

The Birth of Lancaster County

The earliest human beings who have left us any evidence of their residence in what is now Lancaster county were those ancient Indians who carved the pictures upon the rocks of the Susquehanna River and on the rocks in and about adjacent streams. The United States Government works and investigations declare that these rock pictures were made by the early Algonquin Indians.¹ This makes them much earlier than the time of our Conestoga and other tribes of Indians. These ancient rock-carving Indians thus may have been here before Columbus discovered America. It may have been a thousand years ago. But that they lived here is certain, and the pictures prove it.

Next in order, before the earliest colonization of which history tells us—that at Jamestown, in 1607—there is some evidence of a temporary colony which may have extended into the territory now Lancaster county, about 1526. About that time, John Fiske tells us, Lucas Vasquez d'Ayllon came from Hispaniola, and “tried the Chesapeake Bay” in search of the northwest passage, and “obtained a grant and began to build a town.”² But that town was likely south of the Pennsylvania line.

Then next, about 1607-8, both Henry Hudson and Captain John Smith were very near what is now Lancaster county; but, perhaps, not

¹United States Report on Ethnology, 1882-3, p. 47.

²Fisk's Discovery of America, vol. 2, p. 490.

in it. The former ran aground at the upper end of Delaware Bay, as he tells us in his log or sea diary, and went 'ck to the sea, and the latter, Captain Smith, in his "General Historie of Virginia," says: "At the end of Chesapeake Bay it divides into four branches. The best cometh from the northwest from the mountains, but, although canoes can go a day's journey or two up it, we could not get two miles up it with our boat for rocks." But they went by land four leagues, or twelve miles, from the bay along the river. Smith and his party were in search of "White's colony."³ He visited the Susquehannocks.⁴ According to the marks on Smith's map, he was not north of what is the Mason & Dixon line.

An Early Visitor.

But though Capt. John Smith likely did not actually explore what is now Lancaster county soil, it seems morally certain that a Frenchman named Eitienne Brule, in 1615 or 1618, did travel through the Susquehanna river valley. An account of this may be found in a note, page 291 of Vol. 5, of the Jesuit Relations, that splendid history of seventy-two volumes made up of the diaries and doings of the Jesuits as they wrote them on the spot. It is there stated that Brule was with Champlain and that Champlain sent him among the Hurons, and that the Hurons in turn sent him among their relatives, the Susquehannocks. Brule told Champlain that he explored what is the Susquehanna valley to the sea, which Slafter says meant to the Bay of Chesapeake. This is the earliest

³Smith's Historie of Virginia, vol. 1, pp. 118, 119, 121, 183.

⁴Smith's Historie of Virginia, vol. 1, p. 182.

visit of a white man to our great Susquehanna valley that is known.

It will be a matter of curious interest to us, I trust, to know that nearly half a century before Penn appeared practically the whole of what is now Lancaster county was sold by the natives—first in 1637 to the English Indian trader, Clayborne, and next to the Swedes, in 1638, which latter sale they confirmed in 1646. The sale to Clayborne is set forth as including the land from the source to the mouth of the Susquehanna river and twelve leagues on each side, which is about forty miles on each side. The grantors were the King and the "Great Men" of the Susquehannocks; and a writing was drawn up in the nature of a deed. All this may be found in Vol. 3, of Maryland Archives, p. 66. The next sale, that to the Swedes, is set forth in Campanius, p. 23, and it included the lands from the Delaware to the Susquehanna, from the mouth of the latter river up to the falls. But these titles both gave way to later English titles, etc.

The First Indian Traders.

This also suggests to us that it is error to say the first Indian traders in this section were French traders. Clayborne traded here in 1637 and earlier; and as early as 1638 (and for many years afterwards) the Swedes, though not living here, came to trade with our Indians, making the journey twice a year, as Campanius tells us, pp. 122 and 123, and also Acrelius, pp. 43 and 47; and on page 23 Acrelius says that a line of posts marking the Swedes' boundary were set in the ground and could be seen sixty years afterwards. Therefore, at this date there was fur trade between the Indians and the whites in this section.

We see the Susquehannock Indians were the inhabitants of the lower part of what is now Lancaster county about and before the date last mentioned.

From 1638 to 1650 the Dutch and Swedes pushed up along the Schuylkill and in parts of Northern Delaware; but I cannot find that any of them came into what is now our county to settle; they traded here, however. In 1667 the Shawanese settled on Pequea Creek.

In 1683 William Penn journeyed to our region and visited the Susquehannocks, now called Conestogas, in Manor township, near Turkey Hill.⁵ Absolutely conclusive proof of this seems to be wanting, but there are a dozen persuasive evidences of it.

Earliest White Settlers.

As to the first whites living here, the earliest reference I can find is a passage in Volume 1 of the Colonial Records, page 299, viz.: "The Governor gave account of letters he received from the lower counties; also of a letter he had received from one Captain Le Tort, a Frenchman, living up in the country." This was in 1689. Captain James Le Tort and his wife, Ann, did live in Conestoga a few years later, and likely they were here in 1689.

We find a few land grants about 1690 to 1695, authorizing the locating of the same about Pequea, Conestoga and Susquehanna. These were contracts Penn made in England.

These were the first few traces and migrations of civilized life among the several small tribes of savages who held what is now Lancaster county;⁶

⁵Lyle's History of Lancaster County, p. 20; Colonial Records, vol. 1, p. 114.

⁶Lyle's History of Lancaster County, p. 68.

these prospectings of white men the first signs of a new order of things and of the passing of the Red Man. But not until 1701 was there any systematic thought and plan of settlement of these parts awakened; and no actual settlement made for at least six or eight years later.

The First Missionaries.

About 1700 a few traders dwelt in nomadic fashion, and a few missionaries sojourned among the Indians of this region.

Of the former class Martin Chartier is perhaps the first, for in Col. Rec., Vol. 2, p. 131, under date of 1704, it is said that he "has lived a long time among the Shawana Indians and upon Susquehanna." A long time before 1704 might carry back to a date contemporary with the coming of Penn. James LeTort, or his wife, Ann, at least as I have stated, is mentioned as early as 1689. In 1703 or 1704, Louis Mitchel, the Cartileges and a few other French traders appear, and still later many others.

Of the latter class, that is, missionaries, in Conestoga the earliest I can find is Rev. Jonas Airen, a Swede, who preached there in 1702⁷, and the famous Quaker divine, Thomas Chalkley, in 1705⁸. It is not relative to this paper, but it is interesting to note that Thomas Chalkley and John Estaugh, the latter of whom took up about 7,000 acres of land in the fork of the Conestoga and Mill Creek, and John Cadwallader, all three preachers, died in Antiqua, off Central America, and are buried side by side there. The Pennsylvania Gazette of February 2, 1743, has an account of this.

⁷Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, vol. 30, p. 291.

⁸Rupp's History of Lancaster County, p. 41.

First Steps Taken By Penn.

But a project looking toward a settlement and the organization of a county here on the Susquehanna was inaugurated by Penn as early as the year 1690. What was done towards this end is as follows:

In the year 1690 Penn issued proposals for a second settlement, or city, in the province, on the Susquehanna River⁹. In these "proposals" Penn sets forth that "it is about nine years past" that he began Philadelphia. Then he says, "It is now my purpose to make another settlement upon the river Susquehanna which runs into the Bay of Chesapeake." Then he goes on, "There I design to lay out a plan for the building of another city in the most convenient place for communication with the former plantations on the east, which by land is as good as done already, a way being laid out between the two rivers very exactly and conveniently, at least three years ago." He then says there is a common course now used by water by the Indians between the two points (Philadelphia and the projected Susquehanna Settlement) by a branch of Schuylkill and a branch of Susquehanna (likely French Creek and the head waters of the Conestoga), which branches "lie near each other." He provides that every purchaser in the proposed settlement "shall have a proportionable lot in the city to build a house upon. Each share in the proposed plan is to contain 3,000 acres for 100 pounds, and proportionable price for smaller lots." Then, he says, the soil is good, and that the river "many miles above the place of the proposed new settlement

⁹Hazard's Register, vol. 1, p. 400.

is wider than the Thames at London Bridge"¹⁰.

Penn Made "Concessions."

Little progress was made in this matter, but in 1696 there were a few subscribers, Penn, however, continued to have faith in it, and in 1701 he executed and recorded at Philadelphia a paper of "concessions" concerning the proposed settlement, of the following purport: "That the lands subscribed for shall be laid out on Susquehanna River near the mouth of the Conestoga and extend up the river fifteen miles; that a chief town shall be laid out, also townships not exceeding 6,000 acres and not over five hundred acres to each person, and each one also to have a town lot; that the tract shall be a county and when fifty families are settled they shall have two representatives in Assembly, and when the inhabitants number one hundred families, and forever thereafter, they shall be represented by four Assemblymen to be chosen by themselves; that they shall have Courts in the town; and the county shall be named _____ (this has never been filled in, in the original, or in the record at Philadelphia); that he will allow purchasers ten per cent. and five per cent. additional lands free, to encourage them; that he will pay the surveying of the tracts, except the purchasers to find the ax-men, chainmen and diet; they shall have the minerals of all mines, except two-fifths to go to the King; that the land shall be clear of all Indian claims; that there shall be allowance for roads, and that he, Penn, would bear 100 pounds of the expenses in laying the same out; that there should be

¹⁰Hazard's Register, vol. 1, p. 400.

Inns established on the road and Stages, and Penn would contribute part of a hundred pounds (proportionable part) to meet these establishments; that the majority of the purchasers shall appoint a committee to take control of the allotting of tracts, surveying lines and making roads and bridges and all else that is necessary, to carry out the design; that the said committee shall meet at Philadelphia on notice from the commissioners of property of Pennsylvania, to take up the different questions arising together with the said commissioners of property; and that these concessions shall be enrolled at Philadelphia in the Rolls Office, and are to be strictly adhered to.¹¹

This paper of "concessions" is dated the 25th of 8th month, 1701, and is signed and sealed by Penn, at New Castle. It is accepted on behalf of all the subscribers by Edw. Shippen, Caleb Pusey, Jno. Guest, David Lloyd, Samuel Carpenter, Griffith Owens, Thos. Story, Robert Ashton and Paronilus Parmister, October 31, 1701.

I am greatly indebted to Mr. George Steinman for the use of the original of this remarkable document. He owns it.

Penn himself was here in 1701 to view this tract; and also to visit the Conestoga Indians, for in a letter of the 21st of June, 1701, Isaac Norris wrote to David Zachary: "I have just come from Susquehanna, where I have been to meet the Governor. We had a round-about journey, having pretty well traversed the wilderness. We lived nobly at the King's palace in Conestoga, and from thence crossed it to Schoolkill, where we fell in about

¹¹Rolls of Office, C. 2, vol. 3, pp. 171-175.

thirty miles up from hence" (Philadelphia).¹²

December 2, 1701, James Logan wrote to William Penn: "The Susquehanna subscriptions go not briskly on, as at first, chiefly through the undertakers' want of time, because of the fair, etc., but it is intended to be pressed forward with vigor, though thy absence is no small damp to things of that kind."¹³

May 7, 1702, Logan again wrote to Penn: "The Susquehanna business goes but slowly on, for want of undertakers to follow, it up; viz., Samuel Carpenter to follow it, as they say Samuel is a true friend, but overburdened with his own business. I hope there will be 5,000 pounds subscribed. The Susquehanna Company has purchased 6,000 acres."¹⁴

Penn Laments His Venture.

Logan again wrote to Penn in 1702 that certain Octorara lands were no better than the Susquehanna lands; and that Griffith Owen and Edward Shippen knew something of the place, "having been with thee at Susquehannah."¹⁵ He further says: "The settlement of those lands at the head of Northeast river, or Octorara, gives value to our Susquehanna lands."¹⁶ In 1704 Penn writes to Logan: "No revenue or Susquehanna money paid, on which account, I ventured, my poor child, so far from his wife and pretty children. O, Pennsylvania, what hast thou cost me?—above 30,000 pounds more than I ever got by it—two most hazardous and most fatiguing voyages, and my slavery here!"¹⁷ Penn

¹²Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 43.

¹³Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 67.

¹⁴Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 98.

¹⁵Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 122.

¹⁶Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 203.

¹⁷Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 280.

was at home in England when he wrote this, and his son was sowing wild oats and going to the dogs in Philadelphia, with the dissolute Governor Evans as his companion. May 26, 1704, James Logan wrote to Penn: "I know not what we shall do about the Susquehanna subscriptions; we may have bonds renewed by many which will bring interest; but, were the country people ever so willing, nay, were it to redeem their lives, they cannot now raise money."¹⁸

May 30, 1705, Penn sent this order to James Logan: "If the counties of the Province are not bounded westward let them be ordered to be run to Sasquehannagh River" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 15). In the same publication, p. 48, in the same year, he says to Logan: "Running back to Susquehanna thou might perhaps get 8 or 10,000 pounds more;" and that the rest of the soil westward will never be worth anything. Again, in 1705, Penn writes to Logan: "I am sorry the Susquehanna business is where it was, since it was so much the occasion of that fatal journey of my poor son.....If by any means I could pay 10,000 pounds here without the sale of that Susquehanna land I would certainly do it" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 69). In 1706 Penn says: "The Germans incline most to have the Susquehanna land, and will give more for it here in ready money than what's proposed there" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 103). (This gives us a key as to how early the Germans, if not here, were interested in buying lands on the Susquehanna in 1706 and before). Penn was in England, of course, when writing these letters. Later the same year he says: "The Germans press me, not

¹⁸Logan Correspondence, vol. 1, p. 290.

for the 30,000 acres in New Castle, but for the Conestoga Lands" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 110). And Logan, advising Penn also in 1706, says: "If thou canst sell the Susquehanna land there for 3 pounds per 100 acres, or even 50 shillings, though that is much too cheap, it will be as good or better than 5 per cent. here of our subscriptions; but pray remember the Indian settlements" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 120). In September, 1706, Logan again advises Penn on selling the Susquehanna lands to help him out (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 170). And finally, July 8, 1707, Penn writes from England to Logan: "I hereby order thee to dissolve the Susquehanna purchase" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 234). To this Penn adds one last lament, September 11, 1708, as to his whole Susquehanna project: "Be careful that no sales be hereafter made of my estate like the Sasquehannagh purchase now vacated" (Logan Correspondence, Vol. 2, p. 289).

First Attempt Failed.

Thus the first attempt to create a settlement and to organize a county here on Susquehanna failed.

But all this country was rich in soil and in Indian products, and the tide of white inhabitants kept moving up toward the Susquehanna. This tide flowed up the State or province in three great early waves. The first began in 1682 and ended in 1686, when 109,263 acres of land in Chester county alone (which then included Lancaster county) were applied for and warranted; the second began in 1701 and ended in 1704, when in the same county 138,528 acres were applied for and warranted; and the third began in 1714 and ended in 1718, in which time

66,628 acres were applied for and warranted in Chester county. Between these three seasons and for several years after the last one, scarcely 1,000 acres a year were applied for, and from 1694 to 1700 scarcely 500 acres in the aggregate were applied for. The first was the Quaker wave. The second was the English and Irish, generally (except the few Germans who started Germantown). It was in this boom that Penn's Susquehanna project took its rise. But, aside from the Susquehanna project activity, our section was not affected by this wave. Only the last wave affected the now Lancaster county—the German wave. Each of these waves grew out of sociological causes, which are delightful to study. They are not germane, however, to this paper.¹⁹

Development Preceding Organization.

And now let us look briefly at the different lines of development which finally ripened this Susquehanna neighborhood for the organization of a new county, Lancaster county.

Under the date of 1714 (but which I think should be a year or two later) there is a written statement made by Isaac Taylor, found in the Taylor papers in the Historical Society, at Philadelphia, as follows: Endorsed, "Lands in Chester County." And on the first line within the paper there is set out "Lands surveyed on Pequea and Conestoga 58,937 Acres."²⁰ So such is the progress land-taking was making. As early as 1719 James Steel (then one of the land Commissioners of Penn) wrote of the "unwillingness of the commissioners to grant any

¹⁹Pennsylvania Archives, Third Series, vol. 3, p. 102.

²⁰Taylor Papers (Miscellany). No. 2941.

more lands at present" about Conestoga.²¹ And the same year James Logan wrote to Isaac Taylor that all but a few points were taken up at Pequea,²² and also in another letter to the same party he wrote the same year that a point called "Madam's Point" on Conestoga was still vacant, but that there was very little of it.²³ And in 1727 Logan again writes that there is very little timber left in certain tracts.²⁴ This shows that the better land was pretty generally taken up by 1727, or just before agitation began for a new county.

Laying Out Roads.

Roads also were laid out, but they were very poor ones. Besides the road which Penn refers to in 1690 "very exactly and conveniently between the two rivers" (Susquehanna and Delaware), which I have spoken of (and which was surely only an Indian path), a road was opened and used about 1714, called Great Conestoga Road, from Postlethwait's, now Fehl's, near Rock Hill, through Big Springs, through what is now Strasburg and Gap, on to John Minshall's, now Christiana, being an outlet from lower Conestoga and Pequea Valleys; and one in 1726 from the junction of Conestoga and Cocalico Creeks, along the northern boundary of what are now Earl townships, and into Chester county, leading out from the Upper Conestoga and adjoining valleys, the great "Old Peter's Road."

There were also two other laid-out roads in what is now Lancaster county

²¹Taylor Papers (Miscellany), No. 2932.

²²Taylor Papers (Miscellany). No. 3323; No. 3311.

²³Taylor Papers (Miscellany). No. 2920.

²⁴Taylor Papers (Miscellany). No. 3039.

prior to the erection of the county, both of which appear in the Chester county records which I have examined and where I found the proceedings; one in 1724, from the "Lime Stone Rock," in Salisbury township, at the head branch of the Pequea Creek, and running almost directly southward to John Churchman's, on the Maryland line. It extended eventually to Chesapeake Bay. The other is a small road laid out at the August sessions, 1719, of the Chester County Courts, from west of the Octoraro, across by the Shawana Indian town into Chester county, and on to Christina (now Wilmington) and New Castle. There is also mention of a road by which the old Swedes about Christina and New Castle traded with our Indians on the Susquehanna as early as 1647, running along the east side of Susquehanna River; and one in 1751, being the way by which the Delaware and Marylander traders took whisky and goods to our Conestoga Indians; but I cannot find any proceedings laying out the latter two roads at those early dates.

Oldest Buildings in County.

The oldest two buildings in Lancaster county are still standing along the first-mentioned road, the Great Conestoga Road, they having been built at or shortly after the time the road was opened through the woods, and before it was officially laid out by Court proceedings. One is the little old Herr stone house, built (as the date stone above the door indicates) in 1719, on the farm now occupied by David Huber, Jr., near Willow Street, and the other is the Postlethwait Hotel, at one time the Court House of the county, now owned by Geo. Fehl, near Rock Hill, built a few years before 1729.

The liquor business was flourishing in this section also at a very early date. In 1701 one of the Shawana chiefs, who were at that date living near the mouth of Pequea Creek, complained that Sylvester Garland brought to the Indian settlement "several anchors of rum, amounting to 140 gallons, and he gave it to them to induce them to trade with him; and after drinking they were much abused" (See Colonial Records, Vol. 2, p. 33). And at pages 140 and 141, Colonial Records, Vol. 2., under date of 1704, it was complained that great abuses were committed in carrying rum from New Castle to Conestoga, and the Chief of the Conestogas himself went to Philadelphia and complained that great quantities of rum were continually carried to their town so that they are ruined by it, having nothing left, but that they have even sold their clothes to get it. Very nearly as early as this Indian rum trade taverns were opened both along the Conestoga and along the Pequea highways. Applications for the licensing of these soon appeared, and there were many of them, especially along Old Great Conestoga Road and Old Peter's Road. The earliest of these applications, which is signed by a large number of subjects, is that near Old Peter's Road, about the upper branches of the Pequea Creek, dated 1715, and signed by about forty subjects, who state in the petition that the tavern is to be located near the head of the Pequea Creek. This was one of the curious exhibits relating to Lancaster county which I saw at the Jamestown Exposition. The paper is the property of Mr. Gilbert Cope, of West Chester, and is one of the very earliest of all the Lancaster county documents.

Early Mills Erected.

So, too, there were a few mills erected before Lancaster county was born. Before 1714 Christian Schlegel had a mill on Conestoga, or a branch, because in that year he complained "that a certain person hath seated himself near the mill he built lately at Conestoga."²⁵

About 1727 Stephen Atkinson's fulling mill was built on Conestoga Creek, near Lancaster, for on August 27, 1728, there is a complaint that a year ago "he had liberty to settle and build a fulling mill on a neck of vacant land, etc., and that now some people interfere with the dam."²⁶ Christian Stoneman's, Hans Graeff's and Samuel Taylor's mills also were erected before 1729.²⁷

So, too, there was some prospecting for mineral wealth in early times. In 1721 John Cartlidge, of Conestoga, wrote to Isaac Taylor: "There is come into this province from New England a gentleman named John McNeal, and hath been with me and we have viewed the iron oar and matter yt we have laid out."²⁷

The villages of Lancaster and Columbia were both begun before the county of Lancaster was organized—the former by Hamilton and the latter by Wright. Other small settlements, as Conestoga, Donegal, Octorara, Ephrata and Pequea (the last named being now Strasburg, or near it), then a Mennonite settlement which Isaac Taylor noted in 1711 as containing six or seven Palatine families,²⁸ were all in their early stages.

The local financial condition and

²⁵Taylor Papers, No. 2827.

²⁶Taylor Papers, No. 588.

²⁷aRupp's History of Lancaster County, p. 260.

²⁷Taylor Papers, No. 2975.

²⁸Taylor Papers, No. 2796.

prices of commodities, at or a couple years before the time of the organization of Lancaster county, were as follows: The province was now fairly recovered from the money panic of 1721-2. This panic in 1721 afflicted our Germans here very sorely. January 2, 1722, Andrew Bradford, printer of the Mercury, wrote: "Our General Assembly are now sitting and we have great expectation from them at this juncture that they will find some effectual remedy to revive the dying credit of this province and restore us to our former happy circumstances." For this he was called before the Assembly and reprimanded, because they considered it a reflection on their honesty. This was a second outbreak of the early Quaker bigotry, which they first visited on William Bradford, father of Andrew, twenty-five years before, when they virtually made him leave the province for referring to "Lord Penn," banishing thus the first printer of Pennsylvania to New York, where he died at the age of ninety-four, having gained great fame.

As this panic subsided and good prices began to return the Conestoga and Pequea valleys began to fill up. During the autumns of 1724 and onward the Germans of Conestoga were receiving 3 shillings and 6 pence for wheat, it having advanced from 2 shillings and 6 pence since January 1, 1723. Corn had advanced from 1 shilling and 8 pence to 2 shillings and 6 pence in the same time; beef from 30 shillings a barrel to 35 shillings a barrel. Pork, however, had dropped from 40 to 30 shillings a barrel; flour had advanced from 8 shillings to 11 shillings a hundred weight, and tobacco was demanding 25 to 30 shillings a hundred weight, having risen very much in two years. Sugar was

30 shillings a barrel; fine salt 3 shillings 6 pence a bushel, molasses and rum each a shilling a gallon, white bread 15 shillings a hundred weight, middlings bread 12 shillings and brown bread 9 shillings. And in the case of all these commodities the trend of price was now upwards. (See Weekly Mercury, January 13, 1723, and September 17, 1724.) Rhoda Barber, born in 1766, speaking of what her grandmother told her, tells us in her "Journal" that the farmers on the Susquehanna about 1730 did not depend on wheat and corn, but on hemp and hops to make a living. (See Journal Hist. Soc. Pa.)

To tell the number of people who lived here when the county was organized in 1729 is a difficult matter. In 1693, when the Assessors' lists of the various townships of Chester county (of which we were a part) were made out, Conestoga is not mentioned at all, and, of course, no one lived here. This may be seen in Cope and Futhey's History of Chester county. In the 1715 assessments we are also missed, but in 1718 Conestoga had a list of taxables numbering 130, of whom 43 were Englishmen and 87 "Dutchmen," and there were also 10 non-resident landowners. Taxation and voting were both limited and these 130 taxables may have indicated 1,000 inhabitants. The Pequea list for 1721 has about 30 and some non-residents. Both these original lists are in the possession of Mr. Gilbert Cope, of West Chester, where I have seen them. He keeps them in fire-proof safes.

In the Historical Society at Philadelphia may be seen "Authentic Lists of Taxables in 1725 for Conestoga, Donegal, Pequea and Tulpehocken." They are as follows (omitting Tulpe-

hocken, which is not now part of Lancaster county): Pequea, 32; Conestoga, 238, and freemen 15, head rates, 9; county rates 30 and Donegal 56. They make in all 380 taxables, and if they indicate one taxable for every seven persons there would have been about 2,660 people in the confines of what is now Lancaster county at that time. The number of people in 1729, the date of the county's birth, I cannot find. Rupp says that in 1738 the taxables in Lancaster county numbered 2,560, and if one out of every six people was a taxable the population then was 15,360.²⁹ One thing is certain, the great rush of inhabitants came on only after the organization of the county in 1729—mostly Mennonites. I feel sure that to say what is now Lancaster county had, in 1729, about 3,500 people puts the number quite high enough. We must remember Philadelphia had only 13,000 people, even as late as 1744^{29a}, and in 1729 only about 8,000 people.

Such were the proportions of affairs and such the social development that a second movement took rise to make a separate county out of this part of the then Chester county. A couple years before the county was erected the necessity for it became evident. While we are not to be blamed for it, we do not like to acknowledge that the wickedness and lawlessness of our neighborhood emphasized the need of a new county.

On the 19th of January, 1726, a petition, signed by divers citizens of Conestoga, setting forth that many vagabonds resort to that neighborhood, was presented to the Assembly praying that a law be provided to sup-

²⁹Rupp's History of Lancaster County, p. 273.

^{29a}Hazard's Register, Vol. 1, p. 271.

press them.³⁰ Conestoga also began to neglect and refuse to pay her excise and other taxes to the province, in the immunity of being so far away from the officers of the law, at old Chester, the county seat, nearly a hundred miles away.³¹

Conditions were lawless to such an extent in this neighborhood about the time of the organization of the county that the newspapers noticed it. The Pennsylvania Gazette of April 12, 1729, has this account of conditions at that time:

“We hear that there are associated together a company of Irish robbers, the chief of whom are said to be one Bennet, whom they call their captain, and one Lynch, whom they call their lieutenant, with Dobbs, Wiggins and many others, who sulk about this and neighboring provinces; their villainies being to steal the best horses and load them with the best goods, and carry them off before the people’s faces, which they have done lately in and about Conestoga. It seems their usual practice has been to steal horses from this province and carry them to sell into Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. It is said that they begin to grow more numerous and have a place of rendezvous where they meet to consult how to perpetrate their rogueries and entertain all like themselves.”

Then, too, about this time Thos. Cresap, the free booter from Maryland, and his gang began many depredations upon our Indians and our unoffending German citizens.

These and other causes led the citizens of this neighborhood in the winter of 1728-9 to take the first steps to

³⁰Votes of Assembly, vol. 2, p. 468.

³¹Votes of Assembly, vol. 2, p. 491.

form a new county. They began work by circulating a petition throughout the neighborhood setting forth that, by reason of their great distance from the county town, where the Courts are held, offices kept and annual elections made, they are under great inconvenience, being obliged to travel 100 miles to recover debts; that they do not have a sufficient number of constables, justices and other officers to keep up the highways, etc.; that townships are not laid out nor bridges built; that they need a jail here and for want of it many vagabonds and other dissolute persons harbor among them, thinking themselves safe from justice, and the petition then prays that a division line be made between the upper and lower parts of Chester county, making a new county.³²

This petition during more than a century at least was lost and all search for it was unsuccessful, until a few months ago a certified copy of the original, made by John Wright and Thos. Edwards, was found by Mr. L. R. Kelker and the writer at Harrisburg, the former of whom rescued it from the contents of a large box, which had long reposed in a dark recess in the basement of some of the public buildings.

The Petition.

“To the Honourable Patrick Gordon Esqr, Governor of the Province of Pennsylvania, New Castle, Kent and Sussex on Delaware and Council—

“The Petition of the Inhabitants of the upper part of the County of Chester, Sheweth, that by Reason, of the Great Distance we live from the County Town where Elections &

³²Colonial Records, vol. 3, p. 343.

Courts are held, and Publick Offices kept, The arm of Justice is weakened, The benefit of many good and wholesome Laws almost if not Intirely Lost & ye person who has Occasion to apply to them, put to great and Burdensome Expence, Thieves, Vagabonds & Ill people Boldly Infest our parts (Counting themselves beyond the Reach of Law) to the Disturbance of the Peace & very great Damage of the Inhabitants it being almost Impossible to take and Secure such Villains where Justices & Constables are so thin plac'd as not one in Twenty or thirty Miles & Assistance Difficult to be raised on Such Occasions Amongst people who would freely Serve but are Deterred by want of Ready cash, to bear ye Charges of a Journey of Eighty or a hundred Miles to the County Jail, And as we are mostly now Settlers far from a Market, and Trade and Commerce among our Selves mostly by way of Barter, Money canot be Supposed plenty. Therefore when Law Suits prove Necessary to Recover our Just Debts, the trouble and Expense of Travelling to Obtain a Writt or Summons, having it Served bringing Evidence (when Needful) attending Two or Three Courts, the Repeated Journeys amount to three or four hundred miles, besides the loss of much time, All which being a ready Money Charge makes the Recovery of a Small Sum more detrimental than the loss of it, and is a very Great Oppression of the Debtor, and in debts, under forty shillings which cannot be recovered, without an Execution, The Action Drops rather than Cause so great a charge as would Accrue if the party be sent to Jail & taken from his friends (if any) who might assist him. Runaway Servants & Suspi-

clous persons who often come this way to hide among us or Escape into the back parts of Maryland are seldom taken up. The Reward for Runaways not Answering the Trouble, and to far to send Suspected Persons til they can make proof of their Clearness. Our highways are unrepaired, Townships undivided nor Bridges Built, where they are wanted, nor can our Taxes be as Regularly Laid, or our Grievances likely to be Redressed when the mean distance to the nearest place of Appeals is at least fifty miles, And Neither Comishoner nor more than one Assessor (if that) Elected in many years within the Circle of five hundred ffamilies. These and many more Inconveniencies of the like Nature, & from the same Cause which may Occur to you on a serious Reflection we humbly offer to your Consideration—Hoping, as we are His Majesties' Læge Subjects, and Justly Entituled to all the ease & advantages the Law will afford, You will in your Care, for the Publick good be Ready to Redress. And in Order thereto as most of your petitioners Living fifty or Eighty Miles from Chester & some much further, and ye Bounds yearly Enlarging.

“We humbly pray you would be pleased to Order a Division line to be made between the uper and lower part of Chester County, which uper division when so made may be a County, and called ye County of ——— with Privilidge granted to Elect Representatives, A Sheriff & other officers in number and manner as they are now Elected in Chester County and have all other Officers, Officers' powers and privilidges Equal with other countys.

“This we humbly conceive would be the most Effectual means of Re-

dress, of Great Ease and benefit to your Petitioners, and no ways Prejudicial to Chester County or the province in General and for which your Petitioners as in duty Bound shall pray &c

“Pat Anderson, Ephrm Moor, Hugh Scott, Andrew Killbrath, Caleb Pierce, Jno Walter, Alex White, Robt Allison, David Jones, Thos Tinball, Wm Meben, John Wright, Tobias Hendrick, Sam’el Blunston, Ed Smout, (Illegible), Robt Barber, John Postelthwait, Thos Gail, Saml Taylor, Jno Swift Jun, Jno Davis, Thos Owen, Jno Linvil, Albertus Hendrix, Jos Low, Frances Worley, Joseph Jarvis, Jno Cowin, Da’d Cowin, Christian Stoneman, Dan’el ffiere, Jacob Miller, Thos Folkins, John Musgrove, Henry Carpenter, John Stowfer, Gordon Howard, Jno Sterrett, Zacharias Moor, Jno McLean, Jno Catherwood, Jno Miller, Jno Allison, Jno Harris, Saml Scott, Wm. Allison, James Smith, James Robinson, Moses White, James Miers, Jno MacFarland, Thos Howard, James Patison, Jno McCurry, Jacob Bar, Saml Bar, Abraham More, Christian Mosar, Jacob Funk, Jacob Fincher, James Hendrix, Joseph Higingbotham, Caleb Baker, Jos Minhall, Geo Middleton, Casper Loughman, Wm Lindvil, Isaac Woodrow, Simon Woodrow, Peter Lemon, Christian Lemon, Gabriel Carpenter, Hans Grove, Robt Cloud, Jno Musgrove, John Sickray, Jno Huwoll, Jacob Lawson, Robt Cleas, Thos Willkins, Wm Hayes, Jno Killbrath, Jno Griffith, Ri’d Hastings, Sm’l Taylor, Nat Watkins, Jno Killbrath Jur, James Gibson, Jos Kennedy, Thos Hains, Thos Willson, Jos Thatcher, James Killbrath, Jur, Pat McKinley, Saml Parker, John Kellso, Moses Thomson, James Killbrath, Robt Mcfarlan, Arthur Patison,

Jno Miller, Caleb Worley, James Hendrix Jr., Geo Hill, Jno Hendrix, Robt Willkins, Enock Davies, Tobias Hanspaker, Charles Jones, Hugh Brown, Wm. Hughes, Jno Futhey, Saml Jones, Morgan Jones, Henry Jones, Francis Jones, Jno Minshall, Evan Evans, Ric'd Moor, John Walker, William Willis, Alex McKeen, Saml McGomrey, Geo Muffet, John Muffet, Walter Tidiford, Robt Killbreth, James Crody, Wm Allison, Sam'el Hunybrook, James Doke, Richard McLewie, Jno White, Jno Taylor, Thos Mitchell, Abraham Sott, Jas Work, Ed Dodgery, James Swafford, John Klemson, Jno Miller, Ben Heath, Thos Clark, John Boyle, Pat Black, Geo Bohnon, John Mitchell, Ri'd Allison, Jonas Davenport, Wm. Brian, Hugh White, Thos Black, Pat Campbell, James Stuart, Geo Stuart, William Richardson, James Morris, Joseph Mays, Geo Thomas, John Powell, Saml Swallow, Daniel Cookson, John Abbott, Saml Vernor, Dav'd Vernor, Jno Williams, James Gelt, Wm. Willson, Dan'el Harmon, Ri'd Owen, Thos Edwards."

Nothing more than an epitome of the contents of it is set forth in the Votes of Assembly, the Colonial Records, and the many county histories; and I am persuaded that if it had been accessible when Rupp and when Mombert wrote, complete copies of it would have been inserted by those painstaking writers.

Who and how prominent the signers were is a task that local biographers could tell us with great profit. Also the defending, explaining or excusing the absence of German signers thereto (there not being over twelve or fifteen in the list of 182) is a topic on which a very interesting paper could be written.

I believe that John Wright undoubtedly circulated the petition and secured signers, because he tells us he took a leading part in having the county erected. (See Rupp's History of Lancaster County, p. 275.)

February 6, 1729, this petition was presented to Council at Philadelphia and the next day Governor Gordon sent a message to the Assembly on the matter explaining the petition and concluding:

“Upon a mature consideration thereof and a proper inquiry into the allegations of said petition, I am of opinion that it may greatly conduce not only to the peace, good order and ease of those inhabitants, in particular, but also to the security of the whole government, by bringing those who too frequently fly thither for refuge under the same subjection to the laws, with the rest of His Majesty's subjects, in this province, and that the prayer of the petition be granted. And although the power of erecting counties as well as incorporating cities, etc., and such like acts, is wholly vested in the proprietary, and therefore in me at this time, as his lieutenant; yet inasmuch as this will add new members to the legislative body, and require the establishment of courts of judicature, with other alterations, for which a due provision will best be made by a law, I have thought proper to make the House acquainted with the application, now made to me, to the end that the same may be carried on with and strengthened by the joint and unanimous concurrence of the whole legislature.”³³

The next day, February 8, the Assembly ordered the petition read, and that it lie on the table.³⁴

³³Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 69.

³⁴Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 69.

February 11, "The petition of divers inhabitants of the upper parts of Chester county praying a division in said county was read a second time³⁵ and the Governor's message with the same was ordered read a second time which was done and after some debate thereon referred to further consideration to the afternoon."

At three o'clock the house resumed consideration of the petition and the Governor's message, and the message was ordered read again, "which was done accordingly and after a long debate a motion was made and question put, that the said petitioners have leave to bring in a bill according to the prayer of said petition. Passed in the affirmative."³⁶ On February 12, a committee was appointed, consisting of one member from each county, to draw and answer to the Governor's message advising the erecting of a new county.

The committee reported the answer February 14 and the next day it was adopted by the Assembly. In this answer the Assembly says:

"We have taken into consideration the petition of the inhabitants of the upper parts of Chester county recommended to us by the Governor, and are of opinion, it is reasonable that a due provision be made by law for the ease and convenience of the people of that part of the county. As to the new members of Assembly, a law will be made for that purpose. And for as much as the Governor thinks a division necessary, we humbly propose that he will be pleased to appoint some persons inhabiting the lower parts of Chester county with a like number of the inhabitants of the upper parts of the said county to view and

³⁵Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 70.

³⁶Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 70.

make report of the most proper place for making the division line between the two counties, which is, however, humbly submitted to the Governor's judgment."³⁷ At this time no English inhabitants lived across Susquehanna River.³⁸

February 20 the Governor appointed Henry Hayes, Samuel Nutt, Samuel Hollingsworth, Philip Taylor, Elisha Gatchel, James James, John Wright, Tobias Hendricks, Samuel Blunston, Andrew Conrish, Thomas Edwards and John Musgrave, calling to their assistance John Taylor, surveyor of Chester county, "to meet at some convenient place near Octorara Creek and cause a marked line to be run from the most northerly or main branch of Octorara northward, or to the east or west thereof, as shall be found most convenient to the next high ridge of barrens that trend from thence to Schuylkill River, keeping near and proceeding along the ridge."³⁹

March 26th, "The petition of divers citizens of the upper parts of Chester county, praying that the division line for dividing the said county may not be confirmed, until the upper inhabitants are better able to bear the weight of Government, was read and ordered to lie on the table."⁴⁰ So here was a movement against creating the new county.

March 28, "The petitioners, praying for a division in Chester county laid before the House a bill for that purpose, according to the order of February 11, last, which was read and ordered to a second reading," and the same day the House ordered, "that the clerk make out a copy of the peti-

³⁷Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 71.

³⁸Pennsylvania Archives, First Series, vol. 1, p. 364.

³⁹Colonial Records, vol. 3, p. 345.

⁴⁰Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 76.

tion to this house against erecting the upper parts of Chester county into a new county and deliver the same to John Wright."⁴¹

March 31, "The second petition of divers citizens and inhabitants of the upper parts of Chester county, praying that the division inhabitants be better able to bear the weight of Government, was read and ordered to lie on the table."⁴²

May 2, the survey was returned and approved by the Governor and Council.⁴³ The same day the Governor and Council decreed and declared the said upper parts "To be erected and are accordingly erected into a county by the name of Lancaster county" and ordered that the Assembly be acquainted with the decree and that they proceed to erect Courts of Judicature for the same.⁴⁴

The same day the Governor's secretary appeared in the Assembly and acquainted them that the Governor had approved the survey and had erected the upper parts of said Chester county into a county to be called Lancaster county and laid the return, survey and warrant before the Assembly and he hoped the Assembly would take the due care to make the necessary provisions for the same and return him the originals.⁴⁵

Later in the day, May 2, the house read the return, survey and warrant and then gave the subject a severe chill by voting not to consider, at present, the bill to provide for the affairs of the new county.⁴⁶

The next day, May 3, the Governor heard of this decision of the Assembly

⁴¹Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 76.

⁴²Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 78.

⁴³Colonial Records, vol. 3, p. 355.

⁴⁴Colonial Records, vol. 3, p. 356.

⁴⁵Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 83.

⁴⁶Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 83.

to put off action on the new county's equipment and he urged them to dispatch their business, particularly the bill for the division of Chester county.⁴⁷

The Assembly continued to remain inactive regarding Lancaster county, and in a message of May 6th the Governor said, among other things:

"Dispatch all bills that are necessary to prevent the growing disorders in this country. While you are guarding against the inundations upon us, of such as may add to these disorders, you cannot but think with me, that it is absolutely necessary to enable the inhabitants on Susquehanna to exert the powers of Government in those parts, where great numbers of the worst seek shelter in the hope of immunity in their greater distance from more regular administration of Government. I must, therefore, desire that you would also dispatch the bill for erecting those parts into a county, together with the steps I have already made of it."⁴⁸

At last the Assembly became active. May 7th, on motion made, it was agreed the House do immediately consider the bill to divide Chester county, and the bill was read a second time and it was ordered to be debated by paragraphs in the afternoon. At three o'clock the debate was resumed and it was agreed that the new county shall have members to represent it in Assembly and after debate the number was fixed at four. Then the method of electing Assemblymen was agreed upon. Then the bill was ordered into committee to amend it and to report the next morning at eight o'clock. The next morning the Com-

⁴⁷Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 84.

⁴⁸Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 85.

mittee reported the amended bill and the House ordered it read a third time, amended it further, passed it, and sent it to the Governor.⁴⁹

May 9th, the Governor returned the bill to the House with amendments suggested by him and Council as to continuing suits entered in the old county that would fall in the new county and the House agreed to the changes and engrossed the bill and passed it.⁵⁰ The next day the Governor signed it and it became a law, and the new county was now a full-fledged separate political being and started on its career, May 10, 1729.⁵¹

The act creating the new county provided that the people should meet annually at the Court House of the county to hold elections; that the new collectors shall collect the taxes that would, except for the creation of the new county, have been payable in Chester county; that Courts of Quarter Sessions should be held the first Tuesday of February, May, August and November, and that there shall be three Commissioners to raise county taxes, etc. It appointed Caleb Pierce, John Wright, Thomas Edwards and James Mitchel to buy land to build a Court House and a jail upon and that the Commissioners raise £300 for that purpose.

It was soon found that so great a sum of money could not be raised by taxation and so February 14, 1730, a law was passed allowing the province to lend to the county £300, free of interest, to build a prison and a Court House.⁵² The Court House was not built until 1738 or 1739, and the money not paid back until 1742.

⁴⁹Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 85.

⁵⁰Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 87.

⁵¹Statutes at Large, vol. 4, p. 131.

⁵²Statutes at Large, vol. 4, p. 150.

Upon erecting this section into a new county the Governor appointed as its first justices to sit as Justices of the Peace and as Judges holding Courts, John Wright, Tobias Hendricks, Samuel Blunston, Andrew Cornish, Thomas Edwards, Caleb Pierce, Thomas Reed and Samuel Jones, Esqs.⁵³

Efforts to Divide the County.

Several efforts were made to divide the county of Lancaster by taking portions off the northeastern part of it, but they all failed. As they are interesting however, I will here note them and, with that, concludes this subject.

The first was in 1739 and it is reported as follows:

“January 13, The Governor laid before Council a petition from the inhabitants of the northeast side of the county of Lancaster, with a map of the province of Pennsylvania, praying that a new county may be bounded as by the dividing line in the said map for that they labor under great inconvenience and damage by reason of their distance from the Court held at Philadelphia and at Lancaster and for many other reasons in said petition.”⁵⁴

May 19, another petition for the same purpose, by many of the same persons, was presented and sent by the Governor to the Assembly; but it was not favorably acted upon.⁵⁵

August 8, The “petition from a great number of the inhabitants of Philadelphia and Lancaster counties, praying that a certain tract of land inhabited by the petitioners may be erected into a new county, was read in Assembly and after consideration and debate:

“Resolved, That said petition coming

⁵³Colonial Records, vol. 3, p. 359.

⁵⁴Colonial Records, vol. 4, p. 317.

⁵⁵Colonial Records, vol. 4, p. 335

late under consideration and the House wanting further information of the circumstances of the people and the place, said petition is recommended to the next Assembly."⁵⁶

January 8, 1740, accordingly, a "petition from Conrad Weiser, John Davis and James Lewis was again read praying that the house would consider the petition presented to last Assembly for a new county which were by that Assembly recommended to the present one. And the said petitions for a new county were read and considered, and some of the petitioners attending the house were called in and asked by the speaker if they desired to be heard in support of the petition. To which they answered that the hardships they lie under are sufficiently set forth in the petitions and they have nothing further to add. And the petitioners having withdrawn, the question was put that the prayer of the petitions for erecting a new county be granted. Passed in the negative unanimously."⁵⁷

In 1745 there was another effort to divide Lancaster county. On April 24 of that year "a petition from a number of the inhabitants of the back parts of Philadelphia county and the eastern part of Lancaster county setting forth the inconveniences they labor under, by their being too great distance from the Courts of Justice was presented to Assembly praying, 'leave to bring in a bill to erect those parts into a separate county.' It was ordered to lie on the table by the Assembly."⁵⁸

This effort gained considerable popularity; so much, indeed, that the newspapers of the day commented upon it. In its issue of May 2, 1745, Benjamin Franklin's paper, the Pennsylvania Gazette, said, "A petition was

⁵⁶Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 346.

⁵⁷Votes of Assembly, vol. 3, p. 363.

⁵⁸Votes of Assembly, vol. 4, p. 8.

presented to Assembly, praying that all the upper parts of Philadelphia county above McCall's Manor, with part of Lancaster county, be erected into a new county, which was referred to further consideration at the next sitting."

And here this essay, already too long, must end. I have attempted to show the conditions and general proportions of affairs when our grand old county was born and also the *modus operandi* which brought it into existence, together with the opposition to the movement, and the intricacies of legislaaion through which, in its birth, it passed. To this I have added the several early attempts to subdivide it and I am delighted to record the failure to do so. We are proud of every section of Lancaster county and may be glad that her north eastern limits were not clipped off.

The only justification I have to offer for a discussion of this subject of the "Birth of Lancaster county" is that is is highly patriotic—much more so than at first appears. That which connects us with the noble efforts of the past in our own locality and acquaints us with our predecessors' struggles, hardships and lack of advantages must give us a greater love for that which they have handed down to us. Men, women, and children, too, who have a proper regard for the past of their own locality, will be better people. That is the moral quality of history, rightly understood. Truthful history will make patriots.

To feel connected, by ancestry, by similarity of political principle, by belief in the like institutions, of and with those who lived in ancient days, in the same spots where we now live, make us part of the whole course of years and

life of that locality, and, of course, will kindle our pride and love. But how can this be, unless we know of the work and the play—the sunshine and the cloud—the laughter and the tears, the “ups” and the “downs”—and all the vicissitudes of those people in those days long gone by? This kind of study furnishes the flesh and blood—the life and beauty of the history whose unattractive dry bones we have been occasionally glancing at for years.

It makes patriots; it makes better politics; better and more honest business methods; fewer criminals and a home, family and ancestry-loving people. On the other hand, the most unpatriotic man in the world is the “tramp”—not connected with any place—not proud of any country’s history, not accountable to people present or to memories past for his life, morality or usefulness—a man without a country, who is well satisfied that such is his lot.

If now we know more than heretofore of our dear old country’s way of life and her struggles in the past, let these thoughts and contrasts incite us to live, and to be, more noble, more useful, more conscientious and more truly patriotic henceforth than we have been in the past.

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