

The Early Settlement and History of Little Britain Township, Including Fulton Township .

The first survey and grant of lands in Lancaster county was in this township, Little Britain, which included in its early settlement the territory now called Fulton township, and constitutes the extreme southern end of the so-called Southern End of Lancaster county. If we were to define the "Southern End" as it is understood today, or the Lower End, we would say that it was the entire section lying south of the Buck ridge, and bounded on its western boundary by the Susquehanna, touching for ten miles along its southern end the historic Mason and Dixon line, and well-nigh thirty miles of it bordering upon and bounded on the east and southeast by the beautiful Octoraro, and all included now in the townships of Little Britain, Fulton, Colerain and the Drumores. This entire section is too rich in material for history and historical sketches to be covered within the scope of any one paper. Yet it is all so intimately connected, each with the other, as to be hard to separate and give anything like an intelligent story of its earliest settlement. However, I am constrained by the circumstances and the limitations of the paper to confine myself to the original township of Little Britain, which now includes Fulton township, originally a portion of the same. Within its limits and boundaries live the descendants of the people who have probably done

more in the making of history for Lancaster county and in bringing its name to the forefront, as the home of patriots, scholars and statesmen, than any other section of like extent or territory within our county's limits. Not only have they made the name of Lancaster county famous throughout the boundaries of our State, but its fame is not even limited within the boundaries of our own nation. It is not my purpose to detail either the history or lives of these most prominent of her men, but, rather, to put into the records of our Society some facts less prominent in the history of this territory, for abler pens and tongues than mine have already sounded the fame of the great men of this section.

It does not seem to be generally known, yet it is a well-established fact, that in Little Britain township the first land within Lancaster county limits was surveyed and granted under legal and governmental regulations. This tract was known in the original grant as "Milcom Island," and it was surveyed by John Wilmer in 1704, who, apparently, was of the section of Philadelphia, though it is conceded that this land was not occupied by an actual residential settler until 1715, thus antedating in the grant by six years the early settlement of the Mennonites, and being followed by actual warrants and settlement, but four years after that Mennonite settlement Milcom Island consisted of a tract of 1,000 acres, surveyed perfectly rectangular in form, exactly twice as long as it was wide, and extending the long way north and south. As nearly as it can be located to-day, it included that section lying southwest of Little Britain postoffice, also known as Elim, and extending down to and

beyond Kirk's Mills and Wrightsdale village, and within the boundaries, among others, farms of Lewis J. Kirk and Dr. James A. Peoples, both of whom are direct descendants of the very earliest settlers of this section; also the farms now owned by Dr. Ed. Wright, Howard Coates, James Paxson, the William King farm and the Brabsons and the Susan Griffith farm, who likewise were among the earliest in that section. John Wilmer transferred the warrant to Randal Janney a few years after obtaining it, and he, in turn, transferred it to John Budd and Sarah Morrey. In 1714 Budd and Morrey exchanged it for two warrants for 500 acres each near Philadelphia county, and it was surrendered to the proprietaries. Immediately thereafter, or on November 5, 1714, the northern half of this tract was granted by warrant to Alexander Ross, who afterward sold it to John Jamison, June 5, 1725, and the Joseph Jamison farm is now a portion of the original tract, so far as we have been able to discover. The exact time at which buildings were erected and permanent settlement made does not appear, but the indications point to the fact that it must have been very soon after the date of Ross' warrant thereto in 1714. The southern half was not settled until some twenty years thereafter, when patents were granted for it to Elisha Gatchell and Henry Reynolds. Each was of equal portion. This lower half runs down into the hills of Octoraro, and is much rougher and less easy of cultivation than the more northerly portions, which may account for the delay in its settlement. Before 1742 most of the surrounding land was located, and in the name of persons whose family name is still extant in that section, being such well-

known names as William Gibson, David McComb, Benjamin Delworth, Janet Jamison. Among the other earlier settlers, whose descendants are there to-day, are: William King, William N. Griffith, Sarah Phillips and Rachel J. Pickering, Samuel Carter and Seth Kinsey.

This section of our county is of great natural fertility, especially the valleys, with the large, magnificent streams of water running through them, while yielding to-day fertile pasture land and fine crops of wheat, corn and oats, hay and potatoes, that at that day were clad in immense forests of oak, chestnut and hickory; and no doubt the valleys of the Octoraro, the Conowingos and the smaller streams, Peters' Creek and their hundreds of tributaries, made this a great natural hunting ground of the Indians of that day. These same natural attractions soon became known to the very early Quaker settlement, which is now south of the Mason and Dixon line, though when settled was believed to be within the boundaries of Pennsylvania, and part of the lands granted to Penn by his sovereign. That section covered and included the villages and surrounding country, the Brick Meeting-house, Rising Sun and Colora, known by the general name of the Nottinghams.

As is well known, they were settled before the dawning of the eighteenth century, and, if I recall rightly, the two hundredth anniversary of the Nottingham settlement was held some fifteen years ago. The Nottingham settlement was composed almost exclusively of Friends, or commonly called "Quakers," and was very extensive and apparently prosperous, not only as a farming community, but in their religious organizations, and a number

of "Meetings" were established prior to 1700. Very early in the eighteenth century, or about 1715, or thereafter, this Quaker population was attracted to the northwestward across the Octoraro waters, by the fertility and natural resources of that land, attested by the evidence of the giant oaks, hickories, chestnut, poplars and sycamores, which only attain their greatest growth in the most fertile land. When this evidence was contrasted by the early Nottingham settlers with the scrubby growths of oak, pine and cedars that clad too many of the hills of their chosen sections, the Nottinghams, they began to move into it in increasing numbers, many of them stopping in the sections now in the limits of Little Britain, but more of them going further over into the fertile, smoother land of the Conowingo Valley, included in the present boundaries of Fulton township. Among the first to take up and patent lands in Fulton township was Emanuel Grubb, who, on December 10, 1713, or but three years after the Mennonite settlement, patented 100 acres of land, immediately adding 200 to it and soon thereafter 200 more. This section was granted by warranty, under the name of "Three Partners," and now includes those fine farm lands of Annie Wood, Cyrus Herr and brother, Levi Kirk and others, and includes the village of Pleasant Grove and vicinity. Soon following Grubb came William Teague, who, on June 6, 1715, secured a warrant for a tract known as "Teague's Endeavor," and one year thereafter another tract called "Teague's Forest." These tracts are now or lately were in possession of James Maxwell's descendants, the Davis Brown tract, the Jerry B. Haines tract, own-

ed by Eugene M. Haines to-day. We find that on August 24, 1726, an extensive tract, containing some 600 acres, was patented to Thomas Johnson. This tract seems to have covered and included the land extending up and around Peach Bottom, including the famous slate quarries of that section, later owned by Jeremiah B. Brown, a very prominent man in his day, and James A. Caldwell and the Sanders McSparran farm, also the large farm, known as Timothy Haines', now owned by Dr. A. H. Stubbs.

Another influx of settlers shortly followed, confining themselves more directly to the more heavily timbered land of the Conowingo Valley. Among the first of these was James King, whose descendants are many in that section, and the extensive family of Browns, who took up 600 or 700 acres in and about that section, extending from Wakefield, or Penn Hill, across to Fulton House, and as far south as Texas. These tracts were patented, one of them by James King, called the Cave Lands, on both sides of the Conowingo Creek, which at that time was spelled "Canarawango," which is an Indian word, and is interpreted to mean "canoe won't go." The first portion of this tract stayed in the King name for many years, and included the Bradley's Mill farm, the Annie Yocum farm, now owned by the Bradleys, and the Montillon Brown farm, now owned by D. F. Magee, on which farm is still standing the permanent homestead of brick, slate-covered, built after the log-cabin days, and still is bearing its date of 1760. North of that, further up the Conowingo, lands were patented by the Caldwells, the Ewings, the Stubbs, the Porters and the Bradleys. Very early in its history, the family of

Browns, usually designated as the "Nottingham" Browns, came into this section. Though I have not discovered that they were the original patentees of any of our earliest grants, but Jeremiah B. Brown patented an extensive tract, 600 acres, apparently covering and including the section now known as the Day Wood farm, the Annie Wood farm at Goshen village, the Levi and Slater Brown section and probably some portions of the adjoining farms. He took his patent under the name of "Goshen." As we know, according to Biblical history, this was the "land flowing with milk and honey."

Whatever may have been its claim to that title in its earliest days, no one can now go into that section, and, from its gently rolling hilltops, near the residence of Neal Hambleton, look over these broad fields of grain and meadows, dotted with hundreds of lowing kine, that literally furnish the milk to the creameries at Fulton House, Goshen, West Brook and Bradleys, and fail to feel that this section is most appropriately named.

Last summer the writer, on the afternoon of a most beautiful day, attending a social gathering on that old historic meeting-house, at Penn Hill, which lies just a little westward up out of this valley, sitting in the center of the meeting house, looked out of the open door to the east. Within the focus of his view, from the center of the meeting house, confined by the jambs of the door, opening to the east, a magnificent horoscope was given, including the center of Goshen; and a fairer, more fertilly-productive stretch of hillside, meadow land and gently-receding fields of grain and grass has seldom come within my view at one glance.

The Browns, who have descended from the original Jeremiah B., and, we think, his brothers, included in their stock, in those early days, members of the Legislature, a Judge of our Courts, and later that masterful mechanic and engineer, William Brown, engineer-in-chief of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and likewise the present representative in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania from this county, J. Hay Brown, formerly of the Bar of Lancaster county.

Still further northward and eastward up the Conowingo and towards the Britain township line of to-day, in 1743 a tract was located by William Montgomery, and remained in the Montgomery family for 100 years, and his descendants still remain thereabouts. This covers the land now owned by Jason Walton, Lindley Patterson, Wm. Black and Robert Black, and westward of that the same year, 1742, William Fulton took up 393 acres, lying along the Conowingo Creek, which were surveyed to one James Gillespie, which tract was increased by three other pieces, making it a tract of nearly 600 acres. This seems to have covered what is now known as the Frank C. Pyle mill, the Smedley property, John Landis Herr's property and probably the Dr. Gryder property, now Shoemaker's. The present Pyle's mill was early erected on this property, and is the third, and is among the oldest mills in the southern end of the county.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the building of mills quickly followed the clearing and farming of the land, as they were a necessary part of the industries, which were required in the lives of the early settlers. As stated above, the Pyle mill was among the early ones, but

what was known as Woods' mills, close to the present Goshen store, probably antedated it by a few years; and at or about the same period, a mile or so lower down the stream, the Bradley mill, owned by Frank Bradley, the son of Amos K. Bradley, was built on a tract which was patented under date of February 25, 1743, and the Annie Woods mill, southeast of Pleasant Grove, was erected at a very early date.

But the very first mill of all built was in that section in 1733, and was known as King's mill, and located partly on land now owned by D. F. Magee and partly owned by Augustus Heeps, and stood close to the bridge called the "twin bridges," spanning the Conowingo between these two farms. Only the old marks of the foundation walls and race are now visible, all vestige of the mill having disappeared years ago.

Returning again to the east side of this section, we find among the very earliest patents preceding the Menonite settlement by three years was a warrant dated June 10, 1707, to Edward Pleadwell, for 700 acres of land. It was in the extreme southern edge of Little Britain township, and included what is now famous as Woods' chrome banks, lying on both sides of the Octoraro creek, in a bend of the creek, below Lea's bridge. Whether there was any actual settlement of this land at or about that time it is hard to determine; but that the value of the land was known and recognized and first, we may say, discovered by the early settlers of the Nottingham Quaker section, is very apparent. In this section, centrally located, on the 10th of January, 1792, was established the meeting-house and burial-ground known as "Eastland," the founders and

first trustees of which were Henry Reynolds, Reuben Reynolds, James Harlan, Henry Reynolds, Jr., and Abner Brown, and six acres and thirty-five perches of land were set aside for the purposes of the meeting-house. The meeting, though not large, is still maintained. The meeting-house at Penn Hill was founded many years prior to this, however, and was first conducted as a branch of the Nottingham monthly meeting. On the 14th of June, 1749, it was erected into a separate meeting, at least the proceedings looking to that end were instituted at that time, and John Smith, Joshua Johnson, Joshua Pusey, Thos. Carleton, Robert Lewis and James Robinson met at James King's residence, and finally, on May 11, 1752, reported in favor of building a meeting-house, and on March 17, 1758, a conveyance for the land from Michael King was made to Samuel Boyd, Joshua Brown, Isaac Williams and Vincent King as trustees, and a house was erected. It is located on the summit of the ridge between Conowingo and Puddle-Duck creeks. There is a thriving congregation belonging to this meeting to this day including many of the most prominent families of that section. Their forefathers for several generations back sleep in the adjacent cemetery, and to read the names on the lowly tombstones, dating back 150 to 160 years, is an epitome of the biographical history of that section.

Farther eastward and northward in Little Britain township, and overlapping into Coleraine and into the Drumores, we find to-day the descendants of the Scotch-Irish race, whose ancestors settled through that section at a later day, but who played no less important part in the history of the

Lower End, from that period at which they came. We find among them the names of Fulton, Ramseys, Whiteside, General Steele, Hayes, Patterson, McCaullagh, Linton, Clendennin, Fergusons, McConnell and many others that were of the fighting Irish blood and in strong contrast to the peaceful Quaker. Each played a useful and necessary part in the up-building of this section, but the names of the latter only become prominent when war overtook our country and their services were needed as soldiers and commanders and the story of the Revolution and their story is one, and it will be another one for me to relate, which I hope to do at no distant day.

JOHN C. LEWIS.

Before the reading of the above paper, Mr. Magee stated that he had drawn much of his information and data for the same from the notes and writings of one John C. Lewis, Esq., a noted Justice of the Peace and surveyor of the Southern End, with whom he was well acquainted, and, incidentally, gave a short and interesting talk on the man, somewhat as follows:

John C. Lewis, Esq., was for many years a noted character in the Lower End, and his peculiar talents, acquirements and eccentricities made him a noted figure in that section for many years. He came into the neighborhood in the early fifties, and began teaching school when he was a young man, and his early life before that time was a mystery. After his death it developed that he came from Montgomery county and his friends came on to claim a small estate which he left. He taught school for a number of years in Britain, Fulton and Drumore townships.

He was an omnivorous reader, and, being possessed of a remarkable memory, his fund of knowledge on all subjects was very extended, and only his peculiarities and eccentricities in his methods and habits of life kept him from attaining the distinction to which he would otherwise have become entitled. He was a good school teacher as long as he followed it, but in later life he devoted all of his time that he cared to devote to labor to land surveying and conveyancing, and to the duties of his office as Justice of the Peace, which he held for many succeeding terms in East Drumore township.

His active life there extended from about 1850 to 1892, when he died, though the last few years of it, through illness, he was not able to do much surveying. During this long period he had surveyed the greater number of the farms in the Southern End, some of them several times, and his wonderful memory, it is said, served him so well that he could walk into a thicket of underbrush and leaves and, after looking around a while, would say, "that corner ought to be about here," and, thrusting down his Jacob's staff, would hit the stone fairly. He was very fond of history, and as he had, in searching titles, traced to their first source, the titles of nearly all farms of that section, his fund of information on this line was wonderful, and always accurate and complete.

He was for some years County Surveyor, and took great interest in this work, and other surveyors soon found he was their master when it came to establishing correctly, disputed lines.

His great fault was his utter disregard for the conventionalities of dress

or cleanliness. Dressed at his best he looked like a tramp, only perhaps a little bit dirtier and more completely unkempt and shabby. There are many stories told of him in this regard. Most of them, however, will hardly bear retelling here, but among them is the following, which shows at a glance the character of the man. I should state that he always used the very best of language, absolutely correct in grammar, diction and spelling, and wrote a very fine hand, as all of his work amply attests.

The story is that at one time when he was County Surveyor he had occasion to meet several high officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad to locate a certain line. The officials came on the ground and waited some time for the County Surveyor, thinking he had not come. Seeing an old man sitting by the roadside a little distance away, they went to him to ask if he had seen the Surveyor. They found him sitting on a stone, dressed mainly in an old blue army overcoat, a dirty shirt rolled back at the collar showing a brawny, hairy chest, pants with but few buttons and not enough patches to cover his nakedness, a pair of old plough shoes were on his feet, minus strings, and no stockings, and all crowned by a hat in which his thick shock of grizzly hair formed the roof; he sat contentedly munching his lunch, consisting of five cents' worth of crackers and cheese from the neighboring store. In answer to their inquiries for the missing Surveyor he arose, and, with a perfect Chesterfieldian bow and military salute, he said: "No doubt I am the gentleman whom you seek. I am at your service when you are ready."

He lived and held his office in a lit-

tle eight by ten shop about a mile below the Unicorn. This office was stacked on all sides with many old deeds, title briefs and notes of survey innumerable, but so utterly careless and dilatory did he become in his older days, that the rain and the weather came through and destroyed the most of them, and at his death but little remained except those for which he had actual use.

He had been a soldier in the war and drew a pension, but seldom spoke of his services, but talked rather the gospel of peace and good will as the philosophy of his life.

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