

# Impress of Early Names and Traits

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From an early period in its history the population of Pennsylvania was composed of people representing various nationalities. They have all left an impress which is discerned distinctively in many localities.

Our earliest pioneers were the Dutch, who settled along the Delaware river in 1623, and claimed title to the land by right of discovery, under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company. They penetrated into the interior along the valley of the Schuylkill, and were in undisturbed possession for fifteen years, when in 1638 the Swedes appeared in the Delaware, arriving in two vessels, and purchased from the Indians a strip of land from the Falls of the Delaware, near the present site of Trenton, to the Falls of the Schuylkill, at Philadelphia, and they gave to their purchase the name of New Sweden. The Dutch protested on the ground of their prior right by discovery and possession, but the Swedes insisted on their title by purchase and took complete control, which they held for seventeen years, founding the town of Upland, afterwards named Chester by William Penn, and extending the settlement beyond the limits held by the Dutch. The Dutch reconquered the country in 1655 and held control of it for nine years, although the Swedes continued to occupy the land. There were few Dutch settlers, the whole population of Dutch and Swedes being estimated to number about 368 persons.

Then came the conquest by the English in 1664, whereupon a deed was

given to the Duke of York, brother of King Charles II., which included a vast territory, claimed to embrace a large part of New England, and what is now within New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. The name of the New Netherlands was changed to New York.

The deed given to the Duke of York was superseded by the charter granted to William Penn by King Charles II., dated at Westminster, March 4, 1681, in consideration of a claim of sixteen thousand pounds due from the Crown to Admiral Penn, which the latter bequeathed to his son, William Penn.

In the autumn of 1682 William Penn landed and took possession as sole proprietor, and the title in William Penn and his descendants continued until their claims were purchased by the Commonwealth in 1776.

Under William Penn began the "Holy Experiment," which was recognized by the oppressed of all nations, and attracted hither not only the English Quakers, but the French Huguenots, the German Mennonites and Baptists, the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians and the Welsh and English Episcopals.

Penn was especially eager and liberal in extending the hospitalities of his new province to the German refugees from the Palatinate, who migrated in vast numbers to Holland and thence to England, thirteen thousand of them appearing in London in 1709 and casting themselves upon the charity of the citizens. This remarkable exodus is the subject of a most learned and exhaustive historical contribution by F. R. Diffenderffer, Secretary of the Lancaster County Historical Society, to the valuable literature of the Pennsylvania German Society, based on authentic data obtained from original sources by painstaking and elaborate research. His narrative contains the following

concise statement, which affords a glimpse of the strange movement which was fruitful of such great results: "During the months of May and June, 1709, the citizens of the City of London were astonished to find the streets of that metropolis swarming with men and women of an alien race, speaking an unknown tongue and bearing unmistakable indications of poverty, misery and want. It soon became known that about 5,000 of these people were sheltered under tents in the suburbs of the city. Additions were almost daily made to their number during June, July, August and September, and by October between 13,000 and 14,000 had come.....This sudden irruption of so many thousands of foreigners within a few months into a country where but few of them had ever appeared before, and where they were utter strangers, rather than into neighboring countries of like faith and kindred language that would perhaps have been more ready to welcome them, stands forth as one of the most remarkable facts of the time. It was found that these people were Germans from the country lying between Landau, Spire and Manheim, reaching almost to Cologne, commonly called the Palatinate. There were, however, many from other parts of Germany, principally from Swabia and Wurtemberg."

Our author further shows, from the authority of ancient documents, that the Elector Palatine, upon many families leaving his dominions and going to England to be transported to Pennsylvania, published an order making it death and confiscation of goods for any of his subjects to quit their native countries.

The Germans, particularly, were most tenacious of those traits and characteristics which marked the difference between them and other peoples, and this is conspicuous wherever

they colonized. As an illustration of the permanent impress made by many of the early colonists wherever they settled, especially those from Germany, there could scarcely be a more apt citation than from the interesting chapter on the German colony in Ireland in Mr. Diffenderffer's valuable historical work, from which I have already quoted. Of the vast number that migrated to England not all were sent to America. There were 3,800 of them colonized in Ireland. In August, 1709, five hundred families were located near Limerick, and among them were all the linen weavers from among the German refugees, and our author says, after analyzing all the facts, that they warrant the belief "that if these German colonists did not in fact first establish the linen trade in that country they at all events gave it such an impress with their skill as to have for nearly two hundred years made it the most important textile industry in Ireland." Such it is to-day. And he quotes the language of Holmes, that under the distinctive "name of Palatines they left the impress of their character in social and economical traits on the whole district from Castle Mattrass eastward to Adare."

"John Wesley, the eminent evangelist and founder of Methodism, during a trip to Ireland, in 1758, paid a visit to this Palatine colony. In his journal he tells what he saw there. He says: 'I rode over to Court Mattrass, a colony of Germans, whose parents came out of the Palatinate fifty years ago,' and he then describes their condition. In 1760 some of the descendants of these Irish Palatines left Limerick for the United States, and were among the pioneers of American Methodism."

"In 1780, Farrar, the historian, of Limerick, wrote of them, as retaining their distinctive German habits and

customs, and, as late as 1840, well-known English authors wrote about this old German colony. They said, 'They differ from other people of the country. The elder people still retain their language, customs and religion, but the younger ones mingle with the Irish people and intermarry with them.' "

In the year 1709 there were large accessions of Palatine Germans to Pennsylvania, or "Penn's Woods," as it was often called, for the province was a vast stretch of thickly set woodland, and many of these Germans settled in Lancaster county, clearing the forest and establishing homes. Their reports sent to the Fatherland encouraged others to come, and soon the German immigrants became so numerous as to alarm the Proprietary officials, and Parliament was appealed to at one time to prevent their immigration, "for fear the colony would in time be lost to the Crown." As the right to vote or to sit in the Assembly was confined to natural born subjects of England, or persons naturalized in England or the province, and naturalization was a very complicated proceeding, few Germans took any interest in governmental affairs or qualified themselves to vote, which continued until the 19th of June, 1776, when the right to vote was extended to adult freemen resident in the province one year, which enfranchised the Germans, and thus, says the Historian Bancroft, "the Germans were incorporated into the people and made one with them." As was pointed out by George F. Baer, LL. D., in an historical address, delivered at Lancaster, in 1891, "there were no German Tories.....and the Germans were the potential factors in securing the essential vote of Pennsylvania for the Declaration of Independence."

Notwithstanding, however, that the population of Pennsylvania was made

up of persons of various nationalities, the fact of the English proprietorship and dominance of the English Quakers for upwards of a century impressed upon the Colony features of an English character which appear in many of the names and customs that were adopted. It is, therefore, not surprising that the English system of local territorial division was adopted, and that the first division into counties in Pennsylvania gave us names familiar among the English shires. Nor, indeed, that an English name was given to the new county that was carved out of Chester in 1729 and when, in 1730, the old village of Hickory Town was changed into the county seat, that both county and county seat should bear the name of Lancaster, familiar and dear to the emigrants from that ancient English shire town.

Any one who visits Lancaster in England will observe many points of resemblance between it and its namesake in Pennsylvania. Even the surrounding country and the general landscape appear very similar. The surrounding ranges of hills and the broad stretch of fertile country, highly cultivated and beautifully improved, seem quite familiar. The neighboring counties, Cheshire, Yorkshire, Berkshire, Bucks, Montgomery, Cumberland, Northumberland, are names that sound not less familiar than when crossing the stone bridge of five arches over the river Lune and entering the shire town we find ourselves walking up Queen street and the similarity of names is kept up in King street, these two forming the principal cross streets, and then Little Duke street, Prince Regent street, St. James street, High street, Market street, Water street, Ann street, Church street and Middle street.

In the subdivision of the county into townships, as the early officials of the county were almost without exception

natives of England, it is quite natural that English names should attach to many of the townships, as Salisbury and Sadsbury and Martic and Hempfield and Warwick and Little Britain.

It is to be noted however, that while the general government of the colony and the local offices were in the hands of the English under the Proprietorship during the better part of a century, and almost everywhere an English impress was made that was evidenced in a measure by the names of places, other elements of the population were quietly laying the foundations of strength and usefulness that have deeply impressed the history of the Commonwealth.

The Dutch possession, it is true, lasted but a short time and did not extend far, but some of the Dutch names still survive in Schuylkill, Rittenhouse, Pannabecker and others. The Welsh remained later and are remembered for their mining and manufacturing enterprise, and Welsh names mark their influence among the early settlers in many places, especially in the north-eastern section of our county. Three of our original townships bear Welsh names—Caernarvon, Brecknock and Lampeter.

The Scotch-Irish were the aggressive element of the population. They were not under any religious restraint against war as were the English Quakers and the German and Swiss Mennonites and Baptists, and, therefore, they were induced to go to the frontiers, and it was they who kept moving onward and expanding the area of the Commonwealth.

An historian of this time, referring to the settlements of the Scotch-Irish, says that "the country when they arrived in it was heavily timbered, damp and cold. Game was abundant, herds of buffalo and elk wandered through the woods. There were enormous migrations of squirrels, which some-

times became so numerous as to threaten the destruction of the crops. Wolves were also numerous, and hydrophobia spread among them. Rattlesnakes and copperheads were almost as much dreaded as the Indians. It was no uncommon thing to kill six in one day while cutting a field of grain. They lived in dens among the rocks, several hundred together, and the neighbors would often join in an attack on these places."

With such surroundings there was good reason for having on the frontiers a brave, venturesome, alert and hardy people, and there were none who possessed these qualities comparably with the Scotch-Irish, and they made themselves felt wherever they went, and they have left a distinctive trace in almost every section of the Commonwealth. Lancaster county owes much to the Scotch-Irish, who emigrated here at an early period.

The townships of Donegal, Rapho, Mount Joy, Coleraine, Leacock, Drumore, are all names derived from places in Ireland that were affectionately remembered by the early Scotch-Irish.

The German names of places are few, which is not surprising, as the colony was distinctively English, under English laws and customs, and the Germans were without knowledge of the language, customs or habits of the English people. So they naturally took little interest in the affairs of government and devoted themselves to agriculture and to a few mechanical employments. Manheim, one of our original townships, recalls the Palatinate City of that name. Strasburg is the name of another German city, though under French dominion. Earl township was named in honor of Hans Graaf, a prominent and most worthy German pioneer, whose surname is the equivalent of the English Earl, which was adopted instead of the German



form, though Graaf's Thal designates the locality where repose the remains of this progenitor of a now very numerous family.

It is thus obvious that the various elements of our early population made a marked and distinctive impression on the different localities where they settled. Names they brought from their far off homes and adopted in affectionate remembrance, mark the places that now know their founders no more, but their sterling qualities of manhood and womanhood gave an impulse and an inspiration to true citizenship that have had a lasting effect on their posterity, and were the surest and best foundations for a strong and prosperous Commonwealth.

WALTER M. FRANKLIN.

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