

The Culture of Early Pennsylvania

BENJAMIN WEST has a lot to answer for. Everyone knows his painting of William Penn's treaty with the Indians; it is one of our national icons, "as indelibly impressed on the American mind," it has been said, "as . . . Washington's crossing of the Delaware."¹ The lush greens of its foliage, the tawny flesh tones of its noble savages, the sober drab of its Quaker plain dress have fixed forever in our consciousness a stereotype of early Pennsylvania. There he stands under the great elm at Shackamaxon, portly and benignant, the Founder of the Quaker commonwealth, eternally dispensing peace and yard goods to the Indians. If it is mostly legend—for there is no documentary record of a treaty at Shackamaxon—it is at least an inspiring one, quite as much so as that of Pocahontas laying her lovely head on Captain John Smith's breast or Squanto instructing the Pilgrim Fathers in the mysteries of maize culture. And whatever its faults as a document or as a painting, it has the merit of a certain truth to history, for, unlike the founders of Jamestown and Plymouth, the Quaker founders of Pennsylvania did contrive by fair dealing and generosity to stay at peace with the local Indians for three quarters of a century. As a matter of fact, it is worth pausing a moment to note that the autumn of 1956 marked the two-hundredth anniversary of the ending of that remarkable experiment in peaceful race relations.²

What is wrong, then, with West's vast, idyllic canvas as a symbol of early Pennsylvania? It is not the anachronisms that bother me. True, the architectural background is composed of brick buildings that could not have been standing in 1682; true, West portrays Penn

¹ Wesley Frank Craven, *The Legend of the Founding Fathers* (New York, 1956), 77. Ellen Starr Brinton gives a brief account of the growth of the legend, with a comprehensive checklist of reproductions of the painting, in "Benjamin West's Painting of Penn's Treaty with the Indians," *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, XXX (1941), 99-189. She found approximately seventy-five different prints, not to mention the tablecloths, soup tureens, candle screens, and banknotes on which the scene has appeared as a decorative motif.

² See Frederick B. Tolles, "The Twilight of the Holy Experiment," *ibid.*, XL (1956), 30-37.

as stout and middle-aged when in fact he was still young and athletic, and dressed him in the Quaker Oats costume of shadbelly coat and cocked hat that Friends did not wear for half a century to come. No, the mischief lies in the aura, the atmosphere, of the painting—the air of smug and stupid piety combined with the stolid respectability of the successful bourgeois. No one will deny that the early Quakers were a “God-fearing, money-making people”—least of all I, who have written a book on the proposition that they had one foot in the meetinghouse and the other in the countinghouse. It is probably unfair to demand of a painter that he project the life of the mind on his canvas; perhaps it takes a modern abstractionist to portray a pure idea. Yet I cannot help regretting that the most widely current stereotype of early Pennsylvania should suggest a cultural and intellectual desert.

Besides, early Pennsylvania was not, of course, just Quaker. Everyone who has seen *Plain and Fancy* knows about the Amish, who have been here for a long time, and everyone who has a taste for the quaint and the indigestible knows about “hex signs” on barns (which have nothing to do, of course, with witches) and shoofly pie. If we don’t know about the Scotch-Irish, it is not for want of zeal on the part of their descendants, who would have us believe that they fought the Indians and won the American Revolution all by themselves. And if we happen to be Bryn Mawr graduates we are vaguely conscious that the college campus and its surroundings were once peopled by Welshmen, who left the landscape strewn with odd-sounding place names like Llanerch, Bala-Cynwyd, and Tredyffrin (many of which, incidentally, were chosen from a gazetteer by a nineteenth-century president of the Pennsylvania Railroad looking for distinctive names for his suburban stations).

What I want to suggest is that early Pennsylvania had a genuine and important culture or complex of cultures, that there was something more to it than simple Quaker piety and commercialism on the one hand and ethnic quaintness on the other. I am going to side-step one basic problem by refusing to define exactly what I mean by “culture.” The anthropologically minded will be annoyed by my irresponsible tendency to use the term now as Ruth Benedict would use it and again perhaps as Matthew Arnold would use it. In justifi-

cation of this slipshod procedure I can only plead that I am merely an unscientific historian, not a "social scientist."

"Early Pennsylvania" I will define more strictly. By this term I shall mean Pennsylvania east of the Susquehanna and south of the Blue Mountains in the period down to about 1740. But I must immediately point out that this area was never a self-contained or self-conscious regional unit. It was part of a larger geographical whole. The men in the gray flannel suits have been trying hard in recent years to impress upon us the concept "Delaware Valley, U.S.A." The colonial Pennsylvanian knew without being told that he lived in the valley of the Delaware. He first saw his new home from the deck of a ship sailing up the great river. His prosperity and his comfort depended in large measure on the commerce that carried his farm products down the river to the West Indies and southern Europe, that brought back up the river the textiles and hardware he needed and could not manufacture for himself. The Delaware united West Jersey, Pennsylvania, and the Lower Counties (which eventually became the state of Delaware) into a single economic province, and linked it with the rest of the Atlantic community. It also unified the valley into a single "culture area." The Quakers' Yearly Meeting embraced Friends on both sides of the river, and met alternately at Philadelphia on the west bank and Burlington on the east. The Anglicans also thought of the valley as a unit, a single missionary field to be saved from "Quakerism or heathenism." I shall restrict myself, however, to that portion of it which originally formed the province of Pennsylvania proper—the counties of Bucks, Philadelphia, and Chester.

The Founder of Pennsylvania, we must be clear, was neither a narrow-minded religious zealot on the one hand nor a mean-spirited Philistine on the other. William Penn was a man of broad intellectual culture in Matthew Arnold's sense, educated at Oxford, on the Continent, and at Lincoln's Inn; he was a Fellow of the Royal Society and the associate not only of kings and courtiers, but of the reigning intellectuals of the day—men like Samuel Pepys, the diarist, John Locke, the philosopher, Sir William Petty, the political economist. He was a man of wide reading. The list of books he bought to bring to America on his second visit suggests his range; it included the poems

of Milton, a copy of *Don Quixote*, the works of John Locke, the latest travel books by William Dampier and Father Hennepin, the Roman histories of Livy and Suetonius.³ Penn was a good Quaker and a shrewd real-estate promoter, but he was also—though one would scarcely guess it from Benjamin West's canvas—a Restoration egg-head, as much at home with the philosophers of the Royal Society as with the Indians of the Pennsylvania forest. The example of such a man was enough to insure that Pennsylvania would not be a cultural desert. And Penn's commitment to a sophisticated ideal of religious freedom meant that the intellectual life of his colony would never stagnate for want of controversy and the creative clash of opinions.

It is true that, by and large, the English Quakers who sailed with Penn on the *Welcome* or followed him on other ships did not come, as he did, from the leisure class. Quakerism in the seventeenth century took root in the lower orders of society, among the yeoman farmers, husbandmen, artisans, shopkeepers, hired servants, men and women who worked with their hands. The farmers among them, poverty-stricken dalesmen from the moors of northern England, headed straight for the rich uplands of Bucks and Chester counties. (As late as the middle of the eighteenth century, the people of Chester still spoke in a broad Yorkshire dialect.⁴) Within a few years they were producing flour and meat for export. With the proceeds they built those neat stone farmhouses with their projecting pent roofs and door hoods that are so charming when one comes upon them in the midst of the split-levels and ranch houses of Philadelphia's exurbia.

They had little beyond the rudiments of reading and writing, these rural Friends, and few books beyond the Bible and Barclay's *Apology*. They had little time for reading, and besides, their Quakerism enjoined upon them a sober, plain way of life. But if their lives seem drab, remember the clean lines, the satisfying proportions, the functional perfection of the stone meetinghouse where they gathered on First Day to worship God in the living silence. In that simple structure form followed function with a faithfulness that Frank

³ Invoice dated February, 1699, Taylor Papers, 3309, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania (HSP). See also Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1948), 144-146.

⁴ So Deborah Norris Logan told John F. Watson, the annalist, on the authority of her mother, Mary Parker Norris, who had grown up in Chester. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia* . . . (Philadelphia, 1881), I, 129.

Lloyd Wright might envy, and every superfluity was stripped away to leave its purpose revealed in utter purity. The Pennsylvania Friends even anticipated a favorite device of the modern architect: they installed sliding panels with which they could break up the "flow of space" and convert their oblong meetinghouses into two rooms for the men's and women's meetings for business.

Howard Brinton calls the period from 1700 to 1740 the Golden Age of Quakerism in America. He is thinking primarily of the rural Quakers of Bucks and Chester counties when he describes, with a touch of nostalgia, the "unique Quaker culture" of the period.

In the Quaker communities the meeting was the center, spiritually, intellectually and economically. It included a library and a school. Disputes of whatever nature were settled in the business sessions of the meeting. The poor were looked after, moral delinquents dealt with, marriages approved and performed. . . . Each group, centered in the meeting, was a well-ordered, highly integrated community of interdependent members. . . . This flowering of Quakerism was not characterized by any outburst of literary or artistic production. Its whole emphasis was on life itself in home, meeting and community. This life was an artistic creation as beautiful in its simplicity and proportion as was the architecture of its meeting houses. The "Flowering of New England" has been described in terms of its literature, but the flowering of Quakerism in the middle colonies can be described only in terms of life itself.⁵

Quaker life in Philadelphia soon fell into a different pattern. Eventually the cleavage between rural and urban Quaker culture would split the Society of Friends into two factions, Hicksite and Orthodox (and one might even suggest that the recent healing of the schism was made easier by the blurring of that sharp line of cleavage in our twentieth-century suburban culture). The material basis for the rise of urban Quaker culture was Philadelphia's amazing growth and prosperity. Last of the major colonial cities to be founded, William Penn's "green country town" quickly outstripped New York, Newport, and Charleston, and by 1740 was pressing the much older town of Boston hard for primacy in wealth and population.⁶

By 1740 the Quakers were already a minority group in the Quaker City, but they had been the prime movers in the town's economic

⁵ *Friends for 300 Years* (New York, 1952), 184.

⁶ See the estimates of urban population in Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness* (New York, 1938), 6, 143, 303, and *Cities in Revolt* (New York, 1955), 5, 217.

expansion and they still controlled a large share of its trade and its visible assets. Most of the early immigrants had been craftsmen and shopkeepers. They practiced the economic ethic of Poor Richard long before Benjamin Franklin, that Johnny-come-lately, arrived in Philadelphia. Working diligently in their callings, they quickly transformed a primitive frontier village into a complex provincial market town and business center. The tons of wheat and flour, the barrels of beef and pork, the lumber, the bales of furs that poured into Philadelphia from the farms in the hinterland provided, of course, the substance of Philadelphia's flourishing export trade. But it was the diligence and business acumen of the Quaker merchants that translated those raw goods into prosperity for the whole region.⁷

But prosperity, it must be admitted, had its effects on Philadelphia Quakerism. As wealth increased, plainness—what Friends called “the simplicity of Truth”—declined. As early as 1695 Philadelphia Yearly Meeting was warning its male members against wearing “long lapp'd Sleeves or Coates gathered at the Sides, or Superfluous Buttons, or Broad Ribbons about their Hatts, or long curled Perriwiggs,” and cautioning women Friends against “Dressing their Heads Immodestly, or Wearing their Garments undecently . . . or Wearing . . . Striped or Flower'd Stuffs, or other useless and Superfluous Things.”⁸ Obviously, the Yearly Meeting wouldn't have bothered to discourage its members from wearing these abominations unless some Friends were actually doing so. But the clever Quaker could find ways to outwit the meeting, could practice conspicuous consumption without violating the letter of the discipline. In 1724 Christopher Saur, the German printer, noted that “plainness is vanishing pretty much” among the Philadelphia Friends. It was still noticeable in their clothes, “except,” he added, “that the material is very costly, or is even velvet.”⁹ In other words, the Philadelphia Friends were becoming worldly, and there were Jeremiahs—especially among the country

⁷ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, Chap. 3.

⁸ Manuscript minutes of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, I, 54, Department of Records, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends.

⁹ Rayner W. Kelsey, ed., “An Early Description of Pennsylvania,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (PMHB), XLV (1921), 252–253. A Swedish visitor to Philadelphia, twenty-five years later, confirmed Saur's observation: “Although [the Quaker women] pretend not to have their clothes made after the latest fashion, or to wear cuffs and be dressed as gaily as others, they strangely enough have their garments made of the finest and costliest materials that can be procured.” Adolph B. Benson, ed., *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America* (New York, 1937), II, 651.

Friends—who insisted that vital Quakerism varied inversely with the prosperity of its adherents.¹⁰

I am not concerned at the moment with moral judgments. I am concerned with “culture,” loosely defined, and I must therefore point out that the Quaker aristocrats of Philadelphia were receptive not only to the fashions of the “world’s people,” but to their architecture, their books, their ideas as well, though there was always something sober and substantial about Quaker houses, libraries, and intellectual pursuits, as there was about Quaker clothes. If rural Pennsylvania Quakerism flowered in ordered and beautiful lives, the Quakerism of Philadelphia flowered in many realms of the mind and spirit, particularly in the fields of organized humanitarianism, science, and medicine. Since they had no use for a learned clergy, the Quakers were slow to establish colleges: Haverford, which began as a secondary school in 1833, did not become a college until 1856; Swarthmore was not founded till 1864, and Bryn Mawr came still later, in 1885. But the humane and learned institutions which gave Philadelphia its cultural pre-eminence in the pre-Revolutionary years—the American Philosophical Society, the Library Company, the Pennsylvania Hospital, even the College of Philadelphia, which became the University of Pennsylvania—all owed more than a little to the solid and generous culture of the Quaker merchants.¹¹

If I limit myself to mentioning the cultural interests and achievements of just one Philadelphia Quaker—James Logan—it is because he is the one I know best. I will not contend that Logan was either a typical Philadelphian or a representative Friend. The breadth and reach of his mind would have made him an exceptional man in any time or place; and as for his Quakerism, he sat so loose to it that Philadelphia Monthly Meeting had to deal with him repeatedly for breaches of the discipline. But a résumé of James Logan’s contributions in the realm of “high culture” should lay to rest any lingering suspicions that early Philadelphia was a Sahara of the intellect.

Logan came to Philadelphia in 1699 as William Penn’s secretary. At one time or another over the next half century, he occupied nearly every responsible public office in the province, including those of chief justice and acting governor. He was Pennsylvania’s leading fur

¹⁰ See, for example, the lament of John Smith, a Chester County Quaker minister, quoted by John Woolman in his *Journal*, ed. Amelia Mott Gummere (New York, 1922), 267.

¹¹ See Brooke Hindle, “The Quaker Background and Science in Colonial Philadelphia,” *Isis*, XLVI (1955), 243–250; also Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, Chaps. 6–9.

merchant, her ablest and most respected Indian diplomat. He was the builder of Philadelphia's most distinguished early Georgian mansion—the house called Stenton, which still stands in its elegant Quaker simplicity amid the ugliness of industrial North Philadelphia. He assembled a library of three thousand volumes which I do not hesitate to call the best-chosen collection of books in all colonial America. Unlike most other colonial libraries, it is still intact at the Library Company of Philadelphia. And unlike many other colonial libraries, it was a scholar's working library. Logan's marginal annotations make it clear how closely he studied his learned books in many tongues.¹² He carried on a correspondence in Latin—the universal language of scholarship—with Dr. Johann Albertus Fabricius of Hamburg, the most erudite classicist of his age, and his commentaries on Euclid and Ptolemy were published in Hamburg and Amsterdam. He made a translation of Cicero's essay on old age which Benjamin Franklin, its publisher, hailed as "a happy omen that Philadelphia shall become the seat of the American Muses." He designed and carried out some experiments on the generation of Indian corn that botanists all over Europe cited for a century or more as proof that sex reared its head in the plant kingdom.¹³ He was certainly one of the first Americans to understand and use Sir Isaac Newton's method of fluxions, or calculus. He made contributions to the science of optics, which were published in Holland, and several of his scientific papers were read before the Royal Society of London and printed in its *Philosophical Transactions*. He crowned his intellectual life by writing a treatise on moral philosophy which, unfortunately, was never finished and never published. That treatise, which exists only in fragments, may have been suggested by an offhand remark of the great John Locke that it should be possible to construct a rational science of morals: Logan called it in typical eighteenth-century fashion, "The Duties of Man Deduced from Nature."¹⁴

¹² See Edwin Wolf, 2nd, "The Romance of James Logan's Books," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XIII (1956), 342-353.

¹³ In a recent book Henry A. Wallace and William L. Brown have called Logan one of the "fathers" of hybrid corn. *Corn and Its Early Fathers* (East Lansing, Mich., 1956), 47-53.

¹⁴ For Locke's suggestion, see *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. III, Chap. XI, Sec. 16. For a fuller account of Logan's intellectual life, see Tolles, "Quaker Humanist: James Logan as a Classical Scholar," *PMHB*, LXXIX (1955), 415-438, and "Philadelphia's First Scientist: James Logan," *Isis*, XLVII (1956), 20-30.

James Logan, I repeat, was not a typical Philadelphia Quaker, but the example of such a man—and remember he was the leading public figure of his day—could not fail to stimulate others to the intellectual life. Indeed, the three men who are usually called Philadelphia's first scientists—Benjamin Franklin, John Bartram, the botanist, and Thomas Godfrey, the inventor of the mariner's quadrant—all owed a great deal to Logan's encouragement and patronage.

Here then, were two conflicting, or at least divergent, Quaker cultures in early Pennsylvania. A third—perhaps we should call it a subculture—flourished transiently in the frontier region, west of the Schuylkill, known as the “Welsh Tract.” It is difficult to form an accurate picture of the early Welsh community. There are massive works on the subject, but they are all heavily genealogical in emphasis, and read more like stud books than works of history. They seem more concerned with providing a suitable ancestry for later generations of Philadelphians than with disclosing the actual outlines of life in the Welsh Tract.

Were the settlers of Merion, Haverford, and Radnor rich or poor? We get no clear answer because the truth is obscured by a conflict of myths. On the one hand, to fit the legend of America as a land of opportunity, a haven for the oppressed, they must be poor men, fleeing from persecution. On the other hand, to satisfy our itch for highborn ancestors, they must be aristocrats, country squires, gentlemen to the manner born.¹⁵ The size of some of the early landholdings and the inventories of some personal estates suggest that a few wealthy Welshmen did take up their residence on the Main Line in the 1680's and 1690's. But alongside the purchasers of two and three thousand acres who signed themselves “gentleman” were scores of yeomen, grocers, tailors, and the like, who settled on one hundred or one hundred fifty acres.¹⁶ The bulk of the Welsh immigrants were probably of “the middling sort” of people who gave the North American colonies and eventually the United States their overwhelmingly middle-class character.

¹⁵ Thus, according to J. Ambler Williams, it was “the more impecunious brethren” among the Welsh who came to Pennsylvania. “The Influence of the Welsh on the History of Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History*, X (1943), 120. But Charles H. Browning says they came “of the highest social caste of the landed gentry of Wales.” *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1912), 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, *passim*

Neither poverty nor persecution really explains that emigration from Wales which started as soon as William Penn opened the doors of Pennsylvania and lasted till some Quaker communities in Wales were all but depopulated. Professor A. H. Dodd, a learned student of Welsh history, has pointed out that if poverty had been at the root of this folk movement, it would have stemmed from the economically backward regions of Anglesey and Caernarvon rather than from fertile and prosperous Merionethshire, Radnorshire, and Montgomeryshire. And had persecution been the main impetus, the stream of emigration would have slackened off with the coming of toleration in 1689, instead of continuing as it did into the next century.¹⁷

If we would identify the fundamental "cause" of the Welsh migration, we must recognize that it was not the "pushing" factors of poverty or persecution at home, but the strong "pulling" force of a dream—the powerful but delusive dream of a new Wales in the western wilderness, in which, as the Welsh immigrants put it themselves, "we might live together as a civil society to endeavor to decide all controversies and debates amongst ourselves in a Gospel order, and not to entangle ourselves with laws in an unknown tongue."¹⁸ So the first Welsh settlers extracted from William Penn a verbal promise that they should have a 40,000-acre enclave west of the Schuylkill where they could speak their own language, practice their own customs, and hold their own courts in splendid isolation.

Their attempt to transplant their ancient culture and preserve it intact did not prosper. Within a few decades they had lost their identity and merged with the fast-growing American society around them. They blamed William Penn for the failure of their dream. It was true that his governor, confronted with a solid Welsh voting bloc, followed the time-honored principle of divide and rule: he split the Welsh Tract in two by running a county line through the middle of it, throwing Haverford and Radnor into Chester County, leaving only Merion in Philadelphia County.¹⁹ But the experiment, one suspects, was doomed from the start. The Welsh, after all, were a

¹⁷ *The Character of Early Welsh Emigration to the United States* (Cardiff, 1953), 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15. There was always, says Professor Dodd, an enthusiastic, apocalyptic quality about Welsh religion that made not only the Quakers but also the Welsh Baptists and Methodists who came later envisage America as the "wilderness" prophesied in the Book of Revelation, where a place was prepared by God for His church. *Ibid.*, 15–16, 19. In this, however, the Welsh were not peculiar; this is a familiar theme in the history of American settlement.

¹⁹ Browning, 349–366, gives a good (though decidedly anti-Penn) account of this affair.

bilingual people, as fluent in English as in their own tongue; they kept their records in English,²⁰ and there is little evidence that distinctive Welsh laws or customs were observed in the Tract. It was not long before David ap Rees became David Price, Ellis ap Hugh became Ellis Pugh, and Edward ap John became plain Edward Jones.

It is not clear how long even such national traits as the love of music persisted. Thomas Allen Glenn found it pleasant "to think that often through the wild woodland of Colonial Merion there has echoed the burthen of some ancient British war song, chanted ages ago in battle against the legions of Imperial Rome." But Charles H. Browning, who compiled the fullest account of Welsh life in Pennsylvania, could not find "even a tradition that the Welsh Friends over the Schuylkill were inclined to music, singing and dancing." There is a revealing story about Edward Foulke, one of the pioneer settlers of Gwynedd. While he was still in Wales and not yet joined with the Quakers, people used to collect on Sundays at his house at Coed-y-foel in Merionethshire to join him in song, for Edward was a fine singer. But he and his wife presently became uneasy in their minds about this idle way of spending the Lord's Day. Thereafter, when his musical friends gathered and he was tempted to "undue levity," he would get out the Bible and read it aloud. It was surprising, says an old account, how quickly "the light and unprofitable portion of his visitors" melted away.²¹ When Edward Foulke came to the Quaker settlement of Gwynedd in 1698, it is safe to assume that he left his harp behind. The war songs of the ancient Britons may have rung out in the Merion woods, but the echo that Thomas Allen Glenn thought he caught over the centuries was more likely the sound of the psalms of David sung in the Baptist chapels of the Welsh Tract.²²

²⁰ Professor Dodd of the University College of North Wales was surprised to find a few entries in Welsh in the records of Radnor Meeting at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College; even in Wales the Quaker records were normally kept in English. Browning, 18-19 (note), found evidence, however, that Welsh was more commonly spoken at Radnor than in the other two early Welsh settlements, Merion and Haverford.

²¹ Thomas Allen Glenn, *Merion in the Welsh Tract* (Norristown, Pa., 1896), 192; Browning, 525. The story about Edward Foulke is from the manuscript journal of Joseph Foulke, quoted in Howard M. Jenkins, *Historical Collections relating to Gwynedd* (Philadelphia, 1884), 37-38.

²² According to Julius F. Sachse's unpublished history of Old St. David's Church, Radnor, even the Welsh Anglicans conducted their services without music until the 1740's, when some of the parishioners, impressed by the singing they heard in the German churches of the Great Valley, introduced the use of hymns. I owe this information to Mr. Francis J. Dallett, Jr., of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

In any case there is little reason to think that the Welsh Friends after a few decades in America differed much from their English coreligionists.

The original settlers of Germantown seem to have suffered a like fate. The late Professor William I. Hull was convinced that they were predominantly Dutch, not German, in culture, and Quaker, not Mennonite, in religion.²³ But whatever their origins, they quickly became Philadelphia Friends, like the Welsh. Their very names they Anglicized from Luykens to Lukens, from Kunders to Conard, from Schumacher to Shoemaker. Those Dutchmen who were not assimilated to Anglo-Saxon Quakerism were presently swallowed up by the great tide of Swiss and Germans who came to Pennsylvania after 1709—the people who, to add to the general confusion, are known as the “Pennsylvania Dutch.”

I cannot here attempt a definition or characterization of Pennsylvania Dutch culture. All I can do is make a few observations about it and suggest two excellent books on the subject—Fredric Klees’s *The Pennsylvania Dutch*²⁴ and the symposium called *The Pennsylvania Germans*, edited by Ralph Wood.²⁵ In the first place, Pennsylvania Dutch culture was never a single entity, a uniform way of life. Though we tend to think of it as a unity, it was and is a congeries of cultures with roots in many different geographical areas and religious traditions. Among the immigrants from continental Europe who came to Pennsylvania in a trickle during the first twenty-five years and in a flood thereafter were Alsations and Württembergers and Swiss, a scattering of French Huguenots who had lived temporarily in the Rhine Valley, and, ultimately, some Bohemians, Silesians, and Moravians, who came to America by way of Saxony. In religious terms they fell into three broad categories: the sects or plain people, the church people, and the Moravians. All of them were pushed out of central Europe by religious persecution and economic hardship; all were pulled toward Penn’s colony by the promise of religious freedom and economic opportunity. It is the sects—the Mennonites, the

²³ William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania (Swarthmore, Pa., 1935). See also “The Dutch Quaker Founders of Germantown,” *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association*, XXVII (1938), 83–90, for Dr. Hull’s reply to critics who held out for the traditional view that they were German Mennonites.

²⁴ New York, 1950.

²⁵ Princeton, N. J., 1942.

Amish, the Dunkers, the Schwenkfelders, the Protestant monks and nuns of Ephrata, the mystical Society of the Woman in the Wilderness—who have attracted most attention because of their peculiarities. But it was the church people—the Lutherans and the Reformed—who predominated, and it was they who established the characteristic Pennsylvania Dutch way of life. When Count Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravians, came to Pennsylvania with a noble ecumenical dream of uniting all the German religious groups, he soon discovered how stubborn these theological and cultural differences were.

What these people had in common was chiefly that they spoke a different, a “foreign,” tongue. They were, said a supercilious Philadelphian, “so profoundly ignorant as to be unable to speak the English language.” Hence arose the familiar stereotype, the notion that they were boors, stupid, stolid clods—in a word, “the dumb Dutch.”²⁶ Yet they were beyond all comparison the best farmers in colonial America. From the beginning their great barns, their neat farmyards, their care in fencing their livestock, their systematic rotation of crops, their infallible instinct for fertile limestone soil, their industry and good management drew favorable comment in a land notorious for wasteful and slovenly farming. “It is pretty to behold our back settlements,” wrote Lewis Evans in 1753, “where the barns are large as palaces, while the owners live in log huts; a sign, though, of thriving farmers.”²⁷ Evans’ reference to the log cabin is a reminder that we owe that symbol of the American frontier to the Germans and to the Swedes, who had settled earlier along the Delaware River. It was no invention of the American pioneer, but a cultural importation from the forest lands of central and northern Europe.²⁸ As a matter of fact, we are indebted to the Pennsylvania Dutch for the

²⁶ See Richard H. Shryock, “The Pennsylvania Germans as Seen by the Historian,” in Wood, ed., *Pennsylvania Germans*, 241–249.

²⁷ “A Brief Description of the Province of Pennsylvania, 1753,” in Lawrence H. Gipson, *Lewis Evans* (Philadelphia, 1939), 100–101. Richard H. Shryock in his article “British Versus German Traditions in Colonial Agriculture,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXVI (1939–1940), 39–54, to which I owe this reference, emphasizes the cultural basis for the superiority of German to English or Scotch-Irish farming practices.

²⁸ Thomas J. Wertenbaker in *The Founding of American Civilization: The Middle Colonies* (New York, 1938), 298–308, stresses the German sources. Harold R. Shurtleff in *The Log Cabin Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1939) argues for a Swedish origin. There is no necessary inconsistency here: both Germans and Swedes built log cabins in Europe and could have brought this type of construction to America independently.

two other major symbols of the frontier—the Conestoga wagon, and the so-called Kentucky rifle.²⁹ And consider their rich and various folk art. Beside the gay and colorful designs of tulips and hearts, distelfinks and peacocks with which they covered their dower chests and pottery and baptismal certificates, most of what passes for early American folk art seems pale and anemic. Finally, be it remembered that the plain people of the Pennsylvania Dutch country have maintained a vital and satisfying religious life longer than almost any other group in America. Even today the simple piety of a Mennonite farmer is a real and impressive thing in the midst of much false and superficial religiosity.

Theirs was a peasant culture, and it has kept its peasant character for two centuries in a country where peasantry has always been alien. Professor Robert Redfield's generic description of peasant values describes their outlook pretty accurately: "an intense attachment to native soil; a reverent disposition toward habitat and ancestral ways; a restraint on individual self-seeking in favor of family and community; a certain suspiciousness, mixed with appreciation, of town life; a sober and earthy ethic."³⁰ Unquestionably, early Pennsylvania Dutch life was limited, lacking in intellectual quality, wanting in many of the higher values of civilized life. And yet, having said that, one immediately asks: where in early America except in the Moravian towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Lititz could one hear Bach and Handel, Haydn and Mozart, performed by full orchestra and chorus?

The tide of German immigration set toward the full around 1710 and reached the flood at mid-century. Hardly had the old settlers begun to adjust to these newcomers with their strange tongue and stranger ways before they became aware of a new inundation of land-hungry immigrants—the people who have always been known in America as the Scotch-Irish—Scottish and Presbyterian in culture, Irish only in that they had been living for a longer or shorter period in Ulster. They came in waves, the first after 1717, the second about ten years later, the third around the year 1740. Their coming in such crowds and their free-and-easy attitude toward details like land

²⁹ Wertenbaker, 284–286, 289–290.

³⁰ See his Cooper Foundation Lectures at Swarthmore College, *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago, 1956), 140.

titles took even James Logan aback, although he was a Scotch-Irishman himself. They simply squatted, he complained, wherever they found "a spot of vacant ground." When challenged to show title, he added, a little sadly, their standard response was that it was "against the laws of God and nature that so much land should lie idle while so many Christians wanted it to labor on and raise their bread."³¹

It was actually James Logan who assigned them their historic role in America. It happened that the Indians across the Susquehanna were growing restive just as the first wave of Scotch-Irish settlers was reaching Philadelphia. Though Logan was a Quaker, he did not share William Penn's faith in pacifism. Recalling from his own childhood how gallantly the Protestants of Ulster had defended Londonderry and Inniskillen against the Roman Catholic forces of James II, he "thought it might be prudent" to plant a settlement of these tough, bellicose Ulstermen on the Susquehanna "as a *frontier* in case of any disturbance."³² Logan used the term "frontier" with a specific, limited meaning; he meant a border garrison, a strong point on the edge of hostile territory.³³ But the word was destined to vibrate with special overtones for Americans as the outer edge of settlement crept across the continent. And on nearly every American frontier, the Scotch-Irish—those doughty, Bible-quoting, whisky-drinking, gun-toting, Indian-fighting Presbyterians whom James Logan planted in his garrison town of Donegal on the Susquehanna—would be the defenders of the marches, the tamers of the wilderness, the advance agents of the white man's civilization.³⁴

They were not crude, uncultivated roughnecks, these Scotch-Irish frontiersmen. They were pious Presbyterians, and they insisted on a learned ministry and a literate congregation. "The schoolhouse and the kirk went together," says Carl Wittke, "wherever the Scotch-Irish frontier moved."³⁵ "These fortresses against ignorance and the devil," adds Louis B. Wright, "paralleled a chain of blockhouses and

³¹ Logan to John, Thomas, and Richard Penn, Apr. 17, 1731, Penn Manuscripts, Official Correspondence, II, 165, HSP.

³² Logan to James Steel, Nov. 18, 1729, *ibid.*, 101 (my italics).

³³ Cf. *Hamlet* (Act IV, Sc. iv): "Goes it [*the army of Norway*] against the main of Poland, sir,/Or for some frontier?"

³⁴ See Frederick J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York, 1920), 103-106.

³⁵ *We Who Built America* (New York, 1946), 61.

forts against the French and Indian. The Scots were as eager to fight one as the other."³⁶ New Englanders have a habit of attributing the spread of popular education over the country to the heirs of the Yankee Puritan. But some of the credit rightfully belongs to the Scotch-Irish Presbyterian, who kept the lamp of learning lighted on many an American frontier. As early as 1726 the Reverend William Tennent established a "Log College" on Neshaminy Creek in Bucks County, and the "Log College" was the seed out of which Princeton University grew.

A cultural map of the settled portion of Pennsylvania in 1740 would show a band of Quaker country roughly parallel with the Delaware River and extending back twenty-five or thirty miles, its western outposts near Coatesville, Pottstown, and Quakertown. Behind it would be a broad belt of Pennsylvania Dutch country, anchored at Bethlehem to the northeast and at Lancaster to the southwest. Still farther west in the Susquehanna Valley would be a sparse strip of Scotch-Irish settlement, overlapping on its eastern side with the Pennsylvania Dutch country and swinging eastward in upper Bucks County, near where Neshaminy Creek joins the Delaware. There were a hundred thousand people in all, perhaps more.³⁷ Scattered over these broad culture areas would be small pockets of people with different backgrounds—English and Welsh Baptists in the Quaker country, a handful of Roman Catholic and Jewish families in Philadelphia, four or five thousand Negroes, slaves and freedmen, and, here and there, some remnants of the ancient inhabitants of Pennsylvania—the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians.

Two of these "pocket groups" demand special mention. Along the Delaware south of Philadelphia lived several hundred descendants of the "old colonists"—the Swedes, Finns, and Dutch who had brought the white man's culture to the Delaware Valley long before William Penn. By the end of a century, however, they had lost most of their distinguishing characteristics and had merged with the English culture around them. In Philadelphia there was a strong and growing Anglican community, which worshiped in style in the Palladian

³⁶ *Culture on the Moving Frontier* (Bloomington, Ind., 1955), 40. See also Wayland F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1944), 218-224.

³⁷ Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York, 1932), 114.

elegance of Christ Church. Already some of the leading Quaker families had moved so far from their plainer country brethren that they began to drift over to the more fashionable Church of England. The cultural traditions of early Pennsylvania, it is clear, were in constant flux, forever forming new combinations, new patterns, in the prevailing atmosphere of social freedom and economic plenty. The variety and interrelations of these traditions give early Pennsylvania culture its peculiar significance in the development of American life.

It was this region primarily that Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur had in mind when he asked his famous question, "What then is the American, this new man?" and sketched out the answer which has done duty for most of us ever since. The American, said Crèvecoeur, is the product of a "promiscuous breed" of "English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes." Settling in the New World, he leaves behind him "all his ancient prejudices and manners [and] receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds." Here, says Crèvecoeur, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world."³⁸ The prophecy in Crèvecoeur's last words has unquestionably come true, but his account of the process by which his American, "this new man," was created is too simple.

The familiar image of the melting pot seems to imply "a giant caldron in which foreigners are boiled down into a colorless mass—as insipid as any stew."³⁹ Clearly that is not an accurate image of early Pennsylvania. To be sure, some groups melted. The Welsh apparently did. So did the Dutch in Germantown and the Swedes along the Delaware. But the Germans, by and large, did not. Indeed they seem to have become self-consciously German for the first time in Pennsylvania: "the impact of American life," says Caroline Ware, "tends to accentuate rather than to obliterate group consciousness" among immigrants.⁴⁰ Some Philadelphia Quakers became Episco-

³⁸ *Letters from an American Farmer*, Everyman edition (London, n.d.), 41, 43.

³⁹ Ray A. Billington, "Cultural Contribution versus Cultural Assimilation," in Caroline F. Ware, ed., *The Cultural Approach to History* (New York, 1940), 79.

⁴⁰ "Cultural Groups in the United States," *ibid.*, 63. Frederick J. Turner, 22-23, could scarcely have chosen a poorer example than the Pennsylvania Germans to illustrate his thesis that "in the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race. . . ."

paliens, but the great majority did not; and there was never any *rapprochement* between the Quakers of the east and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians of the west. Indeed, the political history of colonial Pennsylvania is a story of continuous struggle, not primarily between social classes or economic groups, but among cultural and religious blocs. Not assimilation but what might be called "selective interaction" was the rule. It seems likely, for example, that the plain dress and the plain architecture of the Amish—or at least some elements thereof—were not brought to America by the immigrants, but were borrowed, once they had arrived, from the broadbrim hat, the plain bonnet, and plain meetinghouse of the Quakers.⁴¹ By way of return, the Pennsylvania Dutchman put scrapple and sticky cinnamon buns on Quaker City breakfast tables. It has even been suggested that we owe apple pie to the Pennsylvania Dutch, though as a New Englander, I shall require further evidence before I can accept *that* revolutionary thesis.⁴² In any case, this process of selective borrowing seems to be how American civilization was created, and there is no better laboratory in which to observe it at work than early Pennsylvania.

My final observation takes me from the popular culture of bonnets and scrapple back to the level of "high culture." It is fairly well known that from about 1740 to the end of the eighteenth century Philadelphia was the intellectual and cultural capital of North America. In science, in medicine, in humanitarianism, in music and the drama and *belles lettres* its pre-eminence was unquestioned. How shall we explain this remarkable quick maturing in the youngest of the colonial towns? Not simply, I submit, on the ground that it was

⁴¹ John A. Hostetler in "Amish Costume: Its European Origins," *The American-German Review*, XXII (August-September, 1956), 11-14, produces convincing evidence that certain features of Amish dress came from the Palatinate. But when he says that "the *Halsduch* [kerchief or cape] is a part of the Amish woman's dress which has no counterpart in the English speaking world . . ." he overlooks the similar kerchief which was for a long period an essential part of Quaker dress. And the "scoop" hat, still worn, according to Hostetler, by the "Old School" Amish of Mifflin County is very like the flat Quaker hat of the eighteenth century which, when tied under the chin, was the source, according to Amelia Mott Gummere, of the "plain bonnet." *The Quaker: A Study in Costume* (Philadelphia, 1901), 215. The whole subject needs more study to determine the priorities and the direction in which the borrowing took place. Dr. Don Yoder of the University of Pennsylvania, who is currently engaged in such a study, inclines to the view that the plain German sects borrowed important elements of their costume from the Friends.

⁴² Klees, 417-418, 426-427.

the largest and most prosperous city in the American colonies. I for one have never been convinced that high culture is a function of a high rate of income. Nor can we attribute it *all* to that displaced Bostonian, Benjamin Franklin. No, I think we shall find the source of colonial Philadelphia's flowering in the richness, the variety, and above all, in the creative interaction of the elements in its cultural hinterland.

There is nothing in Benjamin West's idyllic painting of Penn and the Indians that foreshadows the Philadelphia of Franklin and Rittenhouse, of Benjamin Rush and Charles Brockden Brown, of the American Philosophical Society and the Pennsylvania Hospital and the College of Philadelphia. But William Penn, it should be clear by now, was more than a benign dispenser of peace and yard goods to the Indians. By opening the doors of Pennsylvania to people of every nation and every religion, he established a situation of cultural pluralism and thereby created the conditions for cultural growth. And the atmosphere was freedom.

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⁴³ See Carl and Jessica Bridenbaugh, *Rebels and Gentlemen: Philadelphia in the Age of Franklin* (New York, 1942).