Samuel Nutt's nephew married his stepdaughter (Rebecca). Five years later Sam, Jr. died leaving Rebecca owning her father's interest and her mother, Anna, as co-owner of ironworks at Coventry Forge, Redding and Warwick Furnaces. Rebecca next married Robert Grace, a friend and ally of Benjamin Franklin. Franklin was a frequent guest at the forges and in the early 1740s.

He was actually tenant of ironmaster Robert Grace, who owned property in Philadelphia. Franklin devised a “stove” which would allow warm air to circulate inside the fireplace before traveling up the chimney. The stove was made of iron cast at Warwick Furnace. In 1745 John Potts was the iron master. He hired an indentured servant from Ireland George Taylor to function as clerk. Taylor was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. When a widower himself and after the death of his friend Robert Grace, Franklin sought to marry Rebecca but she turned him down.



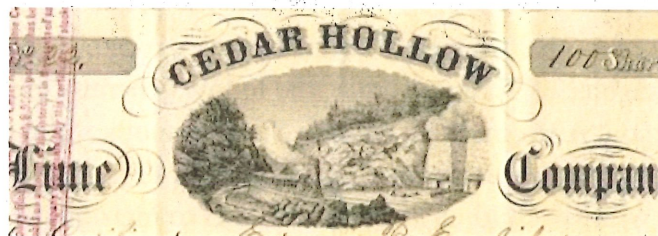
Coventry Hall where the Franklin stove was tested in 1742.



Hopewell Furnace closed in 1883; restored in 1938.

The furnaces used in the making of iron were fired by charcoal made from burning large ricks of hardwood. Even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, people were concerned about deforestation. In 1775 Pennsylvania produced 30,000 tons of iron but it consumed 14,000 acres (22 sq. mi.) of forest to do it. The adoption of bituminous and anthracite coal as more efficient heating mechanisms coupled with discovery of much larger iron deposits in and around areas like Pittsburgh signaled a slow end to the age of iron in this region although Coatesville remains an active furnace to this day. Phoenix Steel operated until 1987. Worthington Steel closed its Malvern plant in 2002.

## 6. LIMESTONE



An area extending from Fort Washington in Montgomery County west through Honey Brook was in prehistoric times a sea of water occupied by corals and shellfish. The remains of these creatures formed over time into 35 miles of limestone deposits. Limestone has many uses. It is a building stone. When burned with wood and coal it becomes quicklime which can be used

to improve soil, produce cement or mortar as well as plaster and whitewash (an inexpensive form of paint). Poor quality limestone is used in roadbuilding. In a word, limestone was and remains an immensely useful material.

The Great Valley extending from Port Kennedy near Valley Forge along the Swedesford Road contains a wealth of lime as well as deposits of marble. A marble quarry was located just off Ship Road (146 South) in Exton at the intersection of Quarry Lane. Another was at Boot and Kirkland Roads, also in West Whiteland. Immediately to the north and extending into Berks and Lebanon Counties are extensive deposits of iron ore. As one travels the region the importance of lime in 19<sup>th</sup> century Pennsylvania is echoed by numerous still extant lime kilns, such as are found near Plymouth Meeting and in Berks County villages such as Limeport. Locally, there are remnants of these kilns near the 1833 Thomas Marble Quarry off Quarry Lane and Whitford Road southwest of Exton.

The heyday of the Chester County lime industry begins with the construction of the Chester Valley Railway from Swedesburg (near Bridgeport) west to Downingtown in 1853. Commercial quarrying began two years later. It is depicted in the stock certificate above with limekilns shown to the right of the locomotive. In and around Howellville (Rte. 252) there were 7 quarries many of which today are part of the Daylesford Lakes community. The lime was used as a base for roads and rail track. There remain five tenant houses including one occupied by British General Grey before his attack on Paoli in 1777. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Howellville was largely occupied by Polish, then Hungarian and later, Italian immigrants who worked the pits and processing operations. In its day, which extended to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the area was a noisy one with frequent explosions to loosen the rock and immense crushers designed to reduce that rock to roadstone or powder.

From the time quarrying operations began, operators were in a constant battle to pump out groundwater from aquifers. The arrival of electricity early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century allowed pumping and quarrying to become more ambitious but a lengthy power outage in the 1930s flooded the Howellville operations. The descendants of Llewellyn David (later Davis) ran what is today the Westlakes Quarry for two centuries until 1917. It was sold to Sam Given, a man who had lost both of his arms in an explosion. Later, these pits would be employed producing concrete until they were abandoned.

Just east of today's Route 29 is Cedar Hollow. It is the oldest, the largest and most favored operation in the valley because of the quality of the limestone. This limestone was used to build the 1846 Chester County Court House on Market and High Streets. By the 1830s lime became widely accepted as fertilizer. The area was dotted with more than 100 lime kilns. Lime in all of its forms was shipped into Philadelphia for use as plaster, cement and for agricultural purposes.

In 1900 the Cedar Hollow Co. was acquired by Wilmington's Charles Warner. Warner Co. expanded its holdings to 200 acres in response to a new innovation that would change

America; poured concrete. Warner erected 30 bungalows along Yellow Springs Road to house workers of all colors and ethnic origins. Some of the houses were made of concrete. The Warner Company employed social workers to “Americanize” the employees from Europe. By 1959 the Cedar Hollow pits were 100 feet deep and producing 400 tons of lime per day. Warner pioneered what today is called Ready Mix Concrete used to construct roads, bridges and buildings. The remains of this operation is a mixed use community known as Atwater along Yellow Springs Road and Route 29. The Cedar Hollow rail spur that ran along Yellow Springs Road and then South to Swedesford Road. The Chester Valley Railway ceased operations in the mid-1980s and Warner sold its operations to Waste Management in 1993. Eventually developer Trammel Crow acquired the site and converted it to the office park just as it had done in the late 1980s with the quarries at Westlakes in Tredyffrin Township.

## 7. INDIAN CONFLICT

As migration from Europe to America continued, the Native American “problem” did not go away. The influx of Europeans travelling inland exacerbated tensions and vexed both the Penn proprietors and their local governments. William Penn himself returned to England after a second visit to Pennsylvania in 1701. At or about the same time he granted 500 acres of land in Willistown Township to the Okehocking Band of the Lenni-Lenape (Delaware) Indians. Once back in England, Penn’s own world continued to disintegrate. He never was successful in collecting the rents due him for his land in America and financial pressures may have contributed to a disabling stroke in 1712. He would live another six years but his powers devolved first to his second wife, Hannah, and then to his sons, Richard and Thomas. Their interests focused on making the economics of Pennsylvania work for them and native relationships were left to suffer. A particular source of concern was the Brandywine River itself. While the Lenape were nomadic, they frequented villages along the river ranging from modern Wilmington to the source of the river near Honey Brook. Penn had acquired this land but then appears to have re-conveyed it such that the Indians believed that they had rights to occupy the land and fish the river from its mouth up to and through the west branch of the stream. They understood that they had exclusive rights to a mile on each side of the streambed. Meanwhile colonial officials granted patents to purchasers who ignored the re-conveyance. Although he was in Pennsylvania in 1701 when some of this dispute arose, Penn’s attention was focused on returning to England to stop efforts by Parliament to end his proprietorship and make Pennsylvania a crown colony.

Relations with the natives remained mixed. Accounts found in both Penn biographies and histories of native Americans seem to agree that the proprietor, or Brother Onas as the Iroquois called him (Onas is Algonquin for quill which translates to “Pen”-get it?), really did aspire to a peaceable kingdom in America. Candidly, despite good intentions and laws that sought to treat natives fairly, Penn was having enough difficulty dealing with his fellow Quakers and the government in London, let alone pacify quarreling landowners an ocean away. The native

population was already declining because of western disease and immigration that made the region seem crowded by Indian standards. There was trade between the tribes and the settlers but resentment was increasing. A particular source of conflict was alcohol. Distilled spirits were unknown to Native Americans until white settlers arrived. The effect upon the native community had no real parallel until recently when we have seen modern society flooded by the arrival of opioids. The destructive effect of alcohol on a population that had never consumed it was remarkable to both the Europeans who were distributing it and the natives consuming it. As with modern drugs, laws were enacted to make sales of alcohol to Indians illegal but they were commonly ignored. The irony was best expressed by the Lenape chief Teedyuscung who observed: "The Indians think it no harm to get drunk whenever they can. But you white men say it is a sin and get drunk notwithstanding." As historian C.A. Weslager noted, the native community saw its lands inundated with white settlers who transmitted deadly diseases no one understood. Migrants from Europe like to profess they brought "civilization" to America. In one sense Native American life was improved by introduction of iron cooking implements, metal hatchets, domesticated animals and, yes, firearms. But the "we brought civilization" narrative has been challenged by recent historians who observe that Native Americans were combative at times but had few instances of famine, plague or other dangers of systemic collapse until the Europeans arrived. What Europeans did bring together with their "civilization" included blackflies, cockroaches (*Periplaneta americana* came from Africa), rats, and house mice (*mus musculus*). These critters assisted humans in the transmission of diseases unknown to America including bubonic plague, smallpox, measles and typhus. It was to be expected that the oppressed natives might resort to abuse of substances which took away the pain of seeing their families destroyed by disease. We know, then as now, that alcohol can trigger crime and other depredations. In many instances, both natives and Europeans looked the other way rather than risk a major confrontation over distribution of distilled spirits. As Moravian missionary John Heckewelder concluded: "Our vices have destroyed them more than our swords."

In 1725, Chief Checochican of the Brandywine branch of Lenape appeared in Philadelphia with some of his people to address the General Assembly. They argued that their land was taken and that the Brandywine

was being dammed such that the fish forming a part of their diet could no longer pass upriver. The Assembly appointed a committee to investigate and the records show that the issue was taken seriously. Alas, there is no record of any positive action to address Lenape grievances. A year later when the same Brandywine Indians returned to protest that there had been no progress James Logan responded that the archives had no document showing that Penn had reconveyed the Brandywine land to them. The Assembly did summon Nathaniel Newlin from the township which now bears his name and the Speaker remonstrated with Newlin to avoid "disturbing" the Indians. Newlin said he would abide by that direction but the discussion never raised the subject of abandoning his claimed land. Truth is that Newlin had purchased his tract from the Society of Free Traders and he had sold to others in reliance upon his deeds.

In 1728, matters boiled over. An incident occurred near the Montgomery-Berks County border northwest of Pottstown that convulsed the colony as it threatened every colonist living west of Philadelphia. At that time various groups of Indians would visit and trade with white settlers. These events often involved both trading and drinking, two activities that could descend into hostilities. Reports reached Philadelphia of a group of Indians massacring a family near Faulkner's Swamp north of Pottstown. Upon learning of this, some white settlers organized to secure retribution. Others settlers decamped in search of safer quarters nearer to Philadelphia. On May 11, ironmaster Samuel Nutt wrote from the Coventry district that two men named John and Walter Wister had killed three Indians and then presented their children at the house of George Boone (Daniel's uncle) claiming a bounty. The alarm was such that residents throughout the region demanded that the government do something and on May 15, Governor Gordon journeyed inland to meet with all sides. He came with gifts, something that Native Americans saw as a form of compensation for tribesmen killed and injured. He met with Delawares, Shawnees, Ganawese and Mingoes at a village on the Susquehanna. Among the "gifts" were supplies of gunpowder, knives, flints and rum; items Indians had come to view as necessities. To settlers living in what was then "the back country" distributions of weapons and alcohol were viewed as arming the enemy. Worse still, there were calls among the residents of Philadelphia for European settlers who attacked natives to be brought to justice. In June the Wisters were convicted by a jury and the Governor ordered them executed. Author Patrick Spero has recently suggested that this misunderstanding marks the very beginning of the long standing conflict between "city dwellers" and the independence and resentment of people who even today live in "the back country." Today, we think of the back country as the American west. In 1728, Chester County was the American west. You can get to Los Angeles in less time than your ancestors required to get from Philadelphia to Downingtown. The crisis of 1728 was re-ignited in 1755. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* from October 30 reports that "Women and children from the back parts of Cumberland, Lancaster, and Berks County are all ...coming down to the Townships that are thickly settled and some of them are come to the city" as reports circulated of 1,500 French and Indian warriors were about to descend on Carlisle.

How can this be? We write in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At a non-rush hour time, any of us can travel from central Philadelphia to Exton, Pennsylvania in 45 minutes. A train accomplishes the same mission in 60 minutes. The geographic distance is 26 miles. Trains are not part of human experience until the 1830s. Automobiles are not part of that experience until early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus until the 1840s when locomotives replaced horse drawn railcars the speed one could achieve on foot or in a horse drawn wagon was about 3 miles an hour. Thus central Chester County was a eight hour walk or ride from Philadelphia. That pace requires a reasonably level and stable roadway. Accounts from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century inform us that stable roads were not a common part of the travel experience. Most accounts complain that between November and May, roads were seas of mud or ice, depending upon temperature. Even with the arrival of locomotive train service in the 1840s, the trip to the stops nearest to Exton required 3

hours of train travel. In 18<sup>th</sup> century America Chester County was the beginning of the frontier because you were a full day's journey to Philadelphia, the only town of consequence.

Conflicts between settlers and native Americans were exacerbated by new waves of immigration. Between 1710 and 1775 more than 200,000 people emigrated from Northern Ireland to the colonies, with more arriving in Pennsylvania than any other state. Many of these immigrants passed through Philadelphia and Chester County heading to western Pennsylvania and south to Virginia and the Carolinas by means of the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road (modern Rtes. 30 and I-81). They had no history of interaction with native Americans whom they saw as an annoyance where earlier settlers viewed them as a resource. By the 1760s, another crisis would arise when groups of Northern Irish immigrants organized attacks on Indian tribes. When the provincial government directed that the Irish bands be arrested and tried, a group of 250 called the Paxtang Boys took up arms and marched from central Pennsylvania toward Philadelphia through Chester County. The absence of any organized militia to resist what could have been a military assault on Pennsylvania's capital helped end pacifist Quaker control of the General Assembly. Quaker traders were viewed by frontier inhabitants as enabling Indian unrest through trade in alcohol and weapons.

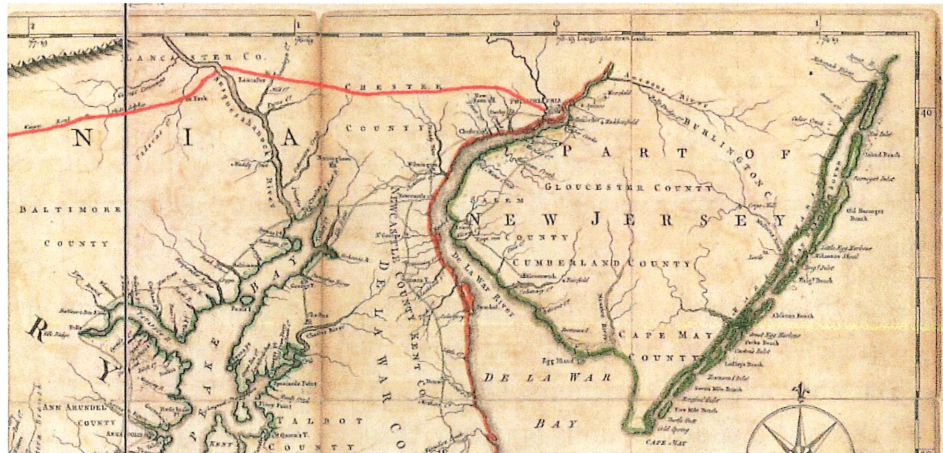
It would not be proper to move on beyond the history of Native Americans without reference to Hannah Freeman, more widely known as "Indian Hannah." Hannah's history might well have been forgotten but for the fact that at nearly 70 years of age, she sought permission to live out the balance of her life in Chester County's almshouse (i.e., poorhouse). In 1797 when she made her application, she was interviewed to ascertain which township should be responsible for her support. Hannah told her life story to her inquisitors and that story reveals much about life among the Indians. Hannah believed she was born in 1731 as part of the Lenni-Lenape tribe. Her parents lived on the property of William Webb in Newlin Township, north of Kennett Square. By the time of her birth the tribe had largely dispersed from Chester County. There was essentially no unclaimed land for native Americans to grow crops on. Those who remained, like Hannah's parents, survived by attaching themselves to friendly settlers in the county. But as violence escalated, Lenni-Lenape men who traditionally would hunt along the Susquehanna in winter decided that they had no reason to return to the Philadelphia region in summer. William Penn had granted 500 acres of land to a tribe in Willistown Township in 1701. But, for whatever reason, settlers bordered this reservation with Goshen Road and West Chester Pike. The tribe dwindled and dispersed to western and northern Pennsylvania. Today parts of that reservation are preserved as the Olkehocking Historic District. By 1769 the Willistown Meeting House was built adjacent to the Indian preserve. Hannah spent time in New Jersey with Quaker families and then returned to Chester County. Later still she lived with a family in New Castle, DE. Hannah performed domestic labor in exchange for room and board, payments in kind or small wages throughout her life. She would produce baskets, brooms and other handicrafts. Generalization is dangerous but early settlers who lived in close proximity with Native Americans accepted and to some degree embraced these people and their culture. During Joseph Pennock's lifetime in West

Marlborough Township (1714 -1771) it is said that the center hall of his home, Primitive Hall, was a common place for Indians to stay while passing through. The White Horse Tavern in Frazer was a trading post for Indians making their way between the Brandywine and Schuylkill Rivers. Unfortunately, the new immigrants from Europe heard of depredations by "Indians" and because these people were different and unknown, they developed an inclination to shoot first and inquire later. The best we can say, looking back three centuries, is that there was inconsistency and violence on both sides. Both natives and settlers practiced murder and torture. Another practice which caused immense controversy was that of kidnapping. As tribes found their populations dwindling, they augmented their families with children taken from other tribes or European settlers. Tensions were such that in April, 1756, Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor issued a proclamation offering cash rewards for the "scalp" of any Indian man or woman over the age of twelve. Little wonder that Indian Hannah moved as much as she did before dying in the Chester County almshouse in 1802. Meanwhile, although one would think that 19<sup>th</sup> century histories would have disparaged this last surviving relic of such contentious times, here is what was written about Hannah in 1824. "She had a proud and haughty spirit, hated the blacks and deigned not to associate with even the lower order of whites. ... In her conduct, she was perfectly moral and exemplary, and by no means given to intemperance, as many of her race were."

## 8. THE PHILADELPHIA WAGON ROAD

Modern Route 30, the Lancaster "Turnpike," has merited histories of its own. It was an Indian path adopted by settlers anxious to explore the west. Settlers began to stream westward early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Christian Herr, an émigré from Switzerland, built a house just south of Lancaster in 1719. That dwelling at 1849 Hans Herr Drive was also the first Mennonite place of worship in the Western hemisphere. A couple thousand feet from Herr's cabin is the Myelin Family gun shop. There's a lot of controversy about which Myelin modified the German Jaeger rifle into what became the Pennsylvania/Kentucky long rifle but that gunshop stood inside Chester County when it was erected in 1711 and the long rifle is an iconic piece of America's material culture. Lancaster itself dates to 1729. At that time it was severed from Chester County. York was laid out in 1741 and became a county eight years later. The Wagon Road followed modern Rte 30 west to York and then continued southward along what is today Interstate 81. It eventually extended all the way to Augusta, Georgia. Among those taking that trail were 15 individuals who left the Moravian settlement in Bethlehem and traveled nearly 500 miles to Winston-Salem N.C. where they founded Wachovia. We know the Lancaster Road as a conduit of products from farmland Pennsylvania to the markets and tables of Philadelphia and its suburbs. But in the 18<sup>th</sup> century huge numbers of immigrants landed at the Port of Philadelphia destined to "head west" to the Ohio and Shenandoah Valleys. Among the others feeling the call of the frontier was Squire Boone of the Oley Valley in Berks County. Disowned by his Quaker Meeting, Squire sold his land in 1750 and headed to North Carolina with his family, including 15 year old Daniel. They joined thousands who had come directly from the docks of Philadelphia.

Chester County was a conduit and a temporary home for people heading west who could rarely travel more than 20 miles per day on dirt roads. This would mean that even in good weather, travelers were destined to spend two days in Chester County before crossing into Lancaster County. The town of Winchester, Virginia would be founded by emigrants from Montgomery and Chester Counties. It would later be the temporary home of Quakers exiled from Pennsylvania during the Revolution because of their failure to support the war against Britain.



### 9. WHY CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS?

One cannot present a history of Chester County without noting the ubiquity and influence of the Quaker migration to America and Southeastern Pennsylvania in particular. Pennsylvania has been home to more than 75 Quaker meetings (as they term their congregations). Almost one third of them are within the borders of Chester County. Because Quaker values celebrate modesty and simplicity, many of the meetings houses are little changed from the time the buildings were first erected. A list of the meetings is offered because it shows that except for the industrial and more Germanic northwest quadrant of the county, it is apparent that by 1800 Quaker communities were *everywhere* in this county.

MEETING	FOUNDED	BUILT	19 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AFFILIATION
Old Kennett	1707	1731	Hicksite
Goshen	1709	1855	Hicksite/Orthodox
New Garden	1712	1743	Hicksite
Uwchland	1712	1763	Orthodox
Caln	1716	1782	Hicksite/Orthodox
Bradford	1716	1765	Orthodox
London Grove	1724	1818	
Birmingham	1726	1763	Hicksite/Orthodox
Willistown	1753	1798	
Downingtown	1784	1806	
Fallowfield	1792	1811	Hicksite

Marlboro	1799	1801	
Schuylkill	1807	1812	formerly Charlestown
Doe Run	1808	1883	
West Chester	1810	1868	
Parkerville	1830	1830	
Holmeville	1839	1839	Upper Oxford
Unionville	1845	1845	
Longwood	1854	1854	
Oxford	1876	1879	

Were we to include meeting houses within a stone's throw of the county borders, there would probably be a dozen more to add. This was Quaker territory and it actually began before William Penn's arrival.

The Quaker faith as practiced in 21<sup>st</sup> century America is quite different than the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century experience. Today we would use terms such as "pacifist", "contemplative" and "passive" to describe the 87,000 practicing Quakers in the United States. Pacifist and contemplative remain valid descriptions but early Quakers were far from passive. Founders George Fox and William Penn spent a fair amount of time inhabiting English jails in their day because of their beliefs. Benjamin Lay of Germantown caused an uproar in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century community around Philadelphia in his campaign to denounce Quakers who either owned or trafficked in slaves. Benjamin Lay died in 1759 when Elias Hicks was eleven years old. Hicks, a Long Island Quaker, insisted that Quakers were not doing enough to abolish slavery in the 1820s and his demands caused a split in the faith that was not repaired for another 100 years. In the chart above, the reader can see how the religion split. In Birmingham and Goshen, there were meetinghouses erected within 100 yards of each other, one Hicksite, one Orthodox. The split was not merely related to slavery. Hicks condemned mainstream religion, including his own, as too tied to tradition and superstition. Pacifism was one thing. Passivism was inconsistent with the life lived by Jesus. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Quakers outside Pennsylvania and New Jersey were afforded some rough treatment. During the Revolution both American and British soldiers targeted Quaker farms for depredation as most Quakers avoided taking sides in the conflict. In the Civil War and in the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well, Quakers sought draft deferments and instead volunteered as ambulance drivers or nurses rather than take up arms. This volunteer service did not sit well with non-Quakers in the community who often experienced the wartime death of husbands and children. The Hicksite rebellion prompted other fissures. In 1852 the Longwood Meeting split over whether non-Quakers (e.g., abolitionists of other faiths) could address the annual meeting. This started a tradition where there were separate indoor and outdoor meetings. The latter permitted anyone to address the congregants. Among those who spoke at Longwood Meeting were Lucretia Mott and non-Quakers Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. By 1890 the "outdoor" Quakers had invited guests from the newly formed

Knights of Labor, the forerunner of the American labor movement. The Knights espoused radical concepts such as an eight hour workday and the right of women to receive equal pay and to vote.

Modern Quaker faith is one that accepts diversity. But, early adherents to the faith are better compared with Amish and Jewish traditions. Quakers who married outside the faith were excommunicated (actually “disowned”). Clothing traditions were also conservative and until the 20<sup>th</sup> century members of the faith wore garments which in both color and design made their simple values apparent. Ostentation in appearance or in material possessions of any kind was to be avoided. Quakers did not oppose interaction with those outside the “community.” But one thing that made the Quaker world so successful was the existence of a Quaker “network” that included friends in Britain, Europe and the Caribbean. Known for being trustworthy, Quakers were often selected to mediate issues and hold money for others in a day before banks became popular. Today, this region continues to host dozens of Quaker founded schools. Most started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the basis that only members of the faith were admitted. The financial distress of the Great Depression of the 1930s may have had more to do with opening enrollment to these institutions than changes in Quaker philosophy. The Westtown School admitted non-Quakers in 1933. Yet, while there is a history of Quaker exclusivity, it has yielded to one of enlightenment and inclusiveness. There is a website that describes Quaker worship. It is not, by any means, conventional. <https://youtu.be/hxjH4sa2RFI>

In sum, the Quaker experience of Chester County was both varied and contentious. Quakers of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century were often separate. But they drove Chester County in the direction of abolition, universal education and women’s equality. That is not to suggest that the community was unified in support of these views. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, the governing body for most Chester County Quakers did not actually forbid slave ownership until 1759. The sect had solid control of the General Assembly until the French and Indian War when the Assembly’s failure to support military action to suppress Indian uprisings caused the Paxtang Rebellion and gave rise to other insurrections in the western part of the colony. By 1776 the religion split over the revolution produced fighting Quakers like Gen. Nathaniel Greene while many local pacifist Quakers were exiled to internment in Virginia by Pennsylvania’s radical government because they would not sign oaths of loyalty to the government.

## 10. THE GERMANS

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century there was no Germany as we know it today. Modern Germany was then a collection of small countries, not entirely different than the collection of tribes forming the Six Nations or Iroquois empire. The Protestant reformation had unleashed animosities and violence throughout Europe. The Germanic states were a hotbed of religious controversy. William Penn was aware of this and he pitched oppressed groups in Europe with the idea of coming to America where their faiths would be tolerated. In response, a group of German Quakers and Mennonites purchased 15,000 acres of Pennsylvania; land that is today the Germantown section of Philadelphia.

The thrust of German migration traveled north through Montgomery County along the Bethlehem Pike and northwest toward Skippack, Reading and beyond. German migration also travelled west although these groups largely passed through Chester County west to Lancaster, York and then south into Maryland and Virginia. Between 1727 and the outbreak of the Revolution 65,000 Germanic people migrated to Pennsylvania. While Chester County never hosted any large enclaves of these migrants, individual families and small groups did settle throughout the county. A settlement outside Spring City in 1743 produced Brumbach's Church and the northern region of the county near Pottstown has a high concentration of German peoples even today. The Germans were renowned for their agricultural skills and their enterprise. They introduced a barn which originated in Switzerland and which was built into the side of a hill so that cattle could be fed with silage that was threshed and stored on the upper floors of the same barn. These barns were so well constructed that many survive today and this form of barn can be found as far west as Nebraska because of its practicality and durability.

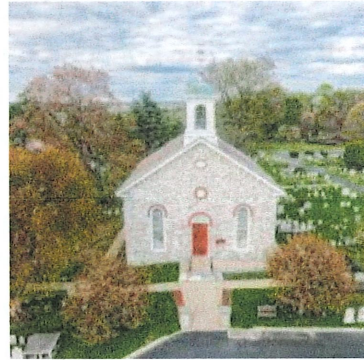
The Amish came to Pennsylvania from Southern Germany and Switzerland beginning in the 1720s. Initially, they joined other German immigrants in traveling west out the Germantown Pike to Berks County. However, in the 1760s many moved southward to Churchtown (Rte. 23). We tend to think of the Amish as residents of Lancaster, Lebanon and York County, but a drive down Route 10 from Morgantown to Oxford (the Limestone Road) will remind the traveler that there are a dozen Amish congregations in Chester County. In fact, until the 1830s there were Amish residents living in Tredyffrin and Charlestown Townships although their numbers were small.

During the Protestant Reformation in Europe, a cleric named Menno Simon formed a religious group known as Mennonites. In 1693 followers of Jacob Amman split with the Mennonites and formed the Amish faith. Both faiths were persecuted in western Europe and that prompted their voyage to America. Today Lancaster County has the largest Amish population in the world. Each church district contains 20-40 families who worship in each other's homes. Each district issues its own self-governing laws, termed an *ordnung*, and is presided over by a bishop chosen by lot. The Amish residents tourists come to observe are Old Order Amish. They split from other sects within the Anabaptist world between 1850 and 1870. In doing so, they chose to eschew a rising tide of modern conveniences and most have never adopted ownership or use of tractors, motor vehicles, electricity or other appliances that bring too much connection or dependence on the modern world. Twentieth century developments with battery power and refrigeration needed to keep dairy products from spoiling have produced some curious exceptions to these rules. The Amish believe that they are en route to a greater place and that humility and care for their religious community is central to happiness. In an age of individualism, theirs is a fascinating faith. The group has a fast rising population since a large family is valued as among God's gifts. Thus, the average household has five children.

Although their numbers would never rival the German and Northern Irish migrations, early Chester County was heavily populated by emigrants from Wales. The Welsh immigrants actually arrived to claim their 30,000 acre purchase two months before William Penn reached his new colony. The Welsh Tract took in parts of Tredyffrin Township, thus the Welsh inspired name. Migration brought not only Quakers but Welsh Baptists, as can be attested by formation of the Baptist Church in the Great Valley in 1711 and the construction of the diminutive London Tract (Baptist) Meeting House in 1729. The Evans Family migrated to the White Clay Creek area around Landenberg by 1700.



London Tract Baptist 1729



Great Valley Baptist 1711

## 11. THE SCOTS-IRISH

To those not familiar with the history of Great Britain, the term Scots-Irish is an anomaly. When Henry VIII decided to renounce Catholicism and establish his own Church of England in 1534 he ignited a controversy that would burn for the next 450 years. Catholics in Ireland never accepted his renunciation of the Catholic Church, so Henry invaded Northern Ireland and sent English residents to occupy that territory. As time passed non Catholics in the North tired of what remains an endless conflict. Largely farmers, they learned of Penn's acquisition of land in the New World and just after 1700, they began to emigrate from Belfast and Londonderry to Philadelphia. By 1710 they had erected a small cabin to serve as a church on property at 2025 Swedesford Road, just north of Paoli where the Great Valley Presbyterian Church is found today. Beginning in 1729 the numbers leaving Northern Ireland swelled to roughly 6,000 per year and held at that level for much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They traveled inland establishing a second church at the Forks of the Brandywine in 1734 although a church building at 1648 Horseshoe Pike did not come until thirty years later. Coming from a place rife with religious conflict that often turned deadly, they were not afraid to confront anyone who threatened their land holdings, whether natives or the "so called" government in Philadelphia. In fact from 1742 until 1758 they fought among themselves over whether ministers had to be ordained and whether itinerant preachers should be regulated. While Chester County was not a focal point of these controversies, chances are good that if you wandered around the county in the 1750s and 1760s you would have heard much grumbling about the "Irish" troublemakers in the west. One local place of controversy was the sanctuary of local Presbyterian Churches. Churches such as the

Great Valley Presbyterian were started by local Welsh immigrants and services were offered in that language. As the 18<sup>th</sup> century brought a stream of Scotch-Irish immigrants who were also Presbyterian, the mixing of the congregants and their cultures did not always go smoothly. A new Presbyterian Church was erected in Charlestown on foundations of what is today the Charlestown Playhouse on Rte 29. Curiously, in 1791 the two congregations united in employing the same pastor but were not inclined to share the same building.

William Penn was not just a lawyer and a preacher but a land speculator in his own right. The earliest maps from the 1680s show lands in Southeastern Pennsylvania owned by Richard Whitpain, a London butcher. Dr. Daniel Coxe, who owned huge tracts in the Vincent Townships was a physician to the king. The London Company owned 16,000 acres of county land, mostly in the south, thus yielding township names like London Grove, Londonderry and London Britain. Ownership often changed hands in Britain and many owners never set foot in America. Meanwhile settlers were not adverse to occupying these lands and claiming them as their own until challenged. It did not help that these disputes involved surveying and trials to decide ownership at the county seat in Chester (not West Chester) on the Delaware River. While Germanic people tended to live in close proximity with each other, the other immigrants were prepared to live amongst people of other cultural and religious backgrounds. The Scots-Irish immigrants came mainly through Philadelphia and dispersed west through Chester County and onto Lancaster, then York and Dauphin Counties before heading south down what is today Route 81 into Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia.

## 12. BORDER WARS

As noted earlier, the question of where Maryland ended and Pennsylvania began had been a source of constant tension between the Penn family and the Calvert family. The grant to the latter was to extend to the 40<sup>th</sup> parallel.



Map made part of 1760 Final Agreement



Land claims as posed by Maryland & Pennsylvania

The 40<sup>th</sup> parallel is about where the Roosevelt Boulevard crosses the Schuylkill River at East Falls and runs west to the center of Lancaster today. Thus, in Chester County, anything south of Downingtown and Malvern would have been the property of Maryland from the viewpoint of Lord Baltimore's family. This would have meant that the Penn's dream of Philadelphia and ownership of any inhabited land in southern Pennsylvania would have been lost, so pressure was applied with varying degrees of success in London to resolve this land dispute.

Wars over who ruled the Palatinate near Cologne in modern Germany drove many peoples from that region of Europe to search for a peaceful and productive place to farm. Word came back from America that Pennsylvania tolerated religious diversity and had navigable streams as well as fecund land. These new immigrants came to Philadelphia and also pushed west along the Lancaster Road with the settlements in Lancaster in 1729 and York in 1741.

In 1726, a Quaker named John Wright began to occupy land on the Susquehanna River near today's Wrightsville (just west of Lancaster). By 1730 he applied to operate a ferry across the river. A Marylander named Thomas Cresap started his own ferry four miles south of the Wright ferry. Since Germans wishing to cross the river had to do so at one ferry or the other, Wright and Cresap effectively began selling the same land on behalf of both colonies, including some land that was already cleared and occupied. In October, 1730 some boats from Pennsylvania began to fire on Cresap's ferry. Cresap swore out an arrest warrant to present to a Pennsylvania magistrate. Needless to say, his request was not warmly received since he was not a "liver" in Pennsylvania. This produced what is called "Cresap's War" or the Conojocular War where disputes turned violent over who owned land west of the Susquehanna. In 1732 an

agreement was formed between the Penns and the Calverts trying to define a border but some members of the Calvert family renounced the deal. Eventually, in 1738, London demanded that both sides adhere to the 1732 agreement. Still, because the land was verdant and valuable, disputes were multiplying absent a definitive boundary. The matter went into litigation and was decided by Lord Hardwicke's 1750 ruling in *Penn v. Lord Baltimore*.

Land so highly valued merited a complete survey. The compromise reached was 39 degrees 43 minutes and astronomer Charles Mason and astronomer-surveyor Jeremiah Dixon were tasked with plotting and marking the new border in 1763. This survey line 83 miles north – south and 233 miles east west is considered a milestone scientific achievement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this age of computers and satellites it is still considered amazingly accurate. Mason and Dixon began at a dwelling which today would be found under the Rte I-95 at South Street in Philadelphia and travelled in two directions. Even then, there remained 600 acres of land (the “wedge”) bordering Pennsylvania and Delaware that was not decided until 1921. Mason and Dixon devoted five years to trekking through the woods from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. In Chester County, their work is preserved by the Stargazer's Stone at Rte. 162 in Embreeville. Here the astronomers constructed a place to measure from using the stars. They would return to this property and the Harlan home located on it many times to assure themselves of the uniformity of their measurements. The Harlan House was their winter quarters for several years. The Harlan Family occupied the house from 1724 until 1956. The Stargazer's Stone is recorded as one of 125 civil engineering landmarks identified by the American Society of Civil Engineers.



Harlan House: S. Fairville Rd west of Rte.52



The Stargazer's Stone enclosed in 1908

At times facts give birth to legends. The story goes that as Mason & Dixon passed through what is today Landenberg they encountered a youngster. This otherwise harmless event became a problem when the child picked up Mason's pocketwatch and swallowed it. The legend is that Mason cursed the child and the watch continued to tick in the child's body until he died. Eighty years later while resident in Philadelphia, Edgar Allen Poe wandered into Chester County and heard of the legend. His theme for his 1843 short story “The Tell Tale Heart” is from that legend. Poe's travels extended north to Phoenixville where it appears he was hosted by a local

physician, Dr. Samuel Whitaker. Either as a fee or gratuitously, Poe inscribed to Whitaker a copy of his poem “The Raven” sometime after 1845. The family sold the copy in the 1920s.



Spread Eagle Tavern

### 13. TAVERNS

Taverns were places of public accommodation and, as such, needed to be regulated. So counties required anyone wishing to operate a public house to apply to the county court for a license each year. There are records of such licensing in Chester County from 1723 to 1923 when prohibition came into effect. <https://www.chesco.org/1701/Tavern-Petitions-1700-1923> Many “tavern” buildings remain in existence today. Over time taverns developed into different classes. In Chester County’s early history most licensed taverns were drovers taverns providing rudimentary services; a meal of stew and space on the floor to sleep. By the 1770s taverns had many different levels of service with City Tavern on Second Street in Philadelphia, Fraunces Tavern in New York and the Raleigh Tavern in Williamsburg being elegant hostels. Meanwhile most taverns outside major towns were not much more than rudimentary buildings offering simple beer, stew and common straw covered beds. Peter Thompson’s *Rum Punch and Revolution* describes how the tavern system evolved. A gentleman would stay at a tavern or “stage stand” as members of Congress did when fleeing to Lancaster and York as Philadelphia was being captured by the British in 1777. Many found accommodation at the Ship Inn near present Downingtown (130 South Lloyd Ave), a hamlet half way en route to Lancaster at the time.

In Chester County, where Swedesford Road intersects with Rte. 252 stands a small village known as Howellville. It is reputed to have been the site of a tavern as early as 1712. Further west on Swedesford Road where it intersects with Conestoga Rd (Rte. 401) you find a 1720 tavern known as the Three Bottles. A couple miles west of the Three Bottles is the “Sign of the White Horse” at 606 Swedesford Rd in Frazer. These properties are today, private residences, but they retain 18<sup>th</sup> century characteristics. The Barns-Brinton House on the Baltimore Pike just below Chadds Ford was built in 1714 and operated as an inn from 1722 to 1731.



Barns Brinton House. Chads Ford c. 1905



The White Horse, 606 Swedesford, Frazer

The Eagle Tavern just above the Downingtown turnpike exit on Rte. 100 may date to 1700 although the building you see today has origins from 1799. In 1734 the Bull Tavern opens on Route 23 near the mouth of the Pickering Creek. Two years later a license is sought for the Seven Stars further west of Phoenixville along today's Route 23. In the same year the Sign of the Ship opened along the Old Lancaster Road at Lloyd Avenue in Thorndale, just west of Downingtown. It is today an Italian restaurant but its buildings reflect its history as an inn. Traces of the original Lancaster Turnpike run in front of the main house. The Red Rose Inn in West Grove dates to the 1730s although it is not clear whether it was an inn at the outset. This is also true of the King of Prussia Tavern just outside of Chester County. The building, now relocated to Bill Smith Boulevard has origins to 1719 but is not identified as a public house until 1769. The General Warren in Malvern began as the Admiral Vernon in 1745 and then was re-named for Admiral Warren. It was at this tavern that the British Army halted on the evening of September 20, 1777 inquiring about the precise location of the American Army. Armed with that location and accompanied by 1,200 British and Hessian soldiers, the British pounced on an American camp of 2,500 in what was termed the "Paoli Massacre." The attack took place on Monument Avenue in modern Malvern. But Malvern did not exist in 1777 and those who record history thought the closest place name was the Paoli Tavern, just west of Valley Road.

The second version of the Blue Ball Tavern Is just a few hundred feet north of the Daylesford Train station on Old Lancaster Road. Its earlier incarnation, where General John Forbes stayed while accompanied by a British Army of over a thousand en route to Fort Duquesne in 1758, was several hundred feet south of the train station on the west side of Glenn Avenue. The old tavern was abandoned when the route of the Lancaster Pike was changed. The new tavern (today a residence) dates to 1799. Until the 1930s if you were headed west from Strafford, you had to take Old Lancaster Pike west to Daylesford (on the north side of the Conrail tracks) and continue west to Daylesford where you would cross under the tracks and then turn right onto Lancaster Pike along the south side of the railway.

Yellow Springs began as a tavern and evolved into a famous resort. The Lenape had discovered an iron spring in what is modern day Chester Springs. By 1722, a newspaper in

Philadelphia said the spring might be a place to visit to restore one's health in Summer. In the 1750s a tavern license is secured and barns were erected to stable horses for visitors. While the place became popular, it appears to have been financially unstable based upon many advertisements throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century offering the property for sale or lease. The American Army camped here on September 16, 1777 after the aborted Battle of the Clouds. Four months later Congress commissioned construction of a hospital at the site to treat men with communicable diseases while the army was camped at Valley Forge.

After the war, the Yellow Springs goes through a succession of owners. In 1822 Margaret Holman begins to manage the property after husband Frederick died. Under Margaret's management, the Yellow Springs became a destination of consequence, where hundreds of people stayed to "take the waters" emitted by iron, sulfur and magnesium springs. Holman employs Thomas Ustick Walter to design buildings which remain standing today. The village features hunting, fishing, ten pin alleys, fine wines and foods in addition to the restorative chalybeate waters. As early as 1818 a stagecoach line is established to carry passengers to the Springs from the Shakespeare Hotel near the State House in Philadelphia out today's Route 23 and then west through Kimberton. P.T. Barnum dispatches opera singer Jenny Lind and the Siamese twins Chang & Eng Bunker to amuse guests. But, as with all things fashionable, fashion moves on. Railroads made it possible to visit even more exotic places, such as Saratoga and the spas in western Virginia. Beginning in the 1820s Americans begin to resort to the New Jersey seashore as it can now be reached by steamboat. Tastes change and by the advent of the Civil War, the village is suffering. After the war, it would be acquired by the state as a school for orphans. Eleven buildings erected between 1750 and 1895 remain today centered around the intersection of Art School and Yellow Springs Roads in Chester Springs.

#### 14. THE ASSOCIATORS

Until military historian Joseph Seymour wrote a book about them in 2012 the Pennsylvania Associators were a little known piece of Pennsylvania history. Both the Quakers and large segments of those emigrating from Germany were pacifists. And because the Quakers still dominated the governing Assembly, the idea of arming militia or creating an army was a topic easily dismissed inside the State House in Philadelphia. That was not true on the streets of the city where there was a rising merchant class and a significant investment in coastal and international trade. The port needed protection and when war broke out in 1739 between England and Spain over control of the Caribbean, the problem was deemed acute by the non Quaker merchant/maritime inhabitants.

In 1747, Benjamin Franklin published a pamphlet titled "*Plain Truth*" in which he summarized the peril and proposed that militia companies be formed to prepare a defense of the city from foreign capture. It was modeled on a similar company which existed in London, where a defense was needed but standing armies were viewed as predatory. Each associator needed to

have a gun and some form of sword. There would be regular training typically followed by alcohol fueled “discussions” at any nearby tavern.

So how is this a Chester County story? Well, while the Associator units organized in Philadelphia were created to defend the city, the concept caught on with alacrity in the surrounding countryside. Bucks and Chester County formed 19 and 11 militia companies respectively, despite heavy Quaker presence in their populations. Lancaster County, 47 miles west of the port of Philadelphia organized 33 companies. That suggests that men were arming not to defend against Spanish aggression but to signal to “troublemaking” Native American tribes that the pacifists in the General Assembly did not speak for the residents on the frontier. On the frontier, force would be met with force. Two things underscore the unofficial purposes of the Associators. First, they did not disband when the war with Spain ended in 1748. But perhaps more tellingly, in 1750 they ordered a cannon to be cast and shipped from England with these words cast into the breech *Kawanio che Keeteru*. That is an anglicized version of the words “This is my right, I will defend it” translated into the Lenape language. Ironically, a gun weighing almost 3 tons was too large to ever be dragged over mud roads to pursue native American targets.

What makes the Associators so important to Chester County and American history is that these groups became a kind of shadow government to the General Assembly. Eventually, that shadow would flip the Assembly from Quaker dominated to frontier controlled as we shall see. It is also this network of militia units that will show so much power during the Spring, 1776 that it effectively overthrew the elected Assembly and installed a government that voted for independence in July, 1776.

## 15. THE FRENCH & INDIAN WAR

The American Revolution would not be Chester County’s first encounter with war. While it could be termed frontier during the late 1720s, the founding of Lancaster in 1730 and York in 1741 demonstrates that westward expansion out the Lancaster Road continued. But Pennsylvania was not the only conduit for westward migration. In 1749 King George II conveyed 200,000 acres of land to the Virginia Co., a group of wealthy investors including Geo. Washington’s elder brother Lawrence. Although barely 21, George Washington is dispatched to the “Ohio Country” in today’s Western Pennsylvania to survey the land and inform the French who had been trading in the territory for decades that they must withdraw and honor British land claims. The French reject this. In 1754 a second armed expedition is launched and an engagement takes place near Uniontown, Pennsylvania. The French surrender on May 28 but some are then massacred including a prominent French officer named Joseph de Jumonville. This engagement is said to start the first *world* war involving Europe and Asia. The British Army is dispatched to Alexandria, Virginia and marched to what is today Braddock, Pennsylvania where the British force of 2,100 is crushed on July 9, 1755 by a force half its size and composed mostly of Indian allies of the French. A few months later in November, 1755 an Indian war party attacks and

burns a Moravian mission in Lehigh, Pa. (then called Gnadenhuetten). Ten of the missionaries are killed, half burned to death. This event, occurring only 75 miles northwest of Philadelphia, again electrifies the entire region with concern prompting many wives to abandon places like Reading and Lancaster to seek comfort with their families closer to Philadelphia. The western border of Chester County is itself 50-60 miles from the city and the pacifist Quakers running the Pennsylvania Assembly have still not authorized creation of a militia. This attack, in which children were killed and missionary women kidnapped changed the colony's political landscape forever. In early 1756 Indian attacks were reported near Bowmanstown in Lehigh County and Millersburg in Berks County. In July, 1757 three women and four children were murdered by Indians in Tulpehocken, 34 miles from Elverson. In 1758 the Maryland Gazette in Annapolis reported three killed and a woman kidnapped in a raid on Swatara; two more killed near Tulpehocken and 4 killed in an attack near Northkill (all Berks County). Now, even the Moravians, a group long eschewing arms, decide that measures of self defense were required. The Quaker aristocracy, which had effectively run Pennsylvania since the beginning, found itself surrounded by angry frontiersmen who demanded that a militia be formed and a string of forts erected throughout the back country to defend settlers from annihilation by the natives. No fort was erected in Chester County, probably because most of the native population had already been driven north and west by settlement and disease. But the fear of attack was undoubtedly quite real in a setting where natives had killed and wounded 1,000 of the King's finest in western Pennsylvania and *missionaries* had been burned to death a few days journey from Pennsylvania's capital city. Chester County's magistrate William Moore informed the government in Philadelphia that 2,000 residents of the county had "associated" to provide for their own protection against the Indians and that they would march to Philadelphia if necessary to secure support of the government. Among those was the St. Vincent and Puke's Land [Pikeland] Association formed on May 8, 1756. Its stated purpose was to "defend our lives, wives, children, liberty and our most holy religion." Meanwhile, the 1756 Supply Act passed the Assembly with a section authorizing 150 Spanish dollars for each native captured and 130 pieces of eight for every native scalp. Troops, forts and bounties were now part of official Pennsylvania policy.

In England, a second larger army is assembled and sent to Philadelphia under General John Forbes. This force, when augmented with troops from surrounding colonies reaches 6,000 men; half the size of Philadelphia's entire population. It requires most of the spring for Forbes' to assemble the militia and supplies. He departs Philadelphia on June 30 marching through Chester County along the Lancaster Road. Forbes stays at the Blue Ball Inn just south of today's Daylesford train station and then the Admiral Warren four miles west. His mission is to dislodge the French from western Pennsylvania, known then as the Forks of the Ohio. It is today where Pittsburgh is located. The eastern portion of this expedition through Chester County and west to Carlisle from Philadelphia is almost forgotten by historians as is the role of local war hawks such as Benjamin Franklin in supplying provisions for this 300 mile trek. Jane Davidson notes in her 1982 history of Downingtown that a call was issued throughout Chester County for militia to

join the march and for sutlers to supply the troops. Local minutes from Quaker meetings at the time indicate that young people who joined in such violent conduct were disowned from the church. The Ship Inn west of Downingtown was a prominent collection point for troops and supplies destined for the Ohio Valley. The Forbes expedition is best remembered for cutting a road west from Carlisle to Pittsburgh and for the Battle of Fort Duquesne in September, 1758. Forbes was not actually part of that battle as he was dying from stomach cancer throughout the expedition. Although the French had repelled an advance assault on their newly built fort, the size of the British army signaled to the French it was time to abandon their outpost; so they burned it and retreated.

The Indians who had supported the French also saw writing on the wall and formed a treaty of peace in Easton, Pa. in October 1758. At Easton, 13 tribes including Shawnee, Lenape and Iroquois Indians agreed to suspend their support for the French and yield their land claims in the Eastern parts of Pennsylvania in exchange for a promise of the right to occupy the Ohio Valley. While this treaty effectively ended Lenape claims to lands east of the Susquehanna it would also sow seeds of discontent as both the Scots-Irish who had begun to occupy western Pennsylvania and the Virginians who also coveted that land saw the Easton Treaty as a sell-out of their interests to placate eastern Indian land claims. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 established a Proclamation Line which declared all land west of the Allegheny Mountains to be Indian territory. For Pennsylvanians that Proclamation Line had more to do with sparking the American Revolution than any issues of taxation or representation in Parliament. The King's Proclamation was forfeiting land that Pennsylvanians and Virginians saw as theirs.

## 16. PONTIAC'S REBELLION

While the French and the British made peace in Paris by 1763 the Indian situation deteriorated. The withdrawal of the French from the Ohio Valley prompted colonists from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania to stream into that region, notwithstanding a royal decree forbidding it. The Indians saw this and understood that the British had no practical ability to enforce the Easton Treaty once the Forbes expedition returned east. The forts erected west of the Susquehanna had fewer than 400 troops and were ill supplied. The French had been generous allies before and during the war, supplying natives with trade goods such as iron, guns and yes, alcohol, to keep relations friendly. The British government was not similarly disposed and the natives resented this. As happened before war broke out, traders from Philadelphia resumed providing guns and powder in exchange for Indian goods. This enraged the colonists who lived in the far west were livid, as the guns and powder could be used as easily to kill colonists as beaver. This was an outrage before war broke out in 1754. And now, nearly a decade after the war erupted, the British government ceded to the Indians the very land that the colonists had fought to drive the French (and their Indian allies) away from.

Thus, it did not take long for conflict to return. Under an Ottawa chief named Pontiac, war broke out between various tribes, settlers and the few British troops left occupying the

beleaguered chain of forts extending from the Susquehanna as far west as Detroit. Although the war never reached Chester County it seems fairly clear that the people living in the county remained threatened by the possibility of attacks on their rural settlements. Although largely driven from the region and decimated by European diseases, Indians were commonly seen traveling the same roads and paths they had forged before Europeans arrived. Among other things, they often convened with proprietary officials and traders in places like Philadelphia and Easton. Moreover, the displaced Lenni-Lenape who felt their interests had been betrayed by the Iroquois at the conference in Easton, threw in their lot with the Ohio tribes led by Pontiac.

It was not only natives who were experiencing conflict. Pennsylvania's colonists can be cleaved into three groups. Those of Quaker faith or German background were commonly pacifists who wanted to avoid any form of conflict and did not aspire to live in the back country of the Ohio. The Scots Irish, Presbyterians who had emigrated from Northern Ireland and occupied western Pennsylvania saw the Indians as having been conquered in the French and Indian War. As such, they should move off of the land the French had ceded. Pontiac's Rebellion would pit back country Pennsylvanians against city dwellers in Philadelphia. As we have noted the legislature to that time was Quaker dominated and the people in charge supported peace and Indian trade. Withdrawal of the French offered the English traders new opportunities. Westerners saw those same Indians as a continuing threat to their families and wanted them expelled from Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Ottawa, Chippewa, Huron and Potawatomi tribesmen headed east capturing Forts Venango, LeBoeuf and Presque Isle while killing an estimate 2,000 settlers in the west and clogging roads like the Philadelphia Wagon Road (Rte 30) with refugees. By early July all British forts west of the Susquehanna had been lost, yet the government in Philadelphia offered only a tepid response.

After the French and Indian conflict had ended, the commanding officer General Henri Bouquet had withdrawn British troops to Lancaster. As the situation deteriorated he organized elements of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highland (the Black Watch) with the 71<sup>st</sup> Highland and marched west. In August he defeated Pontiac's forces at Bushy Run on August 8, 1763 and four days later reached Fort Pitt. Meanwhile the Pennsylvania government gathered what it regarded as friendly Indians and attempted to place them under protection in places like Nazareth and Province Island near today's Philadelphia airport.

A new crisis began in Lancaster, then still a rural hamlet in the far reaches of what had been Chester County. Southwest of Lancaster between Millersville and the Susquehanna River stood a Conestoga Indian village on land conveyed to those natives by William Penn in 1701. The Conestoga were perceived to be peaceful but the prevailing wars had led many neighboring whites to believe they were allied with other violent tribes. In two raids conducted in December 1763, a band of Scots-Irish settlers from the area near Harris' Ferry (Harrisburg) attacked the Conestoga village, killing, then scalping six women, children and elders.



After the first attack, a group of the surviving Conestoga were moved into the Lancaster prison for their own protection. As with the raids outside Pottstown 25 years earlier, many settlers demanded prosecution of the “Paxton Boys” who committed these murders. This only enraged the boys and they returned on December 27, breaking open the prison and murdering six Conestoga adults in the presence of their five children. They then massacred the children as well. The attack took place on a Sunday at the site of today’s Fulton Theater, while the citizens of Lancaster were in church. In the second attack the natives were not merely scalped but mutilated presumably to send a message in response the government’s protectionist policy.

The effect upon the entire colony was chaotic, effectively a reprisal for the massacre undertaken by the Indians eight years earlier. The Conestoga town granted by William Penn to cement natives and Europeans with “one head and heart” was burned to the ground and many natives murdered. The tribe being attacked was minute and would have seemed no threat at all although there were rumors of their complicity with other hostile Indian groups. The demand by Quakers for arrest warrants and for justice to be administered was too much for the Scots-Irish to tolerate. These same Quakers were the ones supplying Indians with guns and liquor while eschewing any military operations to fight Pontiac and his allies. If an attack on the Indians did not make the point, perhaps an attack on the Quaker aristocracy in Philadelphia was needed.

In 1764, if you lived anywhere in Chester County between the Town of Chester and the new villages of Lancaster and York, this was a harrowing time. You lived amongst a dwindling population of native Americans, but the Treaty of Easton and the rise of the Ohio tribes suggested that all understandings of loyalty and peacekeeping were abandoned. Meanwhile, the Scots-Irish population that had largely passed through Chester County en route to settlement on Susquehanna River and beyond was now threatening to return to Philadelphia and install a government to meet its demands for militia control of Indian affairs. This revolution of 1764 was live and local in contrast to the Summer of 1776.

## 17. THE PAXTANG MARCH THROUGH CHESTER COUNTY

The new governor, 34 year old John Penn demanded that the men who murdered the Conestoga be arrested. The settlers who committed the act were infuriated by this. In February, 1764 several hundred armed men assembled in Lancaster and began a march eastward toward Philadelphia on the Lancaster Road. Among them was John Harris, owner of the Susquehanna ferry, who wrote that as they marched through Chester County, they had widespread support. They crossed the Schuylkill at Swedes Ford and continued down the Germantown Road as the other fords had been blocked. Governor Penn read the Riot Act and called upon Philadelphians to prepare a defense from an invasion that was rumored to reach 1,500 persons. Philadelphia was still hosting a delegation of Moravian Indians despite efforts to send them safely north to the Mohawk Valley of New York. Governor Penn persuaded Rev. Henry Muhlenberg to rally the Lutheran community in defense of the city but many families split over whether native Americans were really the problem. On the early morning of February 7, the Paxton leadership met with some of the city's leading politicians including Benjamin Franklin, Benjamin Chew and Joseph Galloway at Coleman's Tavern in Germantown. The threat of a blood bath caused the Paxton rebels to halt although roughly 30 of them marched into the city to try to encounter the Moravian Indians. Not precisely certain how a military operation would work in a setting where a few hundred invaders entered a city of perhaps 15,000, the bulk of the Paxtang crowd presented a declaration of grievances professing loyalty to the King and the Governor but complaining that the government was ignoring the safety of the settlers. They also deplored the fact that western settlers had almost no voice in the General Assembly. This was largely true and that hastened the collapse of Quaker legislative dominance in the colony. The Paxtang Boys headed home on February 8, but they had scored a kind of legislative coup. In the next decade, the composition and the direction of the Pennsylvania Assembly would develop a "western orientation." Although resident in London from 1757-1762, Benjamin Franklin was still promoting a shift of power away from the Penn Family as proprietors and the Quaker mercantile establishment. The Paxtang incident would be followed two years later when a local group calling itself the "Black Boys" attacked a wagon train of presents near modern day Breezewood, Pennsylvania (Fulton County) They did so professing that the "presents" from Philadelphia merchants to western Indian tribes included weapons. Recent scholarship by Patrick Spero suggests that while there was support to change Pennsylvania's relationship with Britain on the east coast, the revolution in Pennsylvania actually began in western Pennsylvania with groups like the Paxtang and Black Boys. Their demands for change helped trigger the constitutional crisis that would erupt in Philadelphia in May, 1776 and culminate in Pennsylvania swinging to support American independence two months later.

## 18. RELIGIOUS DISSONANCE

Unlike the founders of the colonies in New England, William Penn accepted religious freedom. His 1701 Charter of Privileges is considered a predecessor to the Constitution's first

amendment. The first privilege states: "...No Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World; and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any Case molested or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice."

This "privilege" was breathtaking in a day when Roman Catholics, Quakers, Mennonites and Jews were often forced to worship in secret. Realize as well that Baptists, Presbyterians and Methodists in Britain and here were also viewed with suspicion, if not contempt. Evangelical worship, which is to say not mere adherence to a faith, but personal conversion, developed roots in America and Pennsylvania in particular. And, one of the leaders of that movement was the English Methodist George Whitefield (or Whitfield).

Born in Gloucester England in 1715, Whitefield attended Oxford where he met John and Charles Wesley. The Wesleys emigrated to Georgia to promote Methodism. Whitefield followed but soon parted with the Wesleys and Methodism to focus on evangelical work and to support the oldest charity in America, the Bethesda Orphanage.

To raise money for his cause, Whitefield became an itinerant preacher and in 18<sup>th</sup> century America there were few grounds more fertile for that activity than Pennsylvania. So, in 1740 he came to Pennsylvania. First, he united with the Moravians to establish an orphanage for black children in the Lehigh Valley. He would split with that group although it still exists today in Nazareth, Pennsylvania. He could not secure permission to preach in many mainstream churches so he conducted outdoor services where his booming voice was said to project hundreds of feet. He would hire advance men to promote his services wherein he espoused that all humans could find acceptance in the word of God at a time when that was far from established doctrine. For much of his life he wandered up and down the eastern seaboard spreading his word. His 1740 Pennsylvania trip brought him inland to Chester County where he preached in Londonderry Township at Fagg's Manor Presbyterian Church. He would return to America to preach his gospel five more times before dying in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1770. Many consider him to be the most prominent English speaking cleric of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and he is considered the father of the evangelical movement.

A contemporary of Whitefield and another figure of religious importance was John Woolman. Woolman was a Quaker born in Rancocas New Jersey who also became an itinerant preacher travelling the coast of America to speak of his faith and his aversion to slavery. Woolman was not an international figure and he never aspired to speak to thousands, but he is also among America's most important religious figures. He adamantly opposed local involvement in the French & Indian War. In 1758-59 he preached throughout Chester County in opposition to slavery. When Pontiac's Rebellion broke out after that war, he travelled to meet with the Indians and profess a need for peace on all sides. In Spring 1767 Woolman again headed west toward the Susquehanna and stopped at Concord, New Garden, Nottingham and Little

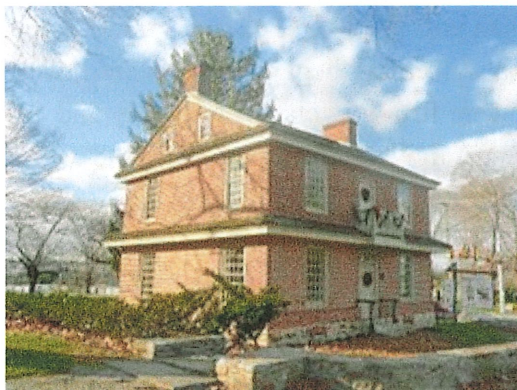
Britain Meetings to preach. Woolman is often credited with pushing the Society of Friends to formally reject slavery as a tenet of membership.



Franklin & the Quakers (1764)

## 19. THE PAINTER WHO ESCAPED

In October, 1738 Sarah and John West gave birth to their 10<sup>th</sup> child, Benjamin, in a house still extant, on the campus of Swarthmore College (Visitors Center Rd). Shortly thereafter John became the proprietor of the Square Tavern, located a few hundred yards from today's Chester-Delaware County border.



Square Tavern Rte 252 & Goshen Rd.



George III by West



West's Self portrait

Benjamin West told his biographer in 1816 that it was the local Indians (perhaps the few remaining from the Olkehocking District) who taught him to mix paints. West was self-taught but his skills were such that he began to attract commissions. One of those commissions came from a Downingtown born gunsmith named William Henry who asked West to paint the "Death

of Socrates.” Only 18 at the time, West produced what some describe as the most ambitious painting of the American colonial era. When William Smith, then provost of the College of Philadelphia (today’s University of Pennsylvania) saw the painting while visiting Henry’s Lancaster home, he decided to introduce West to John Wollaston. Wollaston was an itinerant English painter who had come to America and made a living painting portraits of wealthy Americans from Virginia to New York in the 1750s. In 1760 Provost Smith and merchant William Allen sent West to Italy to study. He stayed three years and then was headed back to the colonies after a stop in England. The stop never ended and West became King George III’s favorite artist. Despite a lack of formal education, West managed to become President of the Royal Academy of Arts. His 1770 painting of General James Wolfe’s death outside Quebec is considered to have transformed history painting as it sought to depict precisely what happened rather than dramatize the event or portray the characters in some epic form (i.e., in togas)

Although West remained a fixture of the British establishment, he made his studio home to an entire generation of American born artists seeking his instruction including Ralph Earl, Charles Willson Peale, Rembrandt Peale, John Trumbull, Matthew Pratt, Gilbert Stuart, Thomas Sully and Washington Allston. Among his students were two artists who became more famous as inventors; Robert Fulton (steamboat and submarine) and Samuel Morse (telegraph).

## 20. AMBIVALENT REVOLUTIONARIES

Most of us were taught a fairly linear view of how America parted company with Great Britain. The typical stations are Stamp Act, Boston Massacre; Tea Act and the accompanying party in Boston harbor; Intolerable Acts closing Boston, then Lexington and Concord. Philadelphia then hosts two Continental Congresses, the second of which declares independence.

Alas, history is almost always more complicated than you see at first glance. As we noted in discussing Pontiac’s Rebellion, the Pennsylvania General Assembly began to cleave into two elements. Before 1763 the Quaker traders of Philadelphia were firmly in charge of policy and they profited handsomely from their city being the largest port in North America. The land around Philadelphia was fertile and where New England relied heavily upon fishing, the fast moving streams of both regions provided abundant water power for manufacturing. For the local aristocracy around Philadelphia times were good and while things like the Stamp Act and the Tea Act were vexatious, the response of Pennsylvanians was far more measured than in New England or Virginia.

Thus, the arrival of the First Continental Congress was an enigma in 1775. Yes, there was anger over Britons fighting with each other but this was something that reasonable people could resolve. At the center of this controversy was a lawyer and planter named John Dickinson. While an aristocrat who had married well, Dickinson displayed his whig “chops” in writing *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* (1767-8), a publication which was a “polite” predecessor to

Thomas Paine's more caustic "Common Sense." Dickinson was a leader in the provincial assembly and an astute vote counter. But he was also an aristocrat at a time when the Assembly was becoming more heavily populated by less "weighty" (wealthy) farmers and tradesmen. When the second Continental Congress convened in 1775, Dickinson was a delegate and persuaded the Congress to offer King George an "Olive Branch" petition. Chastened by the events in Boston, the King was having none of this. America must be taught to comply with royal authority.

In May 1776, the Pennsylvania General Assembly went out of session, leaving the State House available for use by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress. Dickinson left to visit his Delaware plantation leaving behind not only the irascible delegates from New England and Virginia but Benjamin Franklin, recently returned from London and thoroughly disenchanted with the time he had spent there. While Dickinson was away, a group of local radicals under the wing of men like John Adams, overthrew Pennsylvania's General Assembly and installed one that was "pro-independence." The story is more completely told and can be found at [www.ushistory.org/pennsylvania/birth2.htm](http://www.ushistory.org/pennsylvania/birth2.htm). Chester County had 13 delegates at the 100 person Pennsylvania convention to form a revolutionary government including Richard Thomas of West Whiteland. Thomas built a house after the revolution that's about 2000 feet west of Rtes 30 & 100.

Independence was not pre-ordained or universally supported in Pennsylvania. Yet the sitting government and the Penn family proprietorship were both overthrown in May, 1776. Families in Chester County undoubtedly divided over both the question of independence and the "radical" government that came to power in the weeks before Pennsylvania voted to support the declaration drafted by Thomas Jefferson with help from Franklin. This schism would play out as war came to Chester County in late Summer, 1777. During the war, the lands of tory sympathizers were seized and portions of the Quaker community were exiled by the government to Winchester, Virginia in a move that would be echoed by the Japanese internment of the Second World War. The immediate cause was the arrival of the British Army and Navy at Head of Elk (Elkton), Maryland launching an assault on Philadelphia in late August, 1777. The Quakers leaders were considered closet loyalists so they were arrested and sent by wagon through Reading to York and then south to Winchester and Augusta (Staunton) Virginia for eight months while Philadelphia was occupied by the British. The route through Reading was certainly out of the way in contrast to the Lancaster Road, but the Executive Council then running Pennsylvania probably feared what would happen if these very prominent Quaker (and some Episcopal) leaders were sent through Quaker infested Chester County. Aid shipments to the exiles were later routed through Chester County with the permission of the Executive Council and the polite encouragement of Washington while at Valley Forge. During the British occupation the Executive Council, sitting in Lancaster, suggested that the Quaker Meetings in Chester County be "watched" for possible collaboration with the British. Amish families (also pacifists) had arrived in the Chester Valley in the 1760 and lived as far east as Tredyffrin

Township. They spoke mostly German and many resisted the March 1777 Militia Act (requiring enlistment of adult males) and July 1777 acts which required “citizens” to swear allegiance to the new Pennsylvania government in order to vote or hold office.

There were other reasons for concern. The frontier of Chester County and beyond was not well mapped. People who lived there, knew how to get to places without a map. But if the British planned to land an army of 15,000 soldiers anywhere but Philadelphia itself they were going to need to identify locals who knew the roads. Armies do not wait while commanders “ask directions.” Both sides had spy networks since the days of Paul Revere and Williams Dawes at Lexington. And there were Loyalist sympathizers in Chester County as well, willing to help suppress this infamous rebellion. The congregation at St. Peter’s Church in the Great Valley split when the minister revealed his loyalist sympathies. A few miles away at Moore Hall sat Judge William Moore. (Rte. 23 and Moorehall Drive, Phoenixville). Moore knew all of the “patriots” in his shire including Anthony Wayne. He had contempt for all of them. So when the American Army camped at Valley Forge, both the officers and visiting members of Congress had little remorse in occupying his home and confining the judge to the third floor.



Moore Hall: Phoenixville



St. Peters in the Valley Malvern

## 21. THE REVOLUTION ARRIVES IN CHESTER COUNTY

1776 was a momentous year. In May the Pennsylvania General Assembly is effectively overthrown and the new Pennsylvania government installed in June instructs its ten man delegation to the Second Continental Congress to vote for independence on July 2. One of those signers, James Smith, was raised in Chester County before migrating to Shippensburg where he practiced law. John Morton of Ridley Township (then Chester now Delaware County) was the sheriff of Chester County, He became Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1775 a year after being elevated to the Supreme Court. In a deft political move he opposed the overthrow of the old guard Tories in the Assembly while keeping his seat in the Continental Congress.

The Declaration of Independence was signed in early August 1776. Later that month, the British navy arrived in New York harbor and the Americans were badly beaten at the Battle of Long Island on August 27. The British continued to chase the American army around Manhattan and White Plains before Washington retreated to Morristown NJ for the winter of 1776-77. Determined to show that Americans could still win on the battlefield he took his army across the

Delaware River on Christmas night to assault British forces garrisoned at Trenton. Nine days later he attacked again at Princeton, scoring a second victory against 1,200 British troops.

The battles electrified Philadelphia and the region around it. Winter engagements were physically difficult but the British clearly needed to avenge these losses and bring the full force of their military to bear on the fledgling American army. Yet winter gave way to spring and spring to summer without any indication that the main British forces were leaving Manhattan to mop up a frightened American army.

It would be July 1777 before General William Howe and his admiral brother Richard packed up their 200 ships and sailed out of New York harbor. When they left, it was entirely unclear where the brothers were headed although the capital of the rebellion was a good option. The fleet was spotted in late July off the coast of Cape May and after they turned to head up the Delaware Bay, the ships mysteriously reversed course and sailed away. For several weeks the American army did not know whether the Howes were headed north or south. The British disappeared for a month, kept from sailing anywhere because there were no winds on the Atlantic. But, on August 25, 1777 that all changed.

The British were seen disembarking near Elkton Maryland. They were in horrible condition because they expected to be at sea for two weeks and that turned into six. When they arrived, it took them several days to collect fresh resources and walk off their sea legs. From Elkton the British marched east toward Wilmington where there were engagements on September 3 at Cooch's Bridge (Iron Hill), in northern Delaware. It was best termed a "skirmish."

From northern Delaware, the British marched north toward the Baltimore Pike (Rte. 1) arriving in a small village known as Kennett Square on September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. The Americans saw this as a plan to assault Philadelphia and Washington marched his army through Philadelphia to stop the British advance at Brandywine Creek near a ferry site called John Chad's ford. The Americans took the high ground near the Chad house (Creek Rd) and awaited a full frontal assault. They sent skirmishers as far as the Kennett Meeting but those forces were quickly overwhelmed.

The British were up to their old tricks. Only one-third of their forces were deployed on the Baltimore Pike frontal assault. The other two-thirds were sent from Kennett Square north on what is today Route 82 under the direction of Generals Howe and Cornwallis. Their plan was to then shift east (Unionville - Wawaset Road) and cross the forks of the Brandywine at Trimble's Ford and on Allerton Road at Jefferis Ford. Then, the British would turn right and attack the Americans from the west near Birmingham Meeting House. The Americans heard rumors of this plan and some locals reported seeing this flanking troop movement. But Chester County was new territory for both armies and all reports were viewed with suspicion. Brandywine may be the longest and largest battle of the revolution. But at mid-afternoon on September 11, 1777, the Americans caught a break. Just as Washington was recognizing the location and size of the

British flanking movement, British Generals Howe and Cornwallis elected to halt their forces for rest at Sconnelltown at 2:30PM. In their defense, the British troops began marching at 4:00am. But the delay for “refreshment” afforded the Americans time to cull forces from the Baltimore Pike and dispatch them west past Dilworthtown to the Birmingham Meeting. The crux of the battle was not at Chadds Ford where the military park is found today. It was at the Birmingham Meeting along Street Road (Rte. 926). The engagement there was frantic. The American were still being harassed by 6,000 soldiers who were coming straight at them across the Chadds Ford. But the larger element of the British army was attacking their right flank. If the British kept on rolling from the west the core of the Army at Chadds Ford would not know which attack to counter. Because the Americans sent to defend the Birmingham flank did such an effective job in delaying the attack, they were able to manage an orderly retreat back towards Chester, Pennsylvania. The British did pursue the retreat as far as current day Aston but then held off. It had been a 12 hour engagement and both sides were exhausted. The heart of the flanking maneuver as it looked late in the afternoon can be seen at

[https://www.birminghamtownship.org/sites/birminghampa/files/uploads/map\\_of\\_the\\_fields\\_of\\_fire\\_during\\_order\\_of\\_battle\\_at\\_birmingham\\_hill\\_1700\\_hrs.pdf](https://www.birminghamtownship.org/sites/birminghampa/files/uploads/map_of_the_fields_of_fire_during_order_of_battle_at_birmingham_hill_1700_hrs.pdf)

We confine our visual image to that shown in the 1847 map of the county, below. Note the Birmingham Friends Meeting House (M.H.). Just above it is Street Road (Rte 926)



In a military sense, Brandywine goes into the loss column. The Americans started the day at Chadds Ford and ended it in Chester, 13 miles behind their original position. The British had 90 killed and 480 wounded. The Americans 300 killed and 600 wounded. But military experts then and now evaluate this as a moral victory. Two sets of equal forces (15,000 each) engaged in

a day long direct encounter. One army came to the battle ranked among the most formidable on Earth. The other had been organized two years earlier outside Boston. The new army had been driven back but it was still intact and ready to fight another day. To understand the scope of the engagement on the locality, Chester County had roughly 5,000 residents in 1777. It was visited by more than 30,000 soldiers and supporting civilians (teamsters, camp followers, domestics). The British brought with them 4,000 horses and 350 wagons. The American supply train was far smaller but it is little wonder what the impact three weeks of war in Chester County would leave. Crops were destroyed, houses pillaged and the dead and wounded often left on the field.

For the several days after September 11, a chess match is underway. The capture of the rebel capital would seem to be the prize the British sought. Yet, Philadelphia is not a geographically strong place to hold. So long as you keep the enemy from crossing the rivers you would seem to be in a highly defensible position. But if the rivers cannot provide transportation of food and other supplies, an army can be trapped in an otherwise secure place. Washington camps in Darby (Upper Darby) on September 12 and the next day takes the army across the Schuylkill to East Falls. Realizing that the British could trap him between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, Washington recrosses the Schuylkill on September 14 and heads west back into Chester County. His goal in doing so is to have a second bite at the Brandywine apple; an open battlefield match with the British.

On September 15, the American Army camped around Malvern Pennsylvania near Malin Hall (Conestoga and Swedesford Rds.). General Cornwallis had not moved from Aston and General Howe was still camped at Chadds Ford. Howe is also anxious for a re-match so rather than march immediately toward Philadelphia, he elects to pursue the Americans. He marches to Turk's Head (West Chester) and directs Cornwallis to head north along a path close to the North Chester Rd. (Rte. 352 today) in pursuit of the American position.

On the morning of September 16, 1777 both armies prepare for what they thought might be a definitive battle. Howe's troops are marching up today's Phoenixville and Pottstown Pikes. Cornwallis is passing the Goshen Meeting headed north toward today's Hershey's Mill and Immaculata College. Advance forces encounter each other near Greenhill Road. Washington's forces are further west on Swedesford Road near the White Horse Tavern (today 605 Swedesford at Planebrook Avenue). It is looking like a definitive engagement will occur between Lancaster Pike and Paoli Pike on an east-west axis and Phoenixville Pike and the North Chester Rd (Rte. 352). But as the troops are being jockeyed into position on September 16, the skies are growing ominously dark.

The Hessian troops engaged to fight for the British described it as the worst rainstorm they had ever seen. The skies erupted and the rainfall instantly turned the roads to mud and rendered most ammunition useless. The rain would continue for more than a day. There would be no battle on September 16 because there was no dry gunpowder. The armies could do little

more than glare at each other; if they could see each other at all through what we now call a nor'easter.

Washington's powder supply was badly stored and essentially destroyed by the rain. Even when the rain stopped, he was defenseless and he knew it. He ordered the Americans to head up the north slope of the Great Valley to the spa village at Yellow Springs. The distance was six miles and, in dry weather, would have required two hours on flat land. But the land was soaked and the destination straight uphill. It took twelve hours for the Americans to get to their destination and once there, they had no tents to shield them from the rain.

As he assembled his staff on the morning of September 17, Washington understood that he could not defend Philadelphia or attack the British without a fresh supply of powder. Six months earlier, he might have resupplied just a couple miles away as Pennsylvania's Committee of Safety had constructed a gunpowder mill and gun factory near Kimberton on the French Creek at Rapps Dam Road. Anthony Wayne's Committee of Safety for the County had engaged a gunpowder maker to erect a 100 x 32 foot mill for that purpose on the French Creek in the winter preceding American independence. Once its two waterwheels were running, it produced almost 2 tons of powder each week. In June 1776 John Nicholson was engaged to add a gun manufactory at the site. Unfortunately, in March 1777 an explosion destroyed the mill. The advance of the British into Chester County September had prompted removal of what supplies remained. So the Americans were compelled to march past the mill ruins and then turn west toward Warwick township where they could be re-supplied. The British were now between the American Army and Philadelphia. While the Americans were in the northern reaches of Chester County, Howe took the British along the Swedesford Road to a hamlet called Howellville (Rte. 252 & Cassatt Rd.).

While the Americans marched west, a small contingent under Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton and Capt. "Light Horse" Harry Lee was sent east to Valley Forge to remove or at least destroy a large cache of food supplies and equipment. Knowing that the British were camped just four miles away, Hamilton and Lee put advance teams on top of the nearby Mount Joy to notify the force if the British were advancing. On September 18, Hessian General Knyphausen and approximately 200 troops were sent to capture what was stored at Valley Forge. The Americans had loaded two boats with material when warning shots were fired prompting Hamilton to push off into a rain swollen river. The King's forces rumbled into the village and fired at Hamilton killing a horse but he was able to get to the opposite side of the Schuylkill despite the rainfall of the past 24 hours. What the British could not carry off, they burned, including the forge and its equipment.

Perhaps because he also feared being trapped in Philadelphia between two rain-swollen rivers, Howe seemed in no hurry to take the capital. Meanwhile Washington had dispatched 2,500 men under the command of a local son, Anthony Wayne to keep track of British activities. Wayne had established a camp on the south rim of the Great Valley in what is today Malvern

Pennsylvania. It was forested land near today's Sugartown and Monument Avenues about 3 miles southwest of the British camp. The British learned of this and on the evening of September 20, 1777 a force of 1,200 soldiers marched west on the Swedesford Road to what is today the Great Valley Corporate Center. There they encountered and subdued an American picket post. The British were told to unload their weapons and fix their socket bayonets. This would be a surprise night attack; an act considered "unchivalrous" in 18<sup>th</sup> century parlance. The forces marched next to the General Warren Tavern on the Old Lancaster Pike where they conscripted a guest to show them the American position, one mile away.



The Paoli Massacre Sept. 20,1777.

The night attack which came to be known as the Paoli Massacre caught the Americans completely off guard. Many tried to surrender only to find that the British gave no quarter to men they regarded not as enemy combatants but as traitors. The casualties were nearly as bad as Brandywine for the Americans and yet this was a small portion of the army. The British had four killed and seven wounded, a complete rout that continued west all the way to the White Horse Tavern. Hoping that General Wayne might have passed the evening at his home south of Paoli (2049 Waynesborough Rd.) the British raided the house but found nothing of consequence. The defeat here was total.

On September 21, Howe broke camp at Tredyffrin and marched his troops north to the Long Ford (N. Whitehorse Rd) at Phoenixville. Here they crossed into Montgomery County and then headed east to capture Philadelphia. That evening Washington stayed nearby in Thompson Tavern where Egypt Road meets the Reading Road near Jeffersonville. Concerned that Howe may turn west toward Reading to destroy the supply depots in Berks County, the American Army moves back west to Pottsgrove (Pottstown). In fact, Howe turned east and marched into Philadelphia unmolested by the Americans.

As Howe and his army enter Philadelphia, Washington spends the next two weeks collecting supplies in western Montgomery County. On the evening of October 3 he marches from the Wentz Homestead on Skippack Pike in Worcester, Montgomery County to begin a

three prong dawn attack on the village of Germantown, northwest of Philadelphia. The American troops achieve the element of surprise but lose momentum in trying to capture the Chew Mansion (6401 Germantown Ave. Phila). Reinforcements from Philadelphia led by General Howe cause the Americans to effect a disorganized retreat all the way to Schwenksville. With the pressure off, the British embark upon building a string of fortifications from Fairmount (the Philadelphia Museum of Art) across Fairmount Avenue to the Delaware. This makes any further assault on Philadelphia seem futile.

Washington plots his next moves while staying at the Peter Wentz Home (Skippack & Shearer Rds, Worcester); Dawesfield in Blue Bell (565 Lewis Lane) and the Emlen House (1901 Pennsylvania Ave, Ft Washington). After a month at Fort Washington, the area is exhausted of supplies and the army looks for a place to pass the winter that is close enough to Philadelphia to be menacing, but far enough to be safe.

**The Legend of Sandy Flash:** Revolutions inevitably involve disparate groups of people whose conduct is not always easily explained. Any history of Chester County during the rebellion inevitably references a reprobate named James Fitzpatrick. Most of the facts concerning this legend come from Bayard Taylor's 1866 book *The Story of Kennett*. Taylor's life (1825-1878) puts him close enough to the Revolution that the Fitzpatrick story may have been a second generation tale of truth. So here it goes:

Fitzpatrick was born in West Marlborough in 1748. At age 14 he was apprenticed as a blacksmith near the Doe Run south of Coatesville. In Spring, 1776 he enlisted in the militia and went to war in New York where he was wounded and deserted. He returned to Pennsylvania, was caught, and after promising to remain a soldier, he deserted again. This may have prompted him to seek favor in the British side such that when the Howe Brothers landed near Elkton, Fitzpatrick may have helped provide the reconnaissance from which the British made their successful flanking movement at the Battle of Brandywine. Fitzpatrick never was one to like authority so he decided to remain in Chester County when the British left to return to New York in 1778.

By this time, Fitzpatrick knew he was a marked man. He decided to become a robber with a specialty in Pennsylvania tax collectors. He roamed between the Schuylkill River and the Octorara from a base called Hand's Pass, near modern Coatesville. Known now as "Sandy Flash" he wreaked havoc on tax collectors and others who were acting for the American Army. His robberies were brazen and often involved a touch of Robin Hood. In Summer 1778, he was eventually captured at a home on the West Chester Pike near today's Edgemont Shopping Center. Taken to Chester for trial, he was sentenced to hang in the presence of his mother. Whether by accident or design the rope was a bit too long to break his neck, so he suffocated. A thorough analysis of the Fitzpatrick story is at <https://historicnewtownsquare.org/wp-content/uploads/2015-sandy-flash-lear-paper.pdf>.

In a day before police forces were established criminals were often found by means of *posse comitatus* (or simply “posse” as we know from modern westerns). County sheriffs would organize and deputize fellow citizens with guns and horses to arrest well known fugitives like Fitzgerald. A legend reported by historian Paul Wallace held that Sandy Flash learned of a group meeting to plot his capture and decided he ought to know the plan. Disguising himself as a blacksmith he attended the meeting to plan his capture and listened to one leader brag about how well he knew Fitzgerald. As the meeting closed, Fitzgerald approached the man and said he had some information about where to find the felon if they could speak in private. The two waited for the others to leave and then went to a private room. There Fitzgerald robbed the man of his watch and tied him up. As he left his victim Fitzgerald told him that he was now free to tell his friends that he had seen “what he wanted of Captain Fitz.”

In COUNCIL, Philadelphia, July 13, 1778.  
WHEREAS, by repeated and daily information, it appears, that James Fitzpatrick, blacksmith, hath for some time past, and yet doth, at and near the Valley-hill, in Chester County, infest the highway leading from this city to Lancaster, committing robbery on the good subjects of this State passing thereon : On consideration,  
Ordered, That a reward of ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS be paid to the person or persons who shall take and secure the said James Fitzpatrick, so that he be convicted of the said offence.  
*Extract from the Minutes,*  
T. MATLACK, Secretary.

Mr. Fitzpatrick was not a lone character. Actual police departments did not evolve in our region until the 20<sup>th</sup> century when automobiles and motorcycles made it possible to provide timely first responses. Until then, travel arteries like the Lancaster and Conestoga Turnpikes or the Strasburg Road brought wagons carrying goods into and out of Philadelphia. Those wagons were filled with city made manufactured goods and, yes, cash, back from the city. The westbound traveler took extra precautions because highwaymen like James Fitzpatrick welcomed the chance to lighten the load of travelers laden with cash or valued trade goods like firearms. During the Philadelphia campaign, many soldiers on both sides moonlighted as robbers despite strict orders from both Washington and Howe forbidding such activity and imposing harsh punishments for those who were caught.

## 22. VALLEY FORGE

