The Montgomery Enigma

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There has long been belief among local historians that the earliest Welsh pioneers living between the two parallel ridges of what became known as the Great Valley in Chester County, Pennsylvania, referred to their loose settlement as *Montgomery*. However, in the over three centuries since these first immigrants migrated into portions of Tredyffrin and Whiteland townships, most of the secrets of this place remain hidden. The name Montgomery was never recorded on any deed or public record that has survived, and only by the name's association with a tiny Anglican gathering that would become known in 1744 as the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley, do we know of its existence today.

In January 1939, Mr. Paul Teamer, founder and first president of the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club [predecessor of today's Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society], presented a detailed article in the Club's publication *The Quarterly* entitled "*The Welsh Tract*". In a footnote at the conclusion of his article, Mr. Teamer asserts:

> "The earliest name for St. Peters was Montgomery. Evidence for that statement will be advanced in a later article in this magazine." [1]

Regrettably, Mr. Teamer died the following year from an illness contracted during his World War I service in France, still a young man, and without leaving us his promised substantiation.

So it falls to this author, a subsequent president of the Society seven decades hence, to present what is known and deduced about this mysterious community called Montgomery, and then let you, the reader, decide.

Creation of "Pennsilvania"

With the death in 1671 of Admiral Sir William Penn [Britain's naval hero in its wars with the Dutch, and the commander who seized Jamaica for the Crown of England from Spain], the Royal Stuart family was left with an unpaid debt of some magnitude. Sir William had served under the King's father, Charles I. Following the English Civil War, the Admiral had been a loyal friend to King Charles II, and had lent substantial funds from his own purse to the Crown. This loan, plus that portion of salary still unpaid from his distinguished naval service, required repayment to the Admiral's heir in the princely sum of some £16,000.

But a decade after the Admiral's death, the debt still remained unresolved. This matter of repaying such a debt to Sir William's family by a King of England was problematic indeed. The Admiral's beneficiary and eldest son, William, had become an enthusiastic convert of an heretical religious sect called Quakers. Such a heresy within this well-known family was an embarrassment to the Crown and to the Church of England and, many said, a disgrace to the memory of the Admiral. But when the younger Penn appealed to the king to settle his father's debt in full, this matter of honor had to be dealt with. Payment in pounds sterling was, of course, out of the question. But the King shrewdly reasoned that there might be a way to satisfy this debt of honor to Sir William while at the same time allowing the political initiative to be seized by providing at least one solution to Britain's "Quaker problem."

Therefore, on March 4, 1681, King Charles II signed a royal charter granting to 36-year-old William Penn some 45,000 square miles of wild, uninhabited land in North America lying west of the Delaware River, and extending south of New Jersey to the Maryland border. This was a tract nearly as substantial as England itself, and the largest grant ever given to a single individual in America. Robert Proud, called Pennsylvania's first historian, provides a description of the area that would become Philadelphia, c. 1682:

> ". . . all the country, further than about two

William Penn Receiving The Charter Of Pennsylvania From Charles II.
Courtesy of Scarborough Antiquarian Maps & Prints, Scarborough, ME.

miles distant from the [Delaware] river, (excepting the Indians' moveable settlements) was an entire wilderness, producing nothing for the support of human life, but the wild fruits and animals of the woods." [2]

Out of "regard to the memorie and merits" of the Admiral, King Charles II insisted that the tract be named "Pennsilvania," or Penn's Woods.

Penn foresaw at least two benefits for the land granted by the King: to provide a safe haven from religious persecution for his fellow Quakers within a harmonious political environment which Penn coined "the Holy Experiment;" and to produce a financial profit for the Penn family. Because of the King's largess, Penn succeeded admirably in the first, and modestly in the second. Penn was to persuade some 600 investors to buy shares in his new colony, and ultimately would convince almost 4000 people to join him in emigrating to Pennsylvania.

Background of the Great Welsh Tract

Just months after receiving the royal charter in 1681, and before departing England for America, Penn made a verbal promise to 17 Welsh investors agreeing to sell them some 40,000 acres [about 8 square miles] of his grant, to be laid out in one contiguous tract, and surveyed when the intended Welsh inhabitants arrived. [3] In what came to be called the *Great Welsh Tract* or *Welsh Barony*, this agreement was based upon the buyers' expressed wish to create an exclusive enclave for Welsh settlers, subject to Welsh laws and customs alone, and wherein the Welsh tongue would be the official language. This Tract was the original source of Welsh colonization in North America. [4]

These Welsh "adventurers" (as Penn called the early settlers of his new land) first settled on land in what became Merion Township. Perhaps because it lay adjacent to Penn's "faire green country town," [5] it was

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from the outset considered most desirable. Over the next several years, expansion of the Tract continued into the townships of Haverford, Goshen, and Radnor. By 1687 the survey map of Penn's Surveyor General, Thomas Holme, portrays an expanding Welsh Tract to include today's townships of Lower Merion, a portion of Upper Merion, Haverford, Radnor, Newtown, Easttown, Tredyffrin, East and West Whiteland, Willistown, East and West Goshen, and a portion of Westtown township. And with no explicitly defined western boundary, the Tract expanded into the Brandywine Valley, to what is today Downingtown, and may have ultimately exceeded 100,000 acres.[6]

However, the land west and north of Radnor, including Easttown, Tredyffrin, and Whiteland townships [Whiteland Township was not separated into "East" and "West" until 1732], remained only sparsely settled until about 1700. For reasons which are still obscure today, the land in Tredyffrin Township seems to have been kept in reserve while the easterly townships were being populated, with the majority of its acreage owned by a few, mostly absentee, landowners. By 1700, however, Tredyffrin was finally being surveyed for sale. Cartographer Benjamin H. Smith, in his 1880 map of early grants and patents in Tredyffrin, depicts the land in the Great Valley as being laid out in long, narrow tracts, stretching from the North Valley Hills, the summit of which created the Welsh Tract boundary, to the opposite South Valley Hills.

But despite the formalities engendered by surveyors and salesmen, the majority of the earliest settlers within the wild but beckoning Great Valley were either renters or, in a surprising number of cases, simply squatters on land owned by absentee landlords.[7] This reality certainly muddies the water for historians attempting to track the flow of civilization three centuries later. Compounding the problem was the frequent failure at that time to record land deeds at all. During the 1980s, a Chester County researcher named Robert Ward, an expert in ferreting out the intentions of the earliest deeds and land titles, discovered that many deeds were in fact recorded in Philadelphia rather than in Chester or West Chester. He described finding two obscure archives boxes labeled "Tredyffrin Lands" in the Chester County Historical Society which contained, among other things, six property deeds in Tredyffrin that apparently were

never recorded at all! Ward speculates that up to half of all deeds made in Pennsylvania during the 18th century were not properly recorded, despite the fact that by law the transactions were not legal until they were recorded.[8]

The dream of a Welsh Barony as its own political entity was, alas, chimerical. Despite his promise to the investors, Penn soon opened Welsh Tract land to ownership by non-Welshmen.[9] Political control by the Welsh Quakers was maintained for a few short years in Merion, Haverford, and Radnor townships.[10] But by 1689, it was clear that the Welsh inhabitants would be thwarted in their desire to govern autonomously within their Tract, and would in fact be subject to the political and legal jurisdiction of the County of Chester. The Welshmen, to their credit, gracefully submitted to this authority, and built new lives on the burgeoning land while continuing to rely upon the bonds of common language and custom.

A point of clarification concerning the term Welsh Tract: The "Great Tract" of which we have spoken was the original source of Welsh colonization, but not the only Welsh initiative for a land of their own in North America. Responding to offers by Penn and his agents, other Welshmen were later diverted to New Castle County, Delaware; or north of Philadelphia and east of the Schuylkill River in an area called Gwynedd or "North Wales," [now Montgomery County]. This Gwynedd settlement, in the upper portion of old Philadelphia County, was second in importance only to the original Tract. Immigration to this portion of Philadelphia County began in 1698, and this settlement would increasingly became referred to as "Montgomery."[11] As we will see, this reference to the Welsh settlement in Philadelphia County could and would easily become confused with a like-named counterpart in adjacent Chester County.

Settlement in Tredyffrin

The intrepid Welsh "adventurers" who trekked into the wilderness of Tredyffrin at the cusp of the 18th century found no roads, and only the rudest of trails. Indeed, this western edge of the Welsh Tract was known by the indigenous Lenni Lenape tribe as the "Dark Valley" because of its heavily forested growth,[12] and by one contemporary account as a "howling wilderness". To the west and north lay endless forest and the friendly if unfamiliar peoples of the Delaware Nation. To the south and southeast

In the Spring of 2005, during the construction atop St. Peter's Hill of a new Fellowship Hall at St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley, the author climbed a slight rise and, looking southeast down the Valley, was amazed to see no visible evidences of human habitation, thus providing a vista that an early resident of Montgomery could have well recognized. *Courtesy of the author.*

were occasional small settlements of Swedes or English until one came to the Delaware River. Twenty miles to the east lay Penn's fledgling town of Philadelphia. Travel between what passed for "civilization" and these tiny interior settlements demanded such physical rigor that, for decades, the western Tract remained as much an emotional as a tangible realm unto itself.

The name Tredyffrin was wishful thinking; the co-joining of two Welsh words: Tre" (town), and "Duffrin" (a wide cultivated valley), neither of which existed at the time the township's moniker was given. Early English correspondence refers to the township as *Valley Town* or *Valleyton*.[13] Not until 1740 did a Welsh resident, Lewis Evans, record upon his map the phrase "*uh – Duffrin – Mour*" (the Great Valley) to represent the scenic two-mile-wide undulating lowland lying between the east-west parallel ridges.

Lewis Walker of Pembrokeshire may have been the

first settler in Tredyffrin. He came into the Great Valley in 1698 or 1699, cleared land to plant a crop, and built a dwelling. It was not, however, until 1702 that he purchased the land on which he dwelt. It is likely that before that purchase, Walker took his land by consignment from patentee [and Penn's deputy surveyor] David Powell, or by some form of informal lease in the same way as did many of his neighbors, and those who were to follow.[14]

Religion within Tredyffrin

Though Pennsylvania was originally established as a Quaker colony, "Valley Town" was not well represented by adherents of the Society of Friends. Welsh Baptists and Presbyterians met in far greater numbers than Quakers, each forming their separate congregations within the Valley by 1710-1711.

And then there were the Anglicans. "Penn's colony" had been established to allow greater toleration of

religious practice and form than was permitted by the "King's Church." Penn, however, allowed, or at least tolerated, the Church of England within his new colony, despite its record of persecution of the Friends. In 1695, an Anglican presence was established in Quaker Philadelphia with the founding of Christ Church on 2nd Street. In 1700, the Rev. Evan Evans, an Oxford-educated Welshman from Montgomeryshire, became the church's second rector. Evans has been described as being "aggressively evangelistic, especially to his fellow [Welsh] countrymen"[15] who had been raised in the "mother" Church of England, and then subsequently departed for other persuasions. Soon after his arrival in Philadelphia, Rev. Evans, in addition to his numerous duties at Christ Church, volunteered to undertake a physically arduous missionary circuit ministry to the Welsh pioneers within the Tract, preaching and teaching them in "the one true faith" in their native "British" language.

There is a tradition that, about 1700, a group of Welsh families wishing to worship in the Anglican tradition built a crude log chapel in what was considered a central location within the western end of the original Tract. Evidence points to its location within Easttown Township, in what is now south Berwyn. But because of the ruggedness of the western Tract terrain, and the extreme difficulty of travel, there soon evolved within this fledgling parish two locations to better accommodate Anglican worshipers. Those living at the "lower end" of this elongated parish began construction in 1715 of a stone church located several miles to the east of the original log structure, in Radnor Township in what would become Delaware County. The congregation called itself the Church of St. David's - Radnor.

But some years before the construction of the Radnor church, the Welsh settlers in Tredyffrin and Whiteland townships had built a common burying ground at the 350-foot crest of the highest hill within the eastern Great Valley. Oral tradition, recorded in 1849, cites the earliest burial date on this hill as 1703. Soon thereafter, a log house of worship, adjacent to the ground already used for interments, was constructed between 1705–1711 for use in Anglican worship by those at "the upper end" of the missionary parish. This simple log structure would become the basis from which was established, in 1744, the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley.

Earliest Reference to *Montgomery* in Chester County

The first evidence we have of a place called Montgomery in Chester County is found in a Memorial (or progress report) written September 18, 1707 by the Rev. Evan Evans to the missionary arm of the Anglican Church in London, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.).[16] As we have already learned, the Rev. Evans, a Welshman, arrived in Philadelphia in 1700 to assume pastoral duties of Christ Church. In 1707 Evans temporarily returned to England, and in his report he described his pastoral responsibilities:

> ". . . I had in less than three years after my Arrivall a very numerous Congregation; . . . and the true Religion . . . did soe spread, and the number of Converts did increase so fast, that I was obliged to divide my selfe among them as often and as Equally as I cou'd . . ."

Then, as if his duties at the mother church in Philadelphia were not enough, Rev. Evans recites his teaching and preaching ministry with seven budding Anglican congregations in the hinterlands:

> "All which, tho' Equally Fatigueing, and Expensive I frequently went to, & preached in . . . "

Evans then asserts:

> "But **Montgomery** and **Radnor** [author's bold and underline], next to my owne beloved Philadelphia, had the most considerable share in my Labours, where I Preached in Welch once a fortnight for 4 years . . . ."

In the very next paragraph, Evans guides his uninitiated reader from a potential confusion elicited by two settlements with the same name to which he had ministered:

> "There is **another** [author's bold and underline] Welch settlemt called **Montgomery in the County of Philadelphia**, 20 miles distant from the City; where are considerable numbers of Welch People, Formerly in their native Countrey of the Communion of the Church of England, but about 1698 two years before my arrivall in ye Countrey most
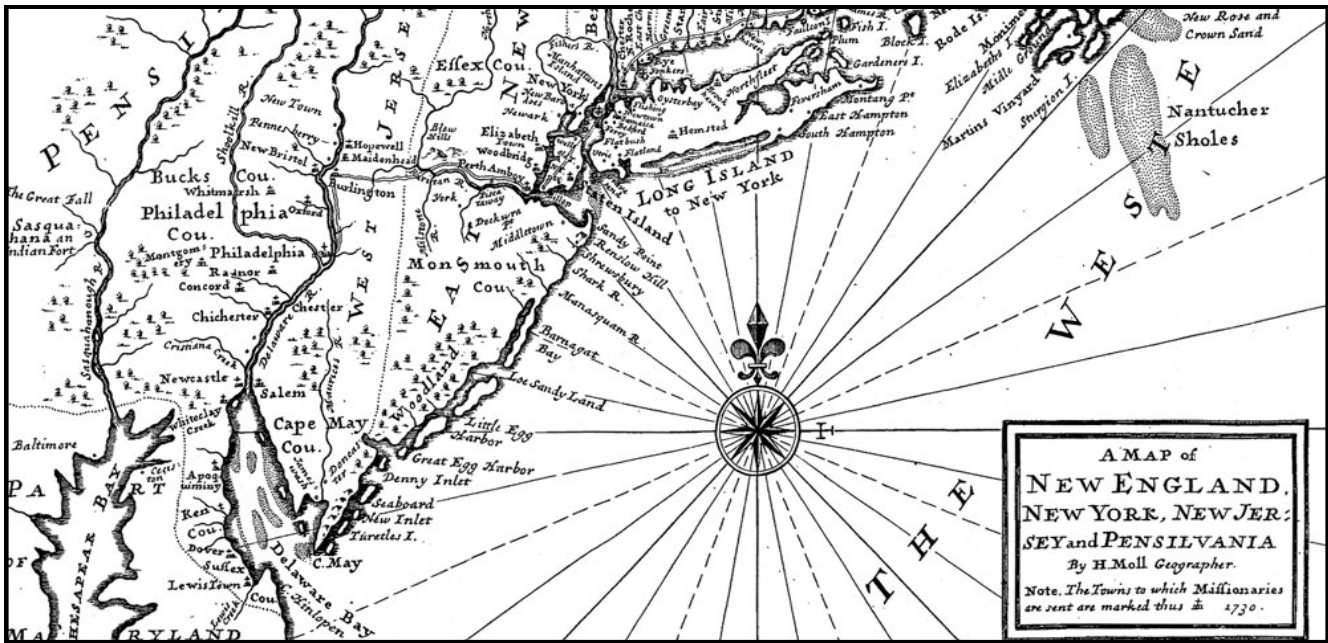
The partial depiction of a 1728 map by veteran Colonial mapmaker Herman Moll, used in the 1730 book by Dr. David Humphreys entitled *A Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, and which contains a reference to Montgomery. *Courtesy of Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania.*

of them joined with the Quakers . . .”
Within the context of these two adjacent paragraphs, Evans' initial reference to "Montgomery and Radnor" implies a cohesion of two flocks in what was then Chester County [Indeed, these two small congregations, which would become St. David's Church and the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley, were forming as two halves of the same parish. Sister congregations – one parish - and so to remain formally until 1836]. His reference in the following paragraph to "another Welsh settlement called Montgomery in the County of Philadelphia", quite clearly emphasizes that, so as not to confuse his S. P. G. readers by references to mission work with Welshmen in two identically named places, Evans takes special pains to differentiate one "Montgomery" from another.

Additional References to Radnor and Montgomery

In correspondence during the following three decades between the growing Anglican congregations of the original Welsh Tract and the S. P. G., the phrase "Radnor" seems to ". . . include 'Montgomery' as well, ... for they were so near together geographically. Because of this comparative proximity, it was apparently becoming the habit . . . to refer rather loosely to 'Radnor' and 'Montgomery' together
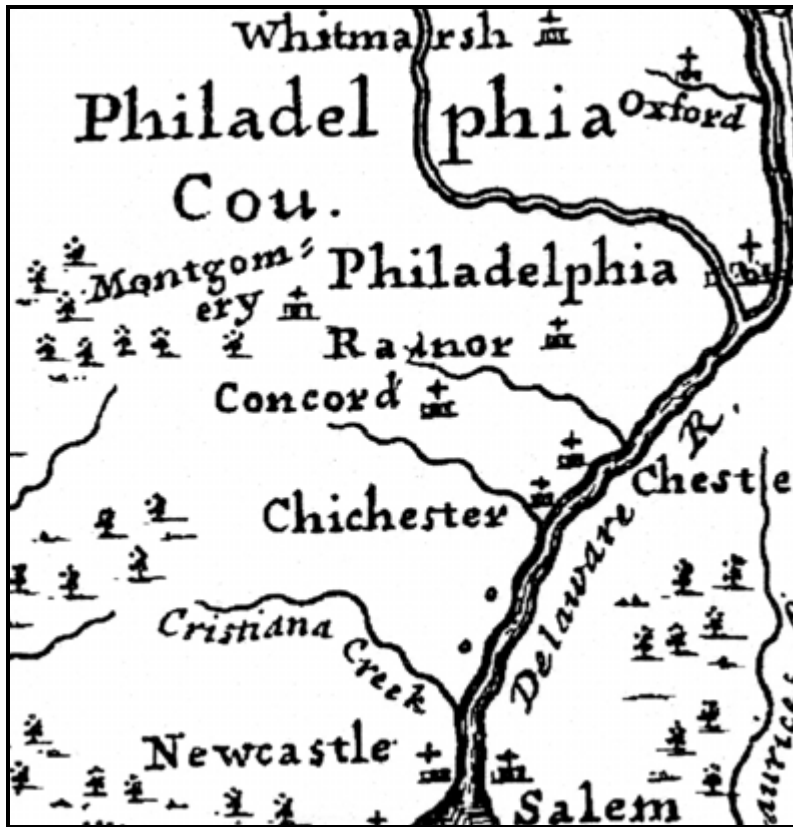
merely as 'Radnor', as though they were one and the same mission or parish as, indeed, they were, although spread out in two separate neighborhoods."[17]

Of particular help in understanding the evolving "separate but equal" unity of these two neighboring congregations of Radnor and Montgomery is a letter sent to the S. P. G. in April, 1725 by "the Radnor Churchwardens and Vestry", stating that ". . . we have resolved on building another Fabrick in Stone for Divine worship & for their Accommodation about Eight Miles in Distance." This "Fabrick of Stone," the intended permanent house of worship to replace the old log chapel atop the high hill in the Valley, was begun about 1726 with the laying of a stone foundation. What is of particular interest is that this document is signed not only by the Radnor Churchwardens and "Vestry Men" but also by four "Trustees for the building of the New Church"—Thomas James, James Anderson, William Evans and James David. All four of these men lived at the "upper end of the parish in the Montgomery neighborhood. When the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley created its first Vestry in 1745, James David was a member; Thomas James became a member two years later; William Evans took his Vestry position several years later; and James Anderson would be later represented by his famous son, Captain Patrick Ander-

son."[18] Furthermore, in a subsequent document of thanks to the S. P. G., the "Radnor churchmen" sign their names in two vertical columns, each bracketed one from the other. One column contains eight names, evidently those of the two Churchwardens and six Vestrymen of St. David's Church. And a second adjacent list includes the names of seven men, four of whom would appear as future Vestrymen of St. Peter's. It is apparent that the seven whose names comprise the second column represented the "Montgomery end" of the parish.[19]

A detailed close-up of Moll's 1728 map, showing the geographic relationship of Radnor and Montgomery. *Courtesy of Van Pelt-Dietrich Library, University of Pennsylvania.*

years earlier that would later become the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley. In those three decades, Montgomery had evolved from a geographic setting to an explicit house of Anglican worship.

There are those who disagree with cartographer Moll's geographic depiction of Montgomery, and indeed even the relevance of the Anglican congregation in the Great Valley. In 1915 the Rev. Charles Scofield, in his *Supplementary History of St. James' Church, Perkiomen,*[21] dismissed the accuracy of Moll's map, judging that Montgomery had been ineptly placed on the west side of the Schuylkill River rather than where it should have been - at Perkiomen on the east side of the river. And Dr. Nelson Burr, in his 1939 article *The Welsh Episcopalians of Colonial Pennsylvania and Delaware,* seems unaware of the existence of the early congregation that would one day become the Church of Saint Peter-in-the-Great Valley. Dr. Burr rather believes that Radnor was "closely associated with . . . the congregation in North Wales or Gwynedd" and that "from this large region, which [Evans] generally called 'Montgomery,' grew two other early Welsh churches: Oxford, north of Philadelphia, and Perkiomen to the northwest."[22]

Three decades after Rev. Evans began his fortnightly ministrations to the Anglican faithful in Radnor and Montgomery, a second explicit reference to Montgomery appears in a published document. In 1730, Dr. David Humphreys presented a treatise entitled *A Historical Account of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*. Included therein is a map created by the well known Colonial cartographer Herman Moll entitled "The map of New England, New York, New Jersey and Pensilvania."[20] Appearing on the map is the notation "The Towns to which Missionaries are sent are marked thus," together with an icon of a building with a cross atop. Looking west and north upon Moll's map from the icon representing Radnor, and west of the "Skoolkill River," is a second icon clearly denoting "Montgomery" at the precise spot where the foundation for the stone church had been laid four

That there was a growing Welsh community north of Philadelphia and east of the Schuylkill River, and commonly referred to as "Montgomery", is well documented and unquestioned. This author, however, believes that by the year 1728 Moll had an under-

standing of the nuances of local Pennsylvania geography less than 20 miles from Philadelphia, and that Dr. Humphreys and the mapmaker chose the placement of Montgomery on the map exactly where they intended it to be shown, "about Eight Miles in Distance" northwest of Radnor.

In 1908, Mr. Henry Pleasants of Radnor, still considered one of the eminent historians of subjects pertinent to the Delaware Valley of Pennsylvania, introduced his still-definitive book entitled *The History of Old St. David's Church at Radnor, Pennsylvania*. In the second edition of this book, published in 1915, there is contained much additional information on the early history of both St. David's as well as its sister congregation in the Great Valley. Pleasants asserts the following: "The exact location of 'Montgomery' … is difficult to establish, [but there are] very strong reasons for believing that the reference is to a very early settlement about Old St. Peter's Church, Great Valley, and that the establishment of Episcopal services there was at least coincident with their establishment at Radnor." [23]

Through the first several decades of the 20th century, St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley had taken a back seat to its erstwhile sibling Saint David's - Radnor, and many historians knew little about St. Peter's contribution or even its existence. But in 1939 a patron commissioned two highly respected authors of history and architecture, Harold Donaldson Eberlein and Cortlandt Van Dyke Hubbard, who had just published their well-regarded *Portrait of a Colonial City: Philadelphia 1670-1838*, to once again combine their collaborative talents to research and document the significant contribution of St. Peter's Church, the oldest Episcopal church in Chester County. The result was *The Church of Saint Peter in the Great Valley, 1700-1940: the Story of a Colonial Country Parish in Pennsylvania*, published in 1944 [in conjunction with the start of the restoration of old St. Peter's Church by Colonial architect R. Brognard Okie]. This book, though now long out of print, is an exhaustive treatise not only on old St. Peter's Church, but its roots in the early Welsh settlement of the Great Valley, and its contribution to, and interrelationship with, St David's - Radnor, St James - Perkiomen, and the rest of early Pennsylvania Anglicanism.

A Conjecture of Montgomery

So, with the preceding as a setting, how are we in the 21st century to describe this early Welsh settlement in and around the Great Valley, only twice referred to in original documents, an obscure place for which no description survives? In what form would the community have existed?

Often in complex historical research the attempt to authenticate the "truth" is a slow process of comparison, deduction, and elimination. Rarely does there exist a complete "audit trail" where one need only connect the dots. Rather, circumstantial evidence must often, by necessity, play a large role. This author, having presented the meager primary documents citing the existence of Montgomery, and a larger amount of secondary information, will now make several leaps of faith in describing this place. The central premise of these conjectures is that the basic needs of these Welsh settlers in the Great Valley of Pennsylvania 300 years ago were not fundamentally different from those of other pioneers in later periods for which we have better records – whether in the settlement of the Ohio Country later in the 18th century, the Great Plains in the 19th century, or even the Alaska Territory in the early 20th century.

By 1700, legal title to nearly all the heavily forested land between the two parallel ridges of the Valley, within the townships of Tredyffrin and Whiteland, was held by absentee land owners located mostly in England. Those Welsh "adventurers" who, for reasons of lesser financial means, were unable to afford the purchase of land closer to Penn's "faire green country town" of Philadelphia looked to the western edges of the Tract for opportunity. Even though surveyors were beginning to articulate land parcels within the townships, at the beginning of the 18th century creative means were often employed by a pioneer and his family to occupy acreage upon which to subsist. These included the use of consignment, formal or informal lease arrangements, or simply "squatting." One way or another, a man and his family required an immediate place to establish a home, and a means of providing livelihood and survival in an unforgiving land so far from home.

There is an American tradition which endures to this day, portraying fearless settlers turning their backs on civilization, striking out for lands where only Indians had gone before, and basking in the fruits of their

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solitude. The mythology goes on to describe the readiness, indeed almost an eagerness, of pioneers to "move west" if and when they could see the chimney smoke of their neighbor. That such moves happened is true, but must be balanced against a larger reality. Less known to the casual historian, but quite well documented, is the staggering emotional toll that wilderness pioneering had upon families; the frequency of insanity caused by sustained lack of social contact, accidents, and death; and the number of settlers who simply quit the land because they were not emotionally equipped for the rigors and terrors that came with settlement in a strange land. Human beings are social creatures, and social interaction was as fundamental to strong mental and emotional health for the Welsh in the early 18th century as it is for us today.

At the time that the Rev. Evans first visited the people of "Montgomery," it was not a village or town in any traditional definition of those words. Yet it certainly was a community. In those earliest years of the 18th century, when there were probably no more than 10-15 pioneer families throughout the Valley, this loose collection of inhabitants with a common heritage and language was a "fabric of spirit" brought together by the elemental need to collectively face the unknown, to rejoice as one, and to bear up together to the ever-present possibility of an early death.

This author believes that another rationale for sustaining the sense of community in Montgomery was the acute awareness that, if necessary, a common defense would be their sole means of survival. William Penn, relying on his Quaker principles, had taken an extremely humane and non-arrogant approach in his dealings with the Native American inhabitants (owners) of the land granted to him by King Charles II. As Pennsylvania historian Robert Proud described in 1797 looking back a century, ". . . the Indians were remarkably kind, and very assistant to them, in divers respects, frequently supplying them with such provisions as they could spare, &c." [24] Yet, by the year 1700, it is recorded that "… on the North American continent, none of the Provinces are yet advanced wholly beyond the period of a struggle for actual existence, and amongst and around all important white settlements yet impends the 'Red Peril' of the Indians."[25] Any settler in North America at the cusp of the 18th century would have heard lurid accounts of "Indian butchery" in Virginia, in the eastern Great Lakes region, and in New England. Indeed, King

Phillip's War in New England, just 25 years before (1675-76), had been the bloodiest conflict in North American history to date, and the profound fear and suspicion engendered by that conflict lingered strongly into subsequent decades. Regardless of one's wish for peace and harmony, the instinct to protect one's family and possessions was greater, both then and now.

During the period in which the Rev. Evans "preached in Welch once a fortnight for 4 years" to the people of Montgomery and Radnor [1700 through 1704], there was certainly no formal church structure in the Valley. In those early years, Evans' regular visits for communal worship, which would have always occurred during the week [his pastoral duties on Sundays at Christ Church would have taken precedence] were most probably held at the log chapel in Easttown. We may never know whether the Rev. Evans actually visited the Anglican faithful in Montgomery itself, but the opportunity for a communal gathering in an individual home, allowing the missionary priest to administer the Holy Sacraments in their native language, would certainly have been a day to remember. As previously stated, sometime during the period of 1705 – 1711, an Anglican log chapel was constructed for communal worship beside the 1703 community burying ground atop what later came to be called Saint Peter's Hill. Yet Montgomery was a place, not a church or a denomination, and the community was not exclusive to Anglicans. Within a decade after Rev. Evans' first visits to the western reaches of the Welsh Tract, Welsh Baptists and Presbyterians had each founded congregations in the Valley that endure to this day.

A final consideration: how might this lightly settled expanse of the eastern Great Valley have acquired the name "Montgomery"? Consider this possibility. Along its north flank, the undulating floor of the valley from East Whiteland into Tredyffrin Township extends at an elevation above sea level from between 200-250'. The linear crest of the ridgeline rises to some 600' in height, with the summit atop Diamond Rock Hill at almost 700'. [The crown of St. Peter's Hill, within the center of the valley, stands at 350' above sea level]. It is possible that this sharp rise from valley floor to crest along the north ridge may have reminded early settlers of their native Welsh Montgomery. In the historic Mid Wales county of Montgomeryshire [the home county of the Rev. Ev-

ans], the historic market town of Montgomery lies along the base of a high wooded escarpment which rises some 400' above the town, remarkably similar to this counterpart in the New World. We may never know the derivation of the valley community's name for sure, but this coincidence is intriguing.

Conclusion

With the death of Franklin L. Burns in 1946, eastern Chester County lost one of its most prolific researchers and commentators on our local history. A charter member of the Tredyffrin Easttown History Club, for whom minutia mattered in getting our local stories right, Frank Burns was a man for details. Yet even Burns occasionally met his match.

In 1982, the editorial staff of the History Club published a collection of Burns' papers, including one on the subject of the Pennsylvania Welsh Tract in the townships of Tredyffrin and Easttown.[26] In reading Burns' writings, one occasionally senses his frustration in attempting to authenticate a premise without the benefit of surviving personal documentation from those earliest Welsh settlers. He ruefully concludes a research paper thusly:

> "The Welsh Quakers were never able to settle Easttown and Tredyffrin with more than a minority of their own sect; the larger part was inhabited by Welsh Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Baptists, and with an ever-increasing English speaking population. The history, the social, and the spiritual life of these early Welsh settlers rest in the records of the Valley Friends, Great Valley Presbyterian, Great Valley Baptist, and (St. David's and St. Peter's) Episcopal meeting houses, for the settlers were too busy felling trees and harvesting the lush crops to record passing events."

So, like Mr. Burns, facts have been used when we have them, circumstantial evidence when we do not, and an occasional use of local traditions and legends,

to connect the dots in re-asserting the belief that an early Welsh community called Montgomery did indeed exist west of the Schuylkill River in the Great Valley of Chester County. This author trusts that Mr. Teamer, with his now-wider perspective on all things historical, would agree.

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The author wishes to gratefully thank two individuals who provided material assistance during the conjuring and writing of this piece:

Dr. Hywel Meilyr Davies, of the University of Wales – Aberystwyth, located in the Ceredigion region on the west coast of Wales. I came upon Dr. Davies' book *Transatlantic Brethren: Rev. Samuel Jones and His Friends, Baptists in Wales, Pennsylvania and Beyond*. Originally written as Dr. Davies' doctoral dissertation, and published in 1995 by Lehigh University Press, Bethlehem, PA, the book chronicles with great clarity and academic excellence the earliest Welsh migration to the Delaware Valley, and the role of Welshmen in founding the Baptist faith in our area. Dr. Davies and I corresponded at length, and I consider the questions that evolved from our early discussions to be the catalyst for writing this article.

Mr. Mike Bertram, member of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society, researcher of the early history of our area par excellence, and friend. Because so much of the story of Montgomery is clouded in mystery, Mike's willingness to share with me his exhaustive study of deed records within the Welsh Tract in the Great Valley provided me a valuable footing as I ventured into the conjecture of this place Montgomery.

Roger Thorne is a past president of the Tredyffrin Easttown Historical Society, a resident of the Great Valley, and the historian of St. Peter's Church in the Great Valley.

NOTES

1. S. Paul Teamer, "The Welsh Tract," *Tredyffrin Easttown History Club Quarterly*, Berwyn, Pennsylvania, Volume II , Number 1, January 1939, pp. 19-24.
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