

# NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Franklin F. Holbrook, editor and librarian of this Society, on whose advice and many activities we constantly rely, has been hospitalized for several weeks but we are pleased to report that he is expected to return to his desk shortly. This edition of the magazine was only in partial state of readiness for the printer at the time of Mr. Holbrook's illness and has been completed for publication by his associates. It is only fair to him to report that it appears in final form without the benefit of his meticulous care or advice.

## HOW DO YOU PRONOUNCE PEPYS?

WILMER MARSHALL JACOBY

A few years ago the late Dr. James C. Burt and I were arguing over the proper pronunciation of the surname of the famous English diarist, Samuel Pepys. We were standing in the lobby of the Duquesne Club and he had one pronunciation, "Peps," and I another, "Peeps." Just then the late Judge Thomas P. Trimble of the Orphans Court came along and joined us. We presented the case to him. He told us he was sure we were both wrong, that he thought "Peppys" was correct. However, he said he would look it up and let us know.

Several days later I received from Judge Trimble the following "legal opinion":

In the year 1895 I purchased the Diary of Samuel Pepys, edited by Henry B. Wheatley with Lord Braybrooke's notes. Macmillan and Company had the copyright in the United States in 1892 and the books were put out by the Norwood Press of Boston. On the front page, however, it is noticed that George Bell and Sons of London and New York had all rights reserved. Mr. Wheatley was a gentleman and a scholar and knew more about Pepys than anybody else before or since. After he published the Diary, there was an additional volume of Pepysiana which is full of the lore of the family. I have spent odd hours reading the Diary and the other volume from 1895 until last night with much enjoyment.

Yesterday . . . I turned again to Mr. Wheatley's introduction to refresh my memory and see whether there is any definite pronunciation of this man's name. From Page LII I quote:

In concluding this account of the chief particulars of Pepy's life it may be well to add a few words upon the pronunciation of his name. Various attempts appear to have been made to represent this phonetically. Lord Braybrooke, in quoting the entry of death from St. Olave's Registers, where the spelling is "Peyps," wrote, "This is decisive as to the proper pronunciation of the name." This spelling may show that the name was pronounced as a monosyllable, but it is scarcely conclusive as to anything else, and Lord Braybrooke does not say what he supposes the sound of the vowels to have been. At present there are

three pronunciations in use—Peps, which is the most usual; Peeps, which is the received one at Magdalene College, and Peppis, which I learn from Mr. Walter C. Pepys is the one used by other branches of the family. Mr. Pepys has paid particular attention to this point, and in his valuable "Genealogy of the Pepys Family" (1887) he has collected seventeen varieties of spelling of the name, which are as follows, the dates of the documents in which the form appears being attached:—1. Pepis (1273); 2. Pepy (1439); 3. Pypys (1511); 4. Pipes (1511); 5. Peppis (1518); 6. Peppes (1519); 7. Pepes (1520); 8. Peppys (1552); 9. Peaps (1636); 10. Pippis (1639); 11. Peapys (1653); 12. Peps (1655); 13. Pypes (1656); 14. Pepyes (1656); 15. Peeps (1679); 16. Peepes (1683); 17. Payps (1703). Mr. Walter Pepys adds:—

The accepted spelling of the name "Pepys" was adopted generally about the end of the seventh (seventeenth) century, though it occurs many years before that time. There have been numerous ways of pronouncing the name, as "Peps," "Peeps," and "Peppis." The Diarist undoubtedly pronounced it "Peeps," and the lineal descendants of his sister Paulina, the family of "Pepys" Cockerell" pronounce it so to this day. The other branches of the family all pronounce it as "Peppis," and I am led to be satisfied that the latter pronunciation is correct by the two facts that in the earliest known writing it is spelt "Pepis," and that the French form of the name is "Pepy."

The most probable explanation is that the name in the seventeenth century was either pronounced Peps or Papes; for both the forms *ea* and *ey* would represent the later pronunciation. The general change in the pronunciation of the spelling *ea* from *ai* to *ee* took place in a large number of words at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, and three words at least (*yea*, *break*, and *great*) keep this old pronunciation still. The present Irish pronunciation of English is really the same as the English pronunciation of the seventeenth century, when the most extensive settlement of Englishmen in Ireland took place, and the Irish always pronounce *ea* like *ai* (as, *He gave him a nate bating—neat beating*). Again, the *ey* of *Peyps* would rhyme with *they* and *obey*. English literature is full of illustrations of the old pronunciation of *ea*, as in "*Hudibras*":

Doubtless the pleasure is as great

In being cheated as to cheat,—

which was then a perfect rhyme. In the "*Rape of the Lock*" *tea* (*tay*) rhymes with *obey*, and in Cowper's verses on Alexander Selkirk *sea* rhymes with *survey*.<sup>1</sup> It is not likely that the pronunciation was fixed, but there is every reason to suppose that the spellings of *Peyps* and *Peaps* were intended to represent the sound *Papes* rather than *Peeps*.

In spite of all the research which has brought to light so many incidents of interest in the life of Samuel Pepys, we cannot but feel how dry these facts are when placed by the side of the living details of the Diary. It is in its pages that the true man is displayed, and it has therefore not been thought necessary here to do more than set down in chronological order such facts as are known of the life outside the Diary. A fuller "appreciation" of the man must be left for some future occasion.

The highbrows of Magdalene College would sustain you. "Peeps"

they say, which would rhyme with keeps and I note that Walter Pepys says the Diarist "undoubtedly" pronounced it "Peeps." It has been many a day since I have been led around by college highbrows. Few of this product have any talent worth speaking of and, if there is a genius among them today, he is a rare bird. There is real scholarship in the summary of Mr. Wheatley, beginning after Walter Pepys' note that the Diarist undoubtedly pronounced his name "Peeps," and the summary would disprove what Walter Pepys said. The name was most probably (another guess but much better than Walter's) pronounced "Papes" because it is seen that the ey of Peyps would rhyme with they and obey. Of the seventeen different spellings given in the quotation, at least five of them are not monosyllabic.

Samuel Pepys was born on the twenty-third of February, 1632 or 1633, and was entered in Magdalene College on the first of October, 1650. Variation in spelling and pronunciation is so great at times, even in a period of fifty years, that no person could be certain. The by on your own name at one time meant a farm, later a village, and when lawyers come before me today and cite the Jacoby will case, one will say Jacóby and the other Jacoby. We must know for certain that Walter Pepys could know no more about it than we know. There are eight different spellings of the name before Samuel Pepys was born and it is noted that no one of them is the same as the spelling today. These covered a period of about three hundred and fifty years. In 1552 we have Peppys and in 1636 we have Peeps. These are the two dates between which Pepys was born. After 1636 we do not get anything like Peaps until 1679 when we have Peeps. The Peapys of 1653 and the Peypes of 1656 would be pronounced Papes. When you relate the various names to the dates given, it is most difficult to see how Walter Pepys could ever conclude from spellings that Peeps was the correct pronunciation and, merely because the descendants of Paulina hold on to a tradition in the family that that was the correct sound to give the letters, would mean nothing to me.

From my general reading I have gathered that on one side of a street in London the names indicated that the Celtic race had predominated while, on the other side, there was little trace of this race through the names used. Assimilation of pronunciation varies greatly. The Spanish and the French are fine illustrations of great variations of languages which are the off-shoot of the Latin, used just across the mountains, and there is no place on the face of the earth where assimilations have been greater than in and around London. I suppose after all the difference is the same as between Tweedledee and Tweedledum but, nevertheless, it is most interesting to accept your challenge. I prefer Pepys—pronounced Peppys. I know that I could sit down with you and make you conclude that that was wrong at one time and should have been Paps or Papes but never in the world could I believe that the name was ever correctly pronounced Peeps. I have a number of books by Mr. Wheatley, a scholar par excellence, and when he tells me that the ea and the ey were pronounced as the boasting Irishman used 'neat beating,' I must accept. Peeps is surely wrong but, to call it Papes at this late day would indicate an affectation perhaps, so I compromise and call it Peppys, knowing very well that I could convince myself only that this is correct. Since there is a reasonable dispute about it, let Jim Burt say Peps and you say Peeps and you will both have plenty of company, but you must let me have my pronunciation. I refuse to be reversed.

1 See Ellis's "Early English Pronunciation," part iv., pp. 1230-1243.)

