PENNSYLVANIA LITERATURE OF THE COLONIAL PERIOD.

BY NANCY H. McCREEARY.

The great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is justly proud of her history. Her position as the Keystone of the thirteen original states links her so closely with both New England and the Southern States that it has been possible for her to combine with her own native endowments the best traditions of those two widely differentiated regions. Yet Pennsylvania is by no means a replica of either; she is an individual state, with vast natural resources, great industries, and sections of magnificent scenic beauty. Her origin was auspicious and her early history creditable; her part in the War of Independence, in the framing of the new government, and in the history of the Republic, has been praiseworthy. In the realm of literature Pennsylvania can compete on equal terms with any other state in the Union. Indeed, for a considerable length of time, Philadelphia was the center of literary activity in America. Much has been written of this great period—that of Franklin and of the late years of the eighteenth century. But little has been said concerning the literary history of the Commonwealth during the colonial period, although the Pennsylvania Historical Society has done much to preserve the me-
morials of those years. From the founding of the colony in 1681 to the outbreak of hostilities in 1775, there was considerable literary activity in Pennsylvania, of a minor character for the most part, but such as effectively paved the way for the great productivity which followed the war. Moses Coit Tyler says, "More than any place except Boston, Pennsylvania was the center of activity in the years 1676 to 1765."

One writer goes so far as to boast that "no one of the states of this Union can exhibit so early, so continued, and so successful a cultivation of letters, as Pennsylvania."

Whether this be true or not, the history of early Pennsylvania literature deserves some consideration, if only as the foreshadowing of greater things to come.

A large part of the credit due to Pennsylvania for her achievements belongs to William Penn, the founder of the colony and perhaps the greatest of all the founders of American colonies. Penn, who was high in the favor of the Stuarts, was given a tract of land in America in payment of a debt owed by the King to Admiral Penn, the father of William. This immense tract lay west of the Delaware river and had originally formed a part of New Jersey. A charter was granted to Penn in 1680; the colony was to be a proprietary one, but the Proprietor was to make the laws "by and with the consent of the freemen." Charles II named the new colony in honor of the founder, although Penn had modestly wished to call it merely "Sylvania." In 1681 Penn sailed for America and the colony was established. An Assembly was formed, the King retaining a veto power, and Parliament the right of taxation. The center of the colony grew up on the

---

advantageous spot between the Delaware and the Schuylkill rivers. The name of the new city—Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love—gives a fair picture of the ideals with which the state was founded. The Assembly was a democratic one; there was to be complete religious freedom within the bounds of the province; the Indians were fairly dealt with, at least during Penn's lifetime; and the first protest against slavery in this country came from Germantown in 1688. True, the question of boundaries was hotly disputed with Maryland, and was not finally settled until the survey of the Mason-Dixon Line (1764-1767). After Penn's death in 1718 various other disputes arose, but the colony remained in possession of the Penn family until the Revolution, with a brief period, 1692-1694, as a Royal province. Philadelphia received its city charter in 1701, with Edward Shippen as the first Mayor, and rapidly became one of the leading cities in the colonies. Schools were early established and in 1749 an Academy was founded, which in 1753 was incorporated and endowed, and in 1755 was given the privilege of granting degrees under the name, "The College, Academy, and Charitable School of Philadelphia." A library was begun in 1731, and in 1743 the American Philosophical Society was organized there. From 1700 to 1750 the province grew from a population of 20,000 to one of 200,000. The center of its life was around Philadelphia, but there were settlements as far west as what are now Franklin and Cumberland counties. So much of the early history of the colony has seemed necessary in order to create a background into which we can fit the literary names of that first century.

Penn's ideal of a colony where religious freedom should prevail and where love should actually reign drew to his province a great variety of religious sects. He himself was a member of the Society of Friends,
and that fact coupled with the persecution which the Quakers were undergoing at that time in England, brought many Friends to Pennsylvania. It is usually considered a Quaker settlement, but many other sects are represented. The mountainous western section was largely settled by hardy Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Lancaster county and the Cumberland valley were peopled with various German sects, Lutherans, Mennonites, Dunkers, and others, driven from their Fatherland by misunderstandings and persecutions. The Moravians settled along the Lehigh river. Parts of what is now Adams county were early settled by Catholics from across the Maryland line, and one can still visit an ancient Jesuit mission in the mountains near Gettysburg, Montgomery county has a large group descended from Welsh settlers. The pioneering Scotch-Irish were too much occupied with home-building and Indian fighting to take much interest in literature, and the Quakers were for the most part an unliterary people, as they were unworldly in all senses. The German immigrants were largely a well-educated group and very early set up printing presses and schools. All three strains, however, by their sturdy virtue added vigor to the early literature of the province, and if a relatively small amount of literature was produced in our state during its first hundred years, the quality may, in some measure, compensate for the lack of quantity. Although the nature of much of the immigration was largely hostile to literature as such, and although Indian wars prevented the western settlers from taking an active part in Philadelphia's growing interest in affairs of the kind, yet certain definite impulses toward literature were early manifest. Tyler names five which he considers important: first, and greatest, a keen desire to publish the advantages of the colony in the Mother-country; second, the religious controversy which soon sprang up among
the Philadelphia Quakers; third, the slavery question; fourth, the problem presented by the Indians; and lastly, the growing interest in science.  

When we begin to consider where these first impulses led, we come at once to the activity of the Founder himself. In the realm of good English prose Penn could write as well as any of his contemporaries. He had a clear, forceful, and literary style. While in an English prison he wrote some reflections, *Fruits of Solitude*, which have been admired by such a master of style as Robert Louis Stevenson. His *Liberty of Conscience* is well known. In 1681 Penn and Benjamin Furley issued in England, *Some Account of the Province of Pennsylvania*. This was a folio of ten pages, and was translated into German and Dutch. It is a glowing account of the new colony, followed by an abstract of Charles II's grant, and closing with a prayer for the blessing of God on the venture. Before he sailed on the "Welcome" Penn issued another pamphlet advertising the colony, and this was equally successful. But it is in his letters that we see him at his best. July 24, 1683, he wrote to the Lord Keeper North in part as follows:

I thank God I am safely arrived, and twenty-two sail more; the air proveth sweet and good, the land fertile, and springs many and pleasant. We are one hundred and thirty miles from the main sea, and forty miles up the freshes. The town platt is a mile long and two miles deep; on each side of the town runs a navigable river. . . . The weather often changeth with notice and is constant almost in its inconstancy.  

How true that last sentence is of Philadelphia today! Concerning his difficulties with Lord Baltimore, Penn wrote to friends at home in a clear, logical manner, giving the impression of a man sure of his claims, but self-controlled and polite. There is a strong religious tone throughout his letters. In July, 1684, Penn re-

---

turned to England, to be gone for fifteen years. On board ship he wrote a farewell letter to his beloved colony.

My love and life is to you and with you and no water can quench it, nor distance wear it out, or bring it to an end. I have been with you, cared over you, and served you with unfeigned love, and you are beloved of me, and near to me, beyond utterance. . . . And thou, Philadelphia, the virgin settlement of this province, named before thou wert born, what love, what care, what service, and what travail has there been to bring thee forth! Oh, that thou mayest be kept from the evil that would overwhelm thee; that faithful to the God of thy mercies, in the life of righteousness, thou mayest be preserved to the end. My soul prays to God for thee, that thou mayest stand in the day of trial, that thy children may be blessed of the Lord, and thy people saved by His power.  

Surely this is the letter of a great man, and, almost Biblical as it is in tone, a good omen for the future of the city and the state.

Associated with Penn in the early history of the colony was James Logan, an extraordinarily intellectual man and one who helped literature in all possible ways. He must be considered as a patron of letters rather than as a creative artist, however. He is said to have known many languages and frequently wrote his personal letters in Latin or Greek. On Penn's second visit to the colony in 1699, Logan came as his secretary and was left in charge of the Proprietor's interests on the latter's return to England. He held many offices, among them that of President of the Provincial Council (1736–1738), which virtually amounted to being Governor. It was he who founded the Loganian Library in Philadelphia. His letters are valuable, but his chief claim to literary distinction lies in his translations of the Classics, especially Cicero's *De Senectute* (1744), and (1735) Cato's *Distichs* which he "'Englished into couplets.'" This was probably the first translation of a Classic made and printed in the

---

colonies. Logan was a scientist of note and was a member of the Royal Society.

Very early the Quaker colony was disturbed by dissensions among the peace-loving Friends themselves. George Keith, the first head of the now famous Penn Charter School, started a separatist movement and many of the leading men of Philadelphia and its vicinity were involved. Keith carried his controversy to the stage of print and a sort of pamphlet war followed. One of the prominent citizens involved was Thomas Lloyd, Penn's principal representative in the colony for many years, and a man who had the interests of the city very much at heart. He was the first President of the Council of Pennsylvania, an Oxford graduate who had come to Pennsylvania in 1683. He too was involved in the proceedings against Keith, but for us his interest lies rather in his wide reading, his occasional verse-making, and in his private journal.

The most prominent of the early Quaker writers, however, was Caleb Pusey, a native of Berkshire, England, who settled at Chester in 1682. Chester was the first Quaker settlement on the Delaware river and Pusey lived there until his death in 1726. He defended the Society of Friends against Keith, and took part in other questions of the day. He was in a position to know much of the intimate details of those early days and collected valuable material later used by Robert Proud in his *History of Pennsylvania*. (Published 1797.)

Closely connected with the Keith controversy is the name of William Bradford, Pennsylvania’s first printer. He came over with Penn, bringing his press with him, and set up business in 1685, four years after the founding of the colony. He printed many religious tracts and was of great service to the colony. He became discredited with the good Quakers, however, by printing Keith’s *Appeal to the Yearly Meeting* and
was put into jail for his offense. On still another charge he had incurred the ill-will of the Provincial Government. He had printed an Almanac compiled by one Daniel Leeds and thought by the Government to contain "unsavory" material. After his release Bradford went to New York and established his press there, where he was much honored. Keith returned to England, joined the Anglican church, and was sent to America as a missionary to the Quakers! Daniel Leeds also compiled a book called The Temple of Wisdom, containing selections from the works of such English authors as Wither, Quarles, and Sir Francis Bacon. This is supposed to have been the first book printed in Philadelphia.

In 1712 Bradford's son, Andrew, who had been born in Philadelphia, returned to his native city and established a printing press there, becoming for a time the city's leading printer and publisher. December 22, 1719, he began what was the first newspaper in the middle Colonies, and the third in the British provinces in America—The American Weekly Mercury. In 1742 he started the Pennsylvania Journal, which continued into the nineteenth century as The True American, a magazine of good quality, under the sponsorship of the Bradford family.

Several other early publishers are worthy of note since their work is indispensable in the dissemination of literature. The almanac was the earliest form of periodical, and that one begun by Daniel Leeds was continued by his son, Titan, under the name Titan's Almanac. It is to this that we turn for much of our material concerning the first Pennsylvania writings. A very odd and peculiar person appeared in Philadelphia about 1722. He was a Camisard from the Cevennes, and was somewhat known in London as a publisher. He may be called Pennsylvania's first publisher.

*Whitecomb, S. L. Chronological Outlines of American Literature P. 40. Note.*
—Samuel Keimer. After settling in Philadelphia he soon issued Steele’s *Crisis*, a translation of *Epictetus on Morals*, and an edition of Sewel’s *History of the People Called Quakers*. Bradford had, however, brought over an English edition of the latter and Keimer’s was not successful. Moreover, a young printer, just beginning to be felt as a power in the city, named Benjamin Franklin, sneered at Keimer’s efforts and this helped to discredit him. But in 1728 Keimer had begun a periodical with the imposing title, *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences and Pennsylvania Gazette*, which was destined to become rather famous. Keimer, poor and beaten, emigrated to the West Indies, and in 1729 Franklin procured his paper. The name was changed to the *Pennsylvania Weekly Gazette*, and the first number was issued February 4, 1729. Here Franklin, materially assisted by a certain Joseph Breintnal, published many of his satirical essays. The earliest attempt at a monthly magazine was the *American Magazine*, published in 1741 by John Webbe. This continued for only three numbers, and is remarkable only for being the first of its kind in America. The first truly successful magazine in Pennsylvania was the *American Magazine or Monthly Chronicle of the British Colonies*. This was begun in 1757 and was edited by William Smith, the first provost of the University of Pennsylvania. Smith was of Scotch-Irish descent, a graduate of Aberdeen University, and had been called to Philadelphia from New York by Franklin to take charge of the affairs of the college. His magazine contained much original material of his own and of the college students. It continued for about a year.

Any study of the colonial literature of Pennsylvania, however brief, must give a special place to the work of the original German settlers. These were for the most part men of scholarly attainments, representing the best products of the Continental Universities, driven
from their homes by religious convictions. They were familiar with the arts of printing and bookbinding and knew many languages. After the leaders died the people gradually lost interest in intellectual pursuits, and as the generations passed they became absorbed into the general development of the colony. To-day the descendants of those pioneers speak a hybrid German-English dialect, and they are noted for their hostility (among some sects at least) to education. Despite this evident deterioration, Pennsylvania owes much, from a literary standpoint, to her German settlers.

Perhaps the most able individual among these German settlers was Francis Daniel Pastorius, who came to Pennsylvania in 1683 on the ship with Thomas Lloyd. He was a man of thirty-two years, extremely well educated in the best Universities of Europe. He came to America to represent a German Land Company, being, like Dr. Faustus, disgusted with the impracticability of learning. He founded the town of Germantown, and it was probably he who, in 1688, there protested against "the traffick in men's bodies." He was a forceful writer, particularly on religious subjects. Among his numerous unpublished works is a sort of encyclopedia, in several languages, written for his children, and called Alvearium or The Bee-Hive. His New Primer and Methodical Directions to Attain the true Spelling, Reading, and Writing of English, published in 1697, was the first school-book prepared by an American writer and published in the colonies. In 1700 Pastorius wrote and sent to Germany Ein Umständige Geographische Beschreibung der zu allerletzter erfinden Provinz Pensylvaniae in denen End-Grantzen Americae in der West-Welt Gelegen. This was for the purpose of encouraging emigration to the colony and was highly successful. It is divided into seventeen "capitels" setting forth the advantages of Philadelphia and vicinity. The city is especially praised because of its situation between two rivers,
and it is curious to notice how many of the early writers dwell on this point. Pastorius says it is almost as if the spot was consecrated ("gewidmet") for a city. Translations of Penn's pamphlets, already referred to, are inserted, and the entire document abounds in Scriptural references. 

Magister Johannes Kelpius was the leader of a very interesting band of German mystics, who arrived in Philadelphia in 1694 and settled in caves on the banks of the Wissahickon creek. Their society was called "The Contented of the God-Fearing Soul," or "The Society of the Woman of the Wilderness." 

Kelpius was a man of vast learning, well versed in sciences and languages. Only two manuscripts of his survive; a book of hymns, and a diary written on the voyage between London and Pennsylvania from January 1 to June 24, 1694. The latter—The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius—is in Latin and has been translated and annotated by J. F. Sachse, a member of the Pennsylvania German Society. 

Kelpius and forty other emigrants sailed on the "Sarah Maria." They early encountered bad weather and the description in the diary of the storm is straightforward and fairly vivid. A battle with some French ships is graphically described also. Two of the most interesting passages are those relating to the schools of dolphins which followed the ship and to the appearance of what I take to be the famous phantom ship, "The Flying Dutchman." A vein of sincere piety is evident throughout the journal. Kelpius died at the age of thirty-five from exposure and hardship undergone in the "Wilderness."

* v. Revelation 12; manuscripts relating to this group are in the Old Christ Church, Philadelphia. It is a most romantic chapter in our history.
One of his companions on the "Sarah Maria" was Heinrich Bernhard Köster. He is noteworthy as being the author of the first German book written and printed in America, *Ein Bericht an Alle Bekennen und Schriftsteller*, published in New York in 1696.

Daniel Falckner was another learned member of the little band of Wissahickon mystics. He was the founder of the oldest German Lutheran Congregation in America, the "Falckner Swamp Evangelical Lutheran Church" near Philadelphia. In 1699 Falckner was sent as an emissary to Germany to give an account of the results of the pietistical experiment in Pennsylvania. A German evangelist, August Herman Francke, prepared a list of questions concerning the voyage to America, the climate there, the wild life, the commercial possibilities, the customs of the savages, and many other points of interest to the German people. The questions and Falckner's careful and detailed answers constitute a curious volume of one hundred and ninety-seven folio pages. The document is entitled, *Curieuse Nachricht von Pennsylvania in Nord Amerika*, and it was published in Germany in 1702. The title is a good one, for the tidings are indeed accurate, as far as lay in the power of the author, who signs himself "citizen and pilgrim in that very place." The questions are carefully numbered and each is followed by its proper answer. Question 46 is interesting. "What kind of aquatic animals are there?"

*Answer.* Beaver in quantity, they remain dry under water all the time, which does not adhere to the hair on account of its sleekness, they eat fish and catch ducks. Fish otters, minks, which smell like martens. Muskrats, whose skins when laid among clothing are a sure preventive against moths, turtles, great and small, which creep into the mud during the winter. . . . There are also three kinds of frogs: (1) a middle species, like ours in Germany; (2) a smaller kind, which sings so fine, as the brown frogs with us, and (3) a very large kind that emit an abominable bark, so that when one has one of these for a neighbor in summer, there is no need of any night watch-man with his horn, as he keeps diligently on until day, with a bellowing and roaring like a young bull. Other trifling things that are in the water I will omit.10

---

A rival band of mystics at Ephrata was led by one Conrad Beissel, a well-educated man who wrote many hymns and treatises on religion. In 1728 he published *Das Büchlein vom Sabbath*, in 1739 a volume of *Zionitischer Weyrauchshügel*, and in 1747 *Das Gesang der Einsamer Turteltaube*. The Ephrata Brethren had a press of their own and there they published, besides Beissel’s numerous works, an ambitious volume called *Der Blutige Schauplatz oder Martyerer Spiegel*, a collection of tales of Christian martyrdoms, translated from the Dutch. This appeared in 1749, and was the largest book printed in America before the Revolution.

One of the Ephrata group moved to Germantown and set up a “Buchdruckery” there. On August 20, 1739, the first German newspaper in America came from this press—*Die Germantäumer Zeitung*. This publisher was named Christopher Sauer, and he issued many German editions of English classics. His greatest achievement was his German text of the Bible. This was a great labor, owing to the difficulties of securing paper and ink, and the limited size of the press. Twelve hundred copies of the first edition of 1743 were issued—the first reprint in America of any European version of the Scriptures. The motto of Sauer’s press was, “To the glory of God and for the good of mankind.”

To the German people must be given credit for one more “first” thing. A book on school management was written by Christopher Dock in 1750, and published in 1769 with the title *Schulordnung*. Dock was a schoolmaster in Montgomery county, known as “The Schoolmaster of the Skippack.”

The Moravian settlement at Bethlehem is still in existence and is to-day an interesting literary shrine. The pious sisters of that communistic group were noted for their singular ability in the composition of hymns, and the men of the colony published many religious
tracts. The city to-day abounds in literary traditions, not the least fascinating of which is the grave in the old Moravian cemetery said to be that of Chingachgook, "the last of the Mohicans," who frequently visited the colony on friendly missions from the Delaware Indians.

Most of the writing which we have thus far been considering has consisted of letters or pamphlets for the purpose of advertising the colony and encouraging immigration, of religious treatises, or of translations. There was, however, a considerable amount of conscious literary effort and some of it was very successful. Poetry always develops after prose in a new community and for that reason, and for convenience in classification, I have considered the two separately in dealing with what seem to me to be the most important of the truly literary writings in this period. It must be borne in mind that during a large part of this period Benjamin Franklin was very active in the literary life of Philadelphia, but he is so well known as to need no mention here.

The first book with any real claim to literary distinction, in the sense of original creative merit, was written by Thomas Budd and appeared in 1685. Budd was the son of an English Quaker who died in prison in 1670. The son settled in Burlington, New Jersey, and finally moved to Philadelphia in 1685. He was a very public-spirited man, and a sincerely religious one. His book is called Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New Jersey in America, being a true Account of the Country, with its Produce and Commodities there made in the year 1685 by Thomas Budd. The purpose, to quote the author's own phrase, seems to be to show how "the rich may help the poor and yet reap great profit to themselves by their so doing." There is evident throughout a strong com-
commercial interest, coupled with the humanitarian ideals of a public-spirited citizen. The geography of the state is described, and the possibilities for various kinds of industry dwelt on. One remark is of interest to Pennsylvanians of to-day; "There is no limestone as we yet know of." How much those early settlers had yet to learn of the vast resources of their new province! Budd advocates the erection of public granaries, illustrating his point by a careful account of the average yearly income and expenditure of the state. He urges the passing of a compulsory school law, with a minimum of seven years attendance required; and urges that trades, especially spinning, be taught in public trade-schools. The book is carefully written, but is rather boring reading because of its mass of detail.

A far more interesting book, though of a somewhat similar character, is Gabriel Thomas's *Historical and Geographical Account of the Province and Country of Pensilvania and of West New Jersey in America*, published in London, in 1698. The book is dedicated to William Penn, and is lively and interesting in parts. Some of the descriptions are so amusing as to make one willing to believe that the humor is conscious. One curious theory advanced by Thomas is that the Pennsylvania Indians may be the remnant of the ten lost tribes of Israel, since they so closely resemble the Jews in personal appearance! Thomas had a better conception of the hidden wealth of the state than Budd had, for he says:

There is also very good lime-stone in great plenty, very cheap, and of great use in buildings, and also in manuring land (if there were occasion), but Nature has made that of itself sufficiently fertile... And I have reason to believe, there are good coals also, for I have observed, the runs of water have the same colour as that which proceeds from the coal mines in Wales.\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\) P. 12.
Thomas’s historical sense was keen and he evidently made an effort to write a good and a permanent book, for at the end he tells us—

What I have delivered concerning this province is indisputably true, I was an eye-witness to it all, for I went in the first ship that was bound from England for that country, since it received the name of Pensilvania, which was in the year 1681. The Ship’s name was the “John and Sara” of London, Henry Smith, Commander. I have declined giving any account of several things which I have only heard others speak of, because I did not see them myself, for I never held that way infallible, to make reports from Hearsay. I saw the first cellar when it was digging for the use of our Governor William Penn.¹²

By far the most readable of all the early books from Pennsylvania, and one which I read with real enthusiasm and almost excited interest is Jonathan Dickinson’s account of his experiences following a shipwreck off the Florida coast. The book is usually referred to as God’s Protecting Providence, those being the opening words of the title. The actual title page of the fourth edition is as follows:

God’s | Protecting Providence, | Man’s Surest Help and Defence, | in Times of greatest Difficulty, and | most eminent Danger, evidenced in the | remarkable Deliverance of Robert | Barrow, with divers other Persons, | from the devouring waves of the sea, | amongst which they suffered Shipwreck; | and also from the cruel devouring Jaws | of the inhuman Canibals of Florida. | Faithfully related by one of the persons concerned therein, Jonathan Dickinson. | Psal. XCIII, 4. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise | of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the Sea. | —LXXIV, 20. The Dark Places of the Earth are full of | the habitation of cruelty. | The Fourth Edition | London: | Printed and Sold by Luke Hende, at the | Bible in George-Yard, Lombard-street, 1759.

Dickenson was born in England and came to Pennsylvania in 1696. He was a well-educated man, a Quaker, and was at one time chief justice of the province. He died in 1722. The first edition of the book came out in 1699. The Cambridge History says of it that it is “in many respects the most interesting of all captivity narratives or tracts.”¹³

Time does not permit me to tell the story here, but it is indeed a vivid personal narrative, told with real

¹² P. 45.
artistic feeling. The story moves swiftly with plenty of detail, but with no digressions or complaints, from the account of the shipwreck, through the horrors of Indian captivity, to the final safe arrival of most of the party at Philadelphia. At the very end the goodness of God in saving them is alluded to, as it has been touched upon throughout, thus unifying the book. The work stands out among the early efforts of the writers of the province as a real literary production.

Coming down about fifty years in the history of the colony, we find the next significant prose work to be the Journal of Thomas Chalkley, published in 1749. Chalkley was a Quaker theologian and his journal gives an account of his travels in the South and among hostile Indian tribes of New York, where he went as a missionary. Several of his sermons and religious treatises are included in the volume and there is a very complimentary testimony by the Monthly Meeting of Friends as to the author’s "meekness, humility, and circumspection." The book is a clear and well-expressed piece of writing and moves smoothly and swiftly.

John Bartram was the author of another book of travels, a journal kept during a trip in Pennsylvania and New York states. This was published in 1751, with the title Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, . . . In Travels from Pennsylvania to Onondaga. This John Bartram lived on the Schuylkill river and took the journey in company with a young surveyor named Lewis Evans. Bartram was a botanist and Linnaeus is said to have called him "The greatest natural botanist in the world." His journal differs in no marked degree from the other accounts of early travels. It is perhaps of special interest to note that the author was the father of that William Bartram whose Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, and the Cherokee Country, published in
1791, had so great an influence on Wordsworth and, more especially, Coleridge. May we not give some credit to the elder Bartram for this influence? It seems more than likely that the son inherited from his father his interest in Nature, his observing eye, and perhaps also the impulse to record his experiences in a readable form.

Lewis Evans, the surveyor who accompanied John Bartram, has given us a very different memorial of the trip. June 23, 1755, he published, "by Act of Parliament," A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America, wherein is also shown the antient and present seats of the Indian Nations. The map is accompanied by an "Analysis" giving detailed explanation of the Latitude and Longitude, and showing England's right to her claims in Pennsylvania and New York, which France was disputing. The map is fairly accurate, though minor errors are evident. It was evidently prepared with the greatest care, and is, to me, a fascinating document.

The most westerly settlement marked on Evans's map, except for Forts and Indian villages, is Shippensburg, a settlement southwest of Harris's Ferry (now Harrisburg), and the second oldest settlement in the state west of the Susquehanna river. It was founded by Edward Shippen, the grandson of Philadelphia's first mayor, and was the site of Fort Morris, an important outpost in the French and Indian wars. Two letters from there may serve to show why the rural districts of the state were not active in literary affairs during this period. In 1733, James Magaw writes to his brother at Harris's Ferry.

I wish you would see John Harris at the ferry and get him to write to the Governor to see if he can't get some guns for us; there's a great wheen of ingens about here, and I fear they intend to give us a good dale of troubbel and may do us a grate dale of harm. We was 3 days on our journey coming from Harris's ferry here. (42 miles. N.McC.) We could not make much speed on account of the childer; they could not get on as fast as Jane and me. 14

14 Wharton, Anne H. In Old Pennsylvania Towns. P. 137.
Shippen was aided in his enterprise by his son-in-law, James Burd. The latter wrote to Shippen in 1755 as follows:

This town is full of people, they being all moving in with their families—five or six families in a house. We are in great want of ammunition but with what we have we are determined to give the enemy as warm a reception as we can. Some of our people had been taken prisoners by this party and have made their escape from them and come to us this morning. We have a hundred men working at Fort Morris every day.15

It was to the people of regions like this and to the friendly Indians the other side of the mountains that the synod of Pennsylvania and New York sent a missionary in 1766. Charles Beatty was appointed, and in 1768 in London was published his *Journal of a two months’ Tour with a view of promoting religion among the frontier inhabitants of Pennsylvanian and of introducing Christianity among the Indians to the westward of the Allegheny mountains*. Beatty and a Mr. Duffield set out from Carlisle and travelled through Path Valley and the valley of the Juniata river, across the mountains to Fort Pitt, holding services wherever possible. They were in constant danger from hostile Indians, from exposure and fatigue, from hunger and cold, and from the terrors of fever. The journal does not dwell on these hardships, but rather on the reception of the message by his hearers. It seems to me to be a story of real heroism, very well—even vividly—told. The personal element which creeps out, despite the author’s effort to be matter-of-fact, gives it a special appeal.

In the town of Carlisle, where Mr. Duffield lived, is Dickinson College, founded by John Dickinson, known as the "‘Penman of the Revolution.’" He is a National figure and needs little mention here where the aim is to bring to light less well-known persons. *The Letters of a Farmer in Pennsylvania* appeared in various num-

bers of the Pennsylvania Gazette, and were very popular and successful. Their author's place in the annals of the Commonwealth is as much historical as literary.

Perhaps the most interesting personality among all these figures is that of John Woolman, the lovable Quaker tailor, whose Journal appeared in 1762. This man was a minister among Friends, a simple man, not well educated, but one who felt a motion of love to leave some hints in writing of my experience of the goodness of God.

Throughout the journal we see love shining above all else. Woolman had a keen social sense and a great interest in the welfare of his fellow-men. His Considerations on Keeping Negroes is a logical and humane protest against slavery. The journal is full of sweet exhortations to Christianity. The latter part of the narrative is concerned with his trip to England, and when telling of a storm at sea in which the passengers were in real danger Woolman's whole thought is one of pity for the poor sailors and not of fear for himself. In his last illness he dwells on the fact that he is only enduring what many people are obliged to suffer all the time, bodily pain. He died of smallpox in York in 1772. His friends paid sincere tribute to him in the closing pages of the journal which they finished after his death. Many people have admired Woolman intensely: Henry Crabbe Robinson calls him a "schöne Seele," a great tribute from the Romantic sense of that expression; Stevenson had a deep regard for him; and Charles Lamb, in the Essays of Elia advises everyone to "get the writing of John Woolman by heart."

From prose such as Woolman's, it is no far cry to poetry. Poetry always develops more slowly in new communities than does prose, and Pennsylvania has no really genuine poets until the second half of the

---

eighteenth century. Before that time, however, there was a good deal of verse-making and some of it is worth enumerating at least.

Probably the earliest attempt at poetry in the Delaware valley was John Holme's *A True Relation of the Flourishing State of Pennsylvania*. For the style, one stanza will serve as an example.

Here many say they bless the day
That they did see Penn's wood;
To cross the ocean back home again
They do not think it good.  

For the subject matter of the piece, it is enough to say that, like the early prose efforts, it lauds the new colony and gives a picture of peace and industry in Penn's woods. It was written c. 1690.

In 1692, Bradford printed in Philadelphia *A Short Description of Pennsylvania; or A Relation of What Things are known, enjoyed and like to be found there*, by Richard Frame. Little is known of this man, and Wharton, Fisher, Watson, and Proud, all writing on the Literature of the Province, do not mention him. He was probably a Quaker. In the poem he mentions a paper mill near Germantown, thus fixing the date of the first paper mill in America as c. 1690. The poem is in very bad pentameter couplets.

During the first part of the next century a fairly large group of minor poets flourished, publishing their pieces in the new periodicals. Among them was Jacob Taylor, an Almanac maker, one-time surveyor general of the province, who published his verses from time to time in his almanacs. In the *American Weekly Mercury* of April (?), 1731, appeared an anonymous poem called the "Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania," which satirizes five young poets in typical eighteenth century style. One of these is Joseph Breintnal, Franklin's colleague. Another is George Webb, the author of a satirical poem entitled *Bachelor's Hall*, written to

--

Placate public opinion on behalf of a gay club in Kensington. Griswold attributes to Webb (p. 22) also a poem which appeared in Titan's Almanac for 1730. The United States Historical Magazine, volume IV, page 344, says that Titan himself was probably the author. Tyler (p. 239) calls the lines anonymous. The piece is prophetic of the future supremacy of the Quaker city and ends with the rather happy lines

Europe shall mourn her ancient fame declined,
And Philadelphia be the Athens of Mankind.

A third poet mentioned in the satirical poem above referred to was Henry Brooke. He was the author of a fairly good poem called A Discourse of Jests. Brooke, besides being a poet, was collector of the customs of Pennsylvania. His poem is in decasyllabic couplets, and shows strong evidence of the Pope manner and school. Thomas Makin is another minor poet who deserves some mention. He was a schoolmaster, once clerk of the Provincial Assembly, and a man of some learning. He wrote two poems in praise of Pennsylvania, in fairly good Latin hexameters. Makin was drowned in the Delaware river. The last years of his life were spent in poverty and obscurity. In 1765 another Latin poem was published by subscription; this was the work of John Beveridge, then deceased, who had been Professor of Ancient Languages at the College of Philadelphia. His poem is called Epistolae Familiares et alia quaedam Miscellanea. One other poet of this group acquired fame, though of doubtful character. James Ralph was immortalized, very unflatteringly, by Pope, in the Dunciad. Ralph early left Pennsylvania and went to England and his poems were mostly published there. The most famous of them are Cynthia, Night, and Zeuma or The Love of Liberty. One really can not blame Pope for not taking kindly to these effusions.

Pennsylvania can justly boast, however, of two genuine poets before the Revolution, Thomas Godfrey and
Pennsylvania Literature of the Colonial Period. 311

Nathaniel Evans, friends and contemporaries. The poetry of these two young men is very creditable, judged by the standards of the average English poetry of the day. Both men died while still very young and it seems likely that had they lived the world to-day would not be in ignorance of their work, for both gave promise in their work of greater things to come. The writings of both show marked eighteenth century tendencies in diction, versification, and subject matter.

Godfrey was born in Philadelphia in 1736, the son of that Godfrey who invented the quadrant. His father was poor and Thomas had very little education. He was apprenticed to a watch-maker, but cared far more for poetry and music than for his trade. He joined the army and served as a Lieutenant in the expedition against Fort Du Quesne in 1758. He was back in Philadelphia for a time, shipped as supercargo to the island of New Providence, and finally took a position as a factor in North Carolina, where he died in 1763, of a malignant fever, at the age of twenty-seven. His poems were published after his untimely death by his friend Evans, by subscription, and some notable names appear on the list of subscribers, among them those of Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Shippen. The title of the book as edited by Evans in 1765 is *Juvenile Poems on Various Subjects; with the Prince of Parthia, a Tragedy*. The titles of some of the short pieces are, *The Wish, Amyntor, The Court of Fancy, A Pastoral, A Cure for Love,* and an *Ode on Friendship*. From *The Wish* the following quotation will serve as a good example of Godfrey’s manner.

No costly labors of the loom
Should e’er adorn my humble room;
To gild my roof I naught require
But the stern Winter’s friendly fire.

But blest my leisure hours I’d spend,
The muse enjoying, and my friend.

In all of Godfrey’s poems the diction is typical of the vogue in England at that time, there is much use
of personification, and the pastoral element, the Delias and their swains, is strong. *The Court of Fancy* is very strongly reminiscent of Chaucer, and, in fact, much of the work is imitative. The most important piece in the volume is of course the tragedy. This was the very first play to be written by an American and acted in America by a professional company. It was acted on April 24, 1767, after the author’s death, alas, in Philadelphia. Many people have pointed out where this play resembles *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, in various places. There is also marked imitation of Dryden and other post-restoration playwrights. The drama is in blank verse, well sustained throughout, and although a typical heroic play, is, nevertheless, quite interesting. The reader’s interest in the plot is held to the end. I read the play with more real interest, in fact, than I have some of its English models.

The poetry of Nathaniel Evans has much in common with that of his friend. He was born in Pennsylvania in 1742, and died there in 1767. He was an Episcopal clergyman, and was sent as a missionary pastor to New Jersey. His volume of poems was published posthumously in 1772, by William Smith, his friend and teacher. Evans died of consumption and his elegy to Godfrey, in which he mourns the early cutting off of promised genius, is singularly prophetic of his own fate. The volume was given the title *Poems on Several Occasions*, and contains, among others, *Orpheus and Eurydice, A Pastoral Eclogue, An Elegy to Thomas Godfrey*, and *To May*. The poems are largely imitative, but none the less good for all that. Even more than Godfrey, Evans used the conventional diction of the eighteenth century, and “finny brood,” “feathered tribe,” and “starry progeny” are common. My own favorite among Evans’s poems is a fragment, called an *Introduction to a Night Piece*.
Hush'd was the air, the howling winds were still,  
And icy fetters bound each silver rill;  
Old Night her raven mantle cast around,  
And Spectres rose from consecrated ground;  
The full orb'd moon a pallid lustre shed,  
And o'er each scene a livelier horror spread.

'Twas then aside the frozen Delaware,  
(To the bleak North, her bosom, heaving, bare)  
Revolving various troubles in her mind,  
Fair Pennsylvania's genius sad reclin'd,  
Her olive crown, scarce cleans'd from reeking gore,  
She dash'd indignant, on the flinty shore;  
Then sorrowful, she turn'd her briny eyes  
To where her Capitol's proud turrets rise.

Thus, as she rested on a bank of snow,  
Breathing deep sighs, and lost in speechless woe;  
Sudden, a solemn murmur filled the air,  
And rous'd the Goddess from her trance of care.

In men like Dickenson, Woolman, Godfrey, and Evans we see that colonial Pennsylvania is worthy of a place in the literary history of the country. Surely these men were indeed forerunners of the great period which began the career of the commonwealth as a part of the new Nation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

A. General References: Bibliographies, Collections, Critical Articles, Histories, Periodicals, and Proceedings of Various Societies.
   Adams, Oscar F. Dictionary of American Authors. Boston, 1897.
   Hart, A. B. American History Told by Contemporaries. N. Y., 1900.
   Historical Magazine. Vols. III, IV, V.
314 Pennsylvania Literature of the Colonial Period.


Olden Time.—“A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Preservation of Documents.”


Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. Vol. IV.


B. Pennsylvania Writers of the Period. 1680–1775.


Beissel, Conrad. Das Büchlein vom Sabbath. 1728.

——— Ein Ehe Büchlein Göttliche Liebes und Lobes Gethöne.

——— Zionitischer Weyrauchshügel.

——— Das Gesang der Einsamer Turtel-Taube. 1747.

——— et al. Der Blutige Schauplatz oder Martyrer Spiegel. (Trans. from the Dutch of Van Bragt.) 1748–49.


Brooke, Henry. A Discourse of Jests. c. 1695.

Budd, Thomas. Good Order Established in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. 1685.
Pennsylvania Literature of the Colonial Period. 315

Dickinson, John. *The Late Regulations Respecting the British Colonies on the Continent of America.* 1765.
Evans, Lewis. *A General Map of the Middle British Colonies in America.* With Analysis. 1755.
Evans, Nathaniel. *Poems on Several Occasions.* 1722.
Graeme, Elizabeth (Mrs. H. H. Ferguson). *Poetical Version of the Psalms.* 1766.
Morgan, John. *A Discourse upon the Institution of Medical Schools in America.* Phila., 1765.
Ralph, James. *Zeumia or The Love of Liberty.*
Ralph, James. *Night.*
Rose, Aquila. *Poems on Several Occasions.* 1741.
Smith, Matthew. *A Declaration and Remonstrance of the Distressed and Bleeding Frontier Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania.* Phila., 1764.
316 Pennsylvania Literature of the Colonial Period.

——— A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania.
Sower, Christopher. Weyrauchs Hügel.
Taylor, Jacob. Pennsylvania. 1728.
——— Astrological Signs of Philadelphia at its Birth.
——— Considerations on Keeping Negroes.