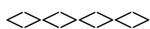


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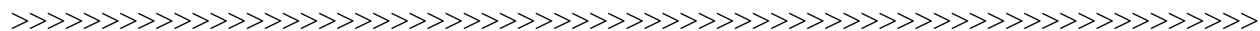
*Donald R. Repsher, of Bath, Pennsylvania  
Friend and Brother of the Lenape*



**SETTLEMENT OF TINICUM TOWNSHIP  
Bucks County, Pennsylvania**

Gen. W. W. H. Davis, Doylestown, Pennsylvania; read at Point Pleasant Meeting, August 14, 1900. (*Published in "A Collection of Papers Read Before the Bucks County Historical Society," Volume 1, pages 615ff; printed for the Society by B. F. Fackenthal, Jr., Riegelsville, Pa. Marx Room, Easton Public Library, Easton, Pa., H 974.821 B 926-c*)

*[Personal note: I include this because of its description of Tinicum Township's earliest post-contact history, the attitudes of the settlers and the paper's author as well, and the crazed mass murder, the infamous Edward Marshall of the "Walking Purchase" fraud. It is not a happy story. - Donald R. Repsher]*



The organization of townships, with some accounts of the pioneers who settled them, transformed the native forests into productive farms, opened roads and built houses, with a sketch of their gradual expansion and growth, is the most interesting portion of a county's history.

The first legal steps toward the formation of townships in Bucks county, were taken in 1690, when the Provincial Council authorized warrants to be drawn for the magistrates and grand jury of each county, to subdivide them into hundreds and such other subdivisions as shall be most convenient for the collection of taxes and defraying of county expenses.

The names of our early townships were the creatures of chance, or were given them by force of circumstances or location, Falls, took the name from the falls of the Delaware; Newtown, because it was a "new town," or settlement, in the woods; Middletown, midway between the uppermost inhabitants and those along the river below. Others, again, were named after the places settlers had come from, which they were acquainted with, or where their friends lived in the mother country.

It was a feature in the organization of the townships of Bucks county, that they were laid out in groups, at longer or shorter intervals, and as the wants of settlers called for them. The first group comprised, Falls, Makefield, Bristol, Bensalem and Middletown. The fourth and last group, prior to 1752, when the county was divided by cutting off Northampton County, included Tinicum township, the subject of our sketch. This group was formed between 1734 and 1775, Durham being the last.

We first hear of Tinicum, or the territory it was made of, in 1699, during Penn's second visit. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, Penn wrote to James Logan, from Pennsbury:

*"I desire to see T. Fairman for that I hear an Indian township, called Tohickon, rich lands and much cleared by the Indians, he has not surveyed to mine and the children's tracts as I*

*expected. It joins upon the back of my manor of Highlands, and I am sorry my Surveyor General did not inform me thereof. If it be not in thy warrants, put it in, except lands already, or formerly taken up, or an Indian township. The Indians have been with me about it."*

The "Manor of Highlands" embraced a large part of what is now Upper Makefield, and back of it, 10,000 acres were confirmed to John Penn and his children. This may have reference to the same tract, and probably the "Indian township" was part of what is now Tunicum. Among the earliest and largest landowners in the county was the "London Company," of which 7,500 acres were in Tunicum, the purchase being probably made about 1699, and had a frontage of five miles on the Delaware. In 1750 the English Parliament authorized the sale of all the London Company's land, and trustees were appointed to sell it, and it gradually came into the possession of individual owners and invited settlers.

The stream of emigration that planted the Scotch-Irish on the banks of Deep Run, in Bedminster, carried settlers of the same race across the Tohickon into what was then the wilderness of Tunicum in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. It will be noted from this that the first settlers in the woods of Tunicum (the real pioneers) were the English-speaking race, afterwards supplanted by Germans. This was the case in several other townships of the county, notably Plumstead, Bedminster and Nockamixon.

We make no attempt to point out the first settler in Tunicum for that would be difficult to do with accuracy; all we can do is to group the first comers.

By about 1730, one hundred and seventy years ago, we find settled in the township William, Edward and Moses Marshall, Moses and Joseph Collins, Joseph Haverford, Richart Thatcher, David Griffiee or Griffith, Richard Minturn, James Ross, John Hall and James Willey, not one of them German. These were the pioneers of Tunicum. In the museum of the Bucks County Historical Society, you will see a sample of the tools and implements of these "nation-Makers," with which they felled the trees, built log cabins and otherwise used indoors and out in rearing comfortable homes in the wilderness. Edward Marshall is historic, and we shall refer to him again.

These pioneers were followed by others. In 1737 Matthew Hughes took up a tract on the lower part of the township, on the river road, extending back to the hills; in 1739, Casper Kolb, a German, took up 150 acres, which he sold ten years later to Michael Heany, another German, and probably the ancestor of the family of this name with you to-day in the township. In 1745 Heany bought an equal quantity of patent land, described as "near Tohickon, Bucks county."

From this time onward settlers continued to come to Tunicum; John Praul, of Bensalem, patented several hundred acres, extending from Point Pleasant up to Smithtown, and reaching a mile back to the river; Van Fossen, a Hollander, at the mouth of the Tohickon; Christopher Sigman, 1750, and many other early settlers are on the roll of pioneers.

By 1738, there were enough settlers in Tunicum to justify a township organization, and they took steps in that direction. On March 26, twenty-six of the inhabitants, doubtless leading men, "Petitioned the Court of Quarter Sessions to erect the following district of country into a new township to be called Tennicunk. Beginning at the lower end of Nockamixon, on the river

Delaware, thence extending by the same township southeast, 2,140 perches to the Tohickon creek, thence down the said creek by the townships of Bedminster and Plumstead to the Delaware aforesaid, then up the said river to place of beginning.”

The Court allowed the township and it was soon after surveyed and organized. The original boundaries of Tincum are retained without change. The area of the township is 17,177 acres. The township organization invited settlers; and emigrants seeking new homes, flocked to the country immediately north of the Tohickon. The names of the petition for the erection of Tincum, prove the first settlers to have been English and Scotch-Irish, the bulk of the Germans coming later.

The petitioners for the township were William, Edward and Moses Marshall; Moses, Joseph and Jonathan Collins; Joseph Haverford; Richard Thatcher; David Griffith; Richard Mintburn; James Ross, John Hall; James Willey; James Stuart; Joseph M. King; Michael Williamson, William Rickey; John McKee; John Peterson; James Briggs; James Campbell; John Steward; James Johnson; John Shaw; William Hill; and Joseph McFarland, who styled themselves “divers inhabitants of the lands adjacent to Plumstead.”

It would be a pleasant duty to deal with the individual settlers, but a brief reference to a single family will have to suffice. I refer to the Williams family, who descended from a Yankee ancestor who was born in Boston, removed to Wilmington, Delaware, and thence to Philadelphia, where he married. The great-grandfather of Hiram A. Williams purchased several hundred acres of John and Richard Penn. His son Jeremiah bought the tract of his father and settled in the township with his family prior to the Revolution. Newbury D. Williams was a member of this family, as is also John S. Williams, of Solebury, an active member of this society. At the time of which we write Richard Stevens owned 4,131 acres, nearly one-fourth of the land in the township.

We have met with the records of but few of the roads in Tincum, the earliest being the road from the mouth of Tincum creek, near Erwinna, then known as “London ferry” to the mouth of Indian Cabin run, where it crosses the Tohickon and meets the Durham road, laid out in 1741. The Durham road was opened through the township in 1745. In 1747, a road was surveyed from London ferry to the Durham road, 12 miles and 36,712 perches. The bridge over the Tohickon on the Durham road was built in 1765 at a cost of 283 pounds, 16 shillings, 10 ½ pence, the taxpayers contributing 101 pounds, 13 shillings, 6 pence. The crossing was called John Orr’s ford, after the first settler at that place, ancestor of the distinguished South Carolina family of that name.

A century ago and for some time before, Arthur Erwin was Tincum’s largest land owner and most prominent citizen. When the London company’s land was sold at public sale in 1761, he purchased 1,568 acres. He was of Scotch-Irish birth, and settled in Tincum prior to the Revolution and represented the county in the Assembly in 1785. He laid out Erwinna, which was named for him. He was assassinated in Luzerne county, 1791, and at his death was the richest man in Bucks county, owning 2,000 acres in Tincum, some in Durham, and 25,000 acres in Steuben county, New York. His son also represented this county in the Assembly.

Each of his children received 2,500 acres; but the family, at this time, does not own a foot

of his ancestral acres, a noted example of riches “taking wings and flying away.”

In 1816, a daughter of William Erwin married John L. Dick of Doylestown, who died in less than two months of typhus fever, and the widow subsequently married Thomas G. Kennedy; he was afterward elected sheriff of the county.

A very interesting part of the history of Tinicum is that which relates to the industrial establishment founded by Joseph Smith, a native of Buckingham township, a little over one hundred years ago. Two and a half miles above Mount Peasant, on the banks of the Delaware, he erected dwellings, grist and saw-mills and smith and plow shop where he carried on a very extensive business for several years. The place was called “Smithtown,” from the name of its founder. The principal employment was making plows and mould-boards. Joseph Smith was assisted by his sons and brother Robert, and in 1800, the latter took out a patent for a cast iron mould-board, the first of the kind ever invented. Before that plows were fitted with wooden mould-boards, but this invention revolutionized the plow as well as plowing.

In 1803 the Smiths shipped 758 mould-boards to Philadelphia. The patent for this mould-board hangs in the museum of the Bucks County Historical Society and receives much attention.

Upon the death of Joseph Smith, the plow works were carried on for several years by his sons. Joseph Smith likewise introduced the use of hard coal in blacksmith shops in Bucks county and taught others how to use it. Some of the Smiths went into Tinicum in 1774, but the co-partnership was not entered into until 1784, about the time Smithtown was founded. This improvement of the plow gave Mr. Smith the confidence of Thomas Jefferson. He also introduced cloverseed into Bucks county and the use of plaster-of-Paris on land, which have proved sources of great wealth.

It is said the west bank of the Delaware might have become the seat of the DuPont powder works, subsequently established on the Brandywine, in Delaware, had proper effort been made and interest manifested in the enterprise. Under date of September 10, 1801, Joseph Erwin in a letter to George Wall, of Solebury, says Mr. DeNoilles, accompanied by Mr. DuPont (Depont) former French Council at Charleston, South Carolina, paid a visit to Mr. Prevost, founder of Frenchtown, New Jersey. DuPont was then looking for a place to establish powder works in this country. Mr. Erwin states he was not then fully acquainted with Mr. DuPont's object or he would have offered him a location at Erwinna. When the matter was mentioned to Mr. Prevost, he promised to write to Mr. DuPont, but it is believed that he did not do so.

Edward Marshall, another resident of Tinicum, was a very picturesque and famous person, but on a different line. He was born at Bustleton, Philadelphia, in 1710, and was 27 years of age when he made the great walk that led to the so-called “Walking Purchase” of 1737, which gained for the Penns a large amount of valuable territory, but lost the good will which the Indians had entertained for the founder of the Colony.

Marshall was a hunter by occupation and choice. He was twice married and the father of 21 children. What time he came into the county is not known, but he moved up into what is now Monroe county after the Great Walk, but subsequently removed to an island in the Delaware

opposite Tinicum, where he died in 1789. He was a famous Indian slayer, not because he delighted in taking life, but in revenge for their killing his wife while absent from home. From this time forward he swore vengeance against the red men and lost no opportunity to shoot them.

If questioned on the subject of killing Indians, he had a way of getting rid of his questioner by saying that when he saw an Indian "he generally shut one eye and never saw him afterward." As Marshall could not get a rifle in this country to suit him, he caused a barrel and lock to be purchased in Germany which he had mounted here. I have seen and handled this famous piece. On the top of the barrel are the following letters, faintly seen: "I. A. D. Rosenberg." The rifle is still in the family, and when I saw it, some years ago, the hair trigger was as sensitive to the touch as when the original owner set it to shoot Indians over 150 year ago. In the flint-box was the identical rammer-screw that Marshall used in cleaning it before starting out in search of human game. It is doubtful whether any other firearm in existence has shed so much human blood as this old rifle. The Marshall graveyard, as many of you know, is on a hill facing southeast a mile and a half from where Tinicum creek empties into the Delaware. (For description of the Marshall graveyard see paper (by John S. Williams, Vol. 2, page 348 ante.)

On the left bank of the Delaware opposite Tinicum in Hunterdon county, New Jersey, is the flourishing borough of Frenchtown. The land it is built on was purchased about a century ago, and Colonel George Piper and General Paul Mallet Prevost laid out the town. The early growth was slow, and 75 years ago it contained not more than half a dozen houses. One of them, of log, on the Baptistown road, is said to have been inhabited by a carpenter who sometimes got employment as a hand on the Durham boats that plied on the river. Their bound girl was "Possessed with an evil spirit," and people flocked for miles to witness her "manifestations."

In recent years there were aged people who had stories to tell of "Wyker's Ghost," but that, with many other things, has passed into history.

The Prevosts were an old Huguenot family which took up its residence in Switzerland upon the revocation of the Edict of Nantes,\* and came to this country prior to the Revolution. Paul Mallet Prevost's uncle, General Augustin Prevost, distinguished himself in defence of Savannah in the Revolution, and his great-grandson Southerland M. Prevost is now (1900) Third Vice President of the Pennsylvania railroad.

*[\* The Edict of Nantes established a semblance of tolerance between the Roman Catholics and Protestants after a religious war that had decimated the countryside of German states. - Donald R. Repsher]*

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