

RESEARCH OF
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Friend and Brother of the Lenape
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FIRST SETTLERS IN BUCKS COUNTY
including land boundaries

(Northampton County was not established until 1750's)

**THE FIRST ROAD TO THE FORKS OF THE DELAWARE
AND THE FIRST SETTLERS**

(Paper read by W. J. Heller, President of the Northampton County Historical Society, at a meeting of the Historical Society of Bucks County. Date unknown.)

(From "The Book Shelf Scrap Book of Easton and Northampton County," Vol. 1, pages 64ff, located in the Marx Local History Room, Easton Public Library, Easton, Pennsylvania. The date and source of the publication is missing.)

Kind friends, join with me near the summit of Morgan's Hill, the east end of the Lehigh mountain in Williams Township. From this vantage point, we obtain an extensive view of that valley which, for productiveness as to the exterior and interior of its surface, has no counterpart in the world. Born to civilization through the dishonesty of Thomas Penn (*son of William Penn*), baptized with the life blood of three hundred innocent settlers, men, women and children. Consecrated ground.

Far to the north like an amethyst barrier, the Kittatiny Hills seemingly mingle their peaks with the clouds. Far to the northeast thirty miles or more, these hills are cut in twain by the historic Delaware. Far to the northwest, forty miles or more, the Lehigh, known in the early days as the west branch of the Delaware, burst through the hills and meandering, first to the south and then to the east, unites with the main stream at our feet below.

This triangular section and the territory on both sides of the rivers, was known for ages as the Forks, so named by the red man, not because it was included between to confluent rivers, but from the three trails forking in different directions after crossing the west branch of Yeisilstein's Island. Afterwards, it was known to the white settlers as "the Forks of the Delaware."

About the year 1730 and later, the fertile valleys of this land of promise was a temptation to the settler, an invitation to a home; but for twenty years or more, it was forbidden ground. At this time, it was a vast treeless plain, the only vegetation to be seen being that which fringed its numerous small streams. By the early New Jersey settlers, it was known as the "Barrens" and the favorite hunting ground of the red man.

Midway between the two rivers, there is in the mountains a natural defile know as the Wind Gap through which the Indians chased the game by burning the undergrowth between the two rivers and dispatching the game as it passed through the Gap. Owing to the yearly

destruction of vegetable growth, it had the appearance of a vast desert plain called by the Philadelphians, "the Drylands;" and by the Hollanders, who first explored it, "Blanveldt" which, in English, is Plainfield.

A township in this tract still retains the name, Plainfield. They also gave the name "Smithfield" to the section above the mountain.

By a deed dated September 17, 1718, Sassoonan, king of the Delawares, and his six counselors confirmed to William Penn the former sales of land from Duck Creek to the Lehigh Hills. Whether the deed of 1686 was genuine or not matters little. The great and important question at this period and for many years afterward was the exact northern boundary of this vast purchase of land. Where did the Lehigh Hills begin? Did this line include any part of the hills? Was the boundary at the bottom of the first hill or on the top of it?

Generally the red man's boundary was a range of hills; the white man's boundary, usually a stream.

If we accept the opinion of James Logan as authority, the line would be at the foot of the first hill or what is now the boundary between the counties of Bucks and Northampton, which was the northern line of the Durham purchase. Between these two lines are the townships of Lower Saucon and Williams, which were thickly settled as early as 1730.

Logan persistently refused to grant land for settlement which was north of this line. Nevertheless, Logan's protest did not deter the hardy German from settling among these hills, even to the water's edge of the west branch of the Delaware, now Lehigh River. Some even penetrated the forbidden ground north of the Lehigh into the Forks. These early settlers apparently respected the Lehigh as the dividing line between them and the promised land, and contented themselves with viewing the vast expanse of territory to the north and waiting for the day when the red man would vacate and the white man take his place.

The east bank of the Delaware, in the province of West Jersey, was lined with settlers' cabins as far north as the line of New Jersey extends. We find Peter Raub maintaining a ferry at what is now Raubsville, about the time the Durham company was formed. This was the highway from New Brunswick to the west.

His brother George entertained the emigrant northward bound as did another brother Michael; and after the opening of the Forks country to settlement, Michael conducted a like place of entertainment immediately above the mountain along the road toward the Minisinks - by road, is meant not a bridle path or trail, but a well defined road. It is not likely that several hundred settlers would live among these hills for upward of a quarter of a century without roads.

The first official road from the south ended at Durham. Whether this official road ended at the forge or extended through the entire Durham tract, I am unable to say; but the unofficial road continued along what is now the old Philadelphia road to a point to Coffeetown road and along Kleinhan's creek to the Delaware, passing on the way the plantation of Michael Meyeres, then to his brother John, reaching the Delaware, where lived on one side of the road Michael

Wilhelm; on the other, Johann George Kleinhans; and afterwards his son, George Kleinhans; and afterwards his son, George Frederick.

From this point, it followed the present Delaware road to a point below the present bridge across the canal, where it passed along the river's edge to about where the power house now stands. From this point to the church at Raubsville the river has worn away the bank, obliterating the old road for that distance. The home of Peter Raub stood near the bridge which crosses the canal a short distance below the Raubsville hotel. This house was removed when the canal was built. His ferry was near this point.

On the opposite side of the river lived Peter Moelich, the ancestor of the Mellick family.

From the hotel northward the road followed the present tow path, passing the public house of George Raub which stood on the knoll immediately north of the church; thence along the present canal bed to the house of Baltzer Hess, now the property of the Hoffmans, where it turned at right angles and followed the present lane in the rear of Hoffman's for a short half mile to the home of Peter Seiler, the pow-wow doctor.

I cannot pass this point on this highway without paying my respect to Dr. Saylor, a physician, who lived one hundred and fifty years ahead of the times; who practiced the very methods that the medical fraternity are now discovering to be the proper methods of healing human ailments. Johan Peter Seiler was a graduate of Heidleberg and possessed marvelous magnetic influence. His wonderful curative powers soon brought him prominently before the community. The more superstitious attributed his almost miraculous cures to witchcraft.

This accusation caused his emigration to America, where he landed in 1743 and settled near Johan Wilhelm Philips at what is now Philipsburg, New Jersey. Being unable to procure certain herbs and roots any nearer than on the property of Peter Raub, Saylor concluded to move to the Pennsylvania side of the river, where he soon became famous in western New Jersey.

This remarkable healer cured every ailment that came before his notice, making no charge but accepting voluntary gifts, money, potatoes, grain and any produce. The Indians gave him, in return for his services, skins of rare animals which he sold in the Philadelphia markets at fancy prices.

The Indians held him in great veneration and called him "the great pow-wow," the greatest title of honor they could bestow. The title was taken up by the white settlers and he became known from Massachusetts to the Carolinas as the great pow-wow doctor of Pennsylvania. He died in 1803.

His son followed in his profession, and later his grandson, both of whom lacked the great magnetic, hypnotic influence of their sire. Whatever may be said of the popularity of his successors is no reflection on Johann Peter Seiler, the great pow-wow doctor of the Lehigh Hills. He was more extensively patronized than any other physician in America before or since.

We will now continue our journey over the old road, turning northward at the end of the

Seiler farm and proceed down the hill into the next valley, passing on the way the burying grounds of the Lantzs, the Schumachers, and Zellers, to the plantation of Nicholas Lantz, now George Zellers', where a lane branches eastward to Michael Schumacher's.

Another branched up the valley to Johan Philip Dick, Conradt Zeller, John Larch (father of Anthony, of Lower Saucon), the Knechts and Unangsts.

Passing Nicholas Lentz, we continue up the hills to the vineyard of Peter Lantz, whose wine cellars were famous for over a half century and afterward, a favorite Sunday retreat for the gentry of Easton.

We will continue until we reach what is now the old Philadelphia road. Proceeding along this road, passing to our left, in the valley below, Leonard Kister, the ancestor of the Kesslers; and further down the valley, the Woodring's, we turn eastward at what is now the old Hopewell schoolhouse, passing Leonhard Hartzell and Leonard Kieffer, continuing down the hill to where it intersects the Delaware river road at what is now Kolb's truck farm where a lane led southward to Philip Meixsell.

Less than one hundred yards from this lane northwardly, the road ascends a hill passing to the rear of what is now the residence of Joseph Heinlein, to the top of the hill immediately above the present brick schoolhouse. This is the vantage point from which we looked upon the land of promise. Before again descending in a westwardly course the north side of the hill, let us turn to look across the river into the province of West Jersey.

Immediately opposite, we see the smoke ascending from the cabin of John Feit whose plantation occupied the bluffs. Below him, along the river bank we see the homes of the Meyers, Beers, Zimmermans, now Carpentersville. *[Note: Zimmerman or Simmerman translates into English as "Carpenter", hence if doing genealogies, you must watch closely..in one family you may find surnames Simmerman, Zimmerman and Carpenter - Philip GrayWolf]* Northward we see the plantation of Johan Yost Rosenberger, who started a fishery on his place and known to this day as Roseberry's fishery - so named after his grandson Michael, who assumed the name Roseberry. North of the Rosenbergers is the 2,000-acre plantation of Johan Wilhelm Phillip, formerly of Phillipsburg, Germany and after whom the town of Phillipsburg, New Jersey, was named.

Continuing our journey, we come to the plantation of Lawrence Merkel and Peter Lattig and then to the log church. This stood where our road crosses the present old Philadelphia road. The site is now occupied by a reservoir. This was a commodious structure, built partly of stone and partly of logs, erected about the year 1730. In it, worshiped the settlers north of the present Bucks County line and as far west as Saucon Township, the great part of the congregation being from the Jersey side of the river. It was known as "The Church of the Congregation at the Delaware River belonging to the Lutheran Religion."

During the first few years services were held only on important religious anniversaries; later they were held more frequently or whenever an itinerant preacher could be procured. On the day preceding these special services it was necessary to notify the inhabitants of the event. This

was done by building huge bon-fires on the summit of Morgan's Hill. These fires could be seen for forty miles around and, the following day, there assembled at this ediface: Magnus Decker, of Upper Jersey; Nicholas Ensel, of Sussex; Jacob Lunge, from Changewater; John Adam Schnell, Jacob Loeffler, and Peter Herring from along the Musconetcong; Nicholas Kern, of near Lehigh Gap; John Fein, of Pinesville; Philip Reimer from the Blue Mountains; Wilhelm Volbrecht from Egypt; Ludwig Klein from Scott's Mountain; Johan Ludwig Repsher from the same place; Christian Miller from Tot's Gap; Johan Jacob Abel, Ludwig Ditman, Mathais Fraunfelder, Frederick Kuhn, Valentine Schultz, Johan Philip Odenwelder, Leonard Vogelmann, Adam Mann, Powell Reeser, Elias Dietrich, Jeremiah Bast, and many others from round about.

This was a very flourishing congregation and had upwards of 200 communicants at the time when William Parsons surveyed Easton.

A short distance west of the church, a road branched northward toward the Lehigh passing the homes of Melchoir Hay and Johan Philip Odwenwelder, then through what is now Coal Street, South Easton, turning eastward and following the present canal, ending at the old ferry house still standing hear the old Lehigh Valley station. The main road continues from a point beyond the church along what is now the Hellerstown road, passing the plantation of Jeremiah Bast, the first white settler on the Lehigh at what is now Glendon Valley and near the buffalo ford on the Lehigh.

Then the homes of the Brotzmans, then the Gahrists (now Garis) reaching the settlement of the Shimers, Freemans, Oberleys, Laubachs, Hartzells. At this place, Rudolph Oberley kept a public house.

Along the road on the land of Philip Slough, was another church known as "The congregation of the Augsburg's confession in Saucon at Philip Schlauch near the large Lehigh and Forks of the Delaware." This congregation, being weak in numbers, sometime later affiliated with another congregation then being formed at a place now known as old Williams township church.

Continuing on the road, we pass the plantation of Abraham Brinker, Stophel Transue, Tobias Weber, reaching the settlement of the Hellers, the Riegels, the Boehms, the Wagners, and many others in Lower Saucon township, intersecting with the King's Great Road from Philadelphia where it ends.

These settlers were mostly of the Reformed denomination and maintained a church at what is now the Lime Kiln school house, from whence they removed in 1751 to the present site of the Lower Saucon church.

Much has been said; much has been written; much remains to be written of the early settlers of these regions. I love its hills and its valleys, its streams and its associations, the homes of my ancestors for upwards of two hundred years. For nearly twenty years, it has been my delight and recreation to roam its hills, making research to ascertain who were the first settlers at the Forks of the Delaware and where they lived.

It is with extreme pleasure that I am able to chronicle the names of these hardy, German pioneers who contributed their share to the German development of Pennsylvania.

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