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HISTORY OF BUCKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA

FROM THE DISCOVERY OF THE DELAWARE TO THE PRESENT TIME
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WITH A

GENEALOGICAL AND PERSONAL HISTORY OF BUCKS COUNTY

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EASTON.—The land on which Easton stands, at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh, was owned by Thomas Penn, son of William. The site of the town is supposed to have been the bed of a great whirlpool in a past age into which the debris, from the neighboring forest and hills, was precipitated, for, in digging wells, rocks and trees have been found, several feet under ground. David Martin was the first settler at this point, whose name has come down to us. In 1739, he obtained a grant and patent for ferrying at the Forks of Delaware, his privileges extending about thirteen miles along the Jersey side of the river, from the upper end of Tinicum island to Marble Mountain, a mile above the mouth of the Lehigh. He had the exclusive right to ferry over horses, cows, sheep, mules, etc. Martin's heirs owned a portion of the land upon which the town of Phillipsburg was laid out.



VIEW OF EASTON ABOUT 1800.

Sometime previous to 1752, Thomas Penn wrote to Dr. Græme and Richard Peters to lay out ground at the Forks of Delaware for a town. The town plat was surveyed by Nicholas Scull, assisted by William Parsons, in the spring of 1752, the ground being then covered with trees and bushes. Mr. Parsons left Philadelphia May 7th, in company with Mr. Scull, and proceeding by way of Abington, the Crooked Billet, Alexander Poe's and Durham, crossed the west branch at the Forks. The survey was begun on the 9th, and occupied about ten days. They lodged and boarded at the tavern of John Lefevre, about six miles up the Bushkill, the nearest public house. The workmen received eighteen pence a day, and boarded themselves, and Lefevre's bill, for boarding Scull and Parsons ten days, was £2. 11s. 9d. "inclusive of slings." William Parsons, the god-father of Easton, was living in Philadelphia in 1722, and that year he married. He was a shoemaker by trade and a member of Franklin's club. He was appointed surveyor-general about 1743, but resigned in June, 1748, and removed to Lancaster. He was appointed to fill the county offices of Northampton in the fall of 1752, and died at Easton, in 1757, where his remains lie in a neglected graveyard. From his tombstone we learn that he was born May 6th, 1701, but where is not stated. The town was called Easton.¹¹

¹¹ The Indians called it Lechawitunk.

after the seat of Lord Pomfret, in Northampton, England,¹² father-in-law of Thomas Penn. Several of the streets were named after his family—Fermor, Pomfret, Hamilton and Juliana, names long since diseardeed—and Penn gave two squares of ground on which to erect a court and prison, the consideration being the payment of a *red rose* forever, to the head of the house, annually, at Christmas. Some years ago, when Easton wished to build a new jail and court house in another part of the town, application was made to Granville John Penn, for his consent to use the ground for other purposes, which was granted for a valuable consideration.

The first house erected in Easton was David Martin's ferry-house, in 1739, on the point of land at the junction of the two rivers, and probably one or two others were put up before the county was organized. When Northampton county was erected there was a demand for town lots, which were sold subject to an annual ground rent of seven shillings, conditioned that the purchaser should erect thereon, in two years, a house not less than twenty feet square, with a stone chimney. The town plat surveyed embraced about one hundred acres. In December, 1752, there were eleven families, about forty persons in all, wintering in Easton, and the jail was building. The inhabitants were isolated; not a single wagon road led to or from the place, and their only outlet was along Indian paths. The country between Easton and Bethlehem was considered a desert waste, called "dry lands," and was thought to be unfit for settlement and cultivation. The court house was not finished until 1766, at a cost of \$4,589.67. The first attorney-at-law at Easton was Lewis Gordon, member of the Bucks County Bar, admitted at Northampton June 16, 1752, and died at Easton, 1778. His daughter, Elizabeth, married James, the son of George Taylor, the Signer. Gordon came to this country from Aberleean, Scotland, and in 1750 was employed in the office of Richard Peters, of Philadelphia. He was the agent of the Penns at Easton, and was clerk of the courts for several years. Easton had two taverns at this early day. In 1763 there were eleven houses in the town, sixty-nine in 1773, nearly all one-story log, eighty-five in 1782, and 150 in 1795, but faint promise of the beautiful and thriving little city it has grown to be. The Penns still owned Easton in 1800. At an early day the Moravians erected a stone building there, intended for "a brethren's house," but was never occupied as such. They sold it to the Lutherans, who occupied it until the completion of the Union Lutheran and Reformed church edifice on North Third street, in 1776. It was demolished, 1873, and previously had been, for many years, a popular tavern, and last known as the "Washington." Phillipsburg, on the opposite bank of the Delaware, was settled at an earlier date than Easton. It was the site of an Indian settlement when Van Der Donk's map was made, in 1654, and called Chinktepink. It is called by its present name on Evan's map, 1749, and it is thought to have been named after Philip, an Indian chief and friend of Teedyuscung, who resided there. By the opening of the Morris canal, and the construction of the several railroads which pass through it, Phillipsburg has become a large and flourishing town.

The Wageners, of Easton and Northampton county, are descended from David Wagener, born in Silesia, Germany, May 24, 1736. In 1740 his mother, a widow, came to America with her two sons, David and Christopher, and settled in Bucks county. David married Susannah Umstead, and had a family

¹² "I desire that the new town be called Easton, from my Lord Pomfret's home, and whenever there is a new county, that shall be called Northampton." (Thomas Penn to Doctor Græme and Secretary Peters, in a letter dated London, Sept. 25, 1751).