

**THE PERKIOMEN  
REGION, PAST AND  
PRESENT. VOL. I**

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The Perkiomen Region, past and Present. Vol. I by Henry Sassaman Dotterer

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**HENRY SASSAMAN DOTTERER**

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**EDITED BY**

**HENRY S. DOTTERER.**

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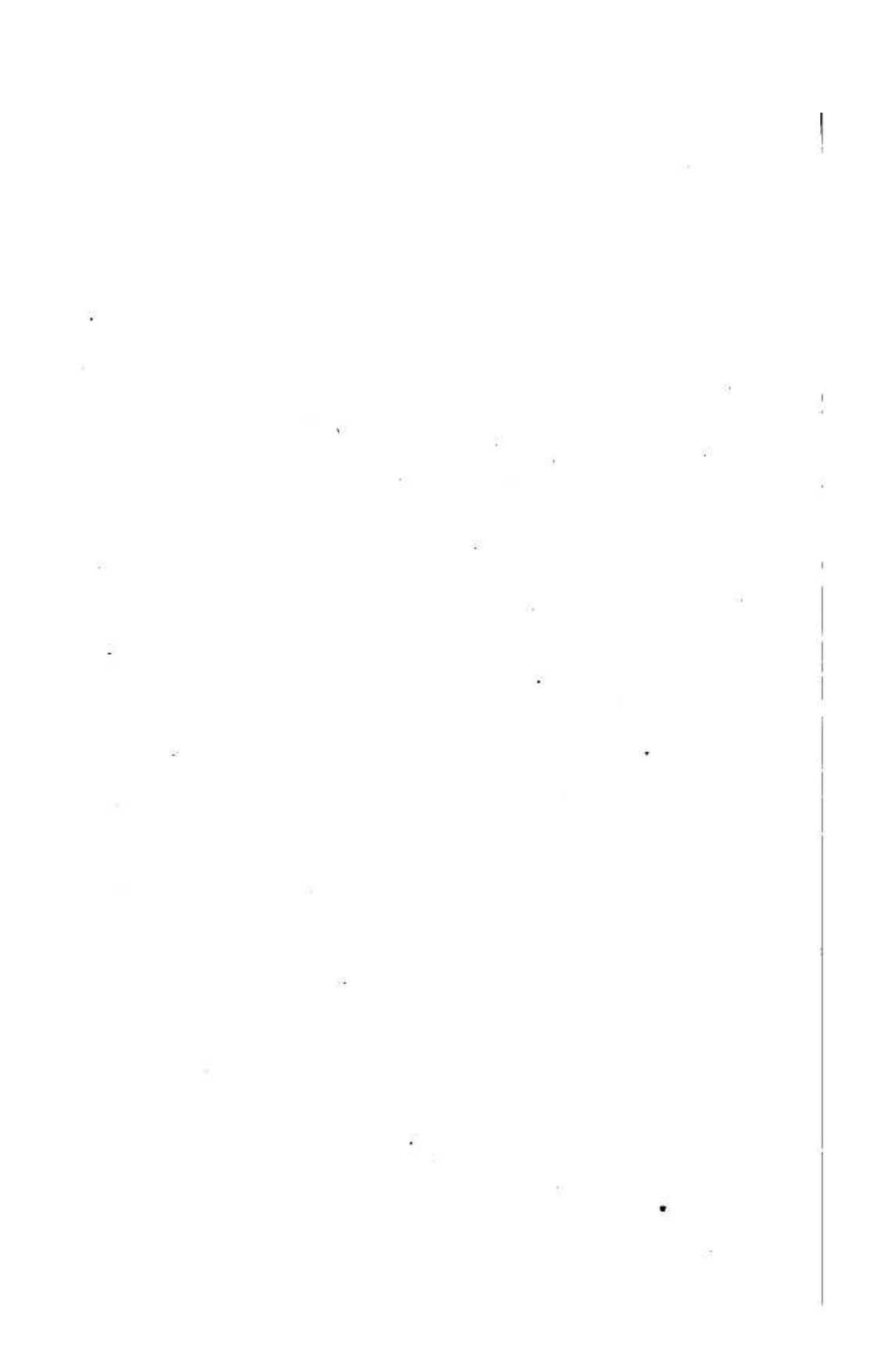
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# The Perkiomen Region, Past and Present.

Edited by HENRY S. DOTTERER.

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P. O. Box 316, Philadelphia.

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## Our Field and Our Work.

Soon after William Penn founded Philadelphia European emigrants pushed inland to the Perkiomen creek, entered its valley and settled upon its inviting lands. Others followed, and ventured farther into the wilderness, establishing themselves upon Skippack creek and farther north on the two Swamp creeks, Old and New Goshenhoppen, and points farther east, north and west. Thus in a comparatively short time was peopled by civilized whites the territory drained by Perkiomen creek and its tributaries. The work of subduing the forests and of making homes followed the advent of the colonists.

Six generations have lived and toiled in the Perkiomen region, each in its turn encountering hardships, confronting perils, achieving triumphs peculiar to its epoch. At the outset came the struggle to wrest a livelihood from the virgin soil. The presence of the Indians, distrusted and feared, was a source of anxiety, night and day. Intercourse with them had to be carried on with the utmost discretion. It thrills us to contemplate the hazards to which our forefathers were subjected in this regard. The liberty of conscience guaranteed by William Penn brought people of many and diverse religious

convictions. In Europe they had not been taught the lesson of toleration, and here they found difficulty in learning it. Contentions were the result. Notwithstanding these untoward manifestations by professing Christians, the several denominations organized congregations and built churches and school houses. The French and Indian wars in the colonial times—not here, be it remembered, but in distant localities—affected and disquieted our ancestors. The War of Independence for eight years was part of their daily life. The battles at Brandywine and Germantown were at their doors. Valley Forge was but across the Schuylkill. The contending armies crossed and recrossed the Perkiomen and the Skippack and marched up and down the highways of this section of Pennsylvania. The inhabitants here were not only observers of these stirring events. Many patriotic spirits rendered heroic service during the entire war. The militia was thoroughly organized and was called out when pressing emergencies demanded instant service. History tells much of the glorious deeds of our people in those days; careful research will bring to light far more. Then followed the era of growth and expansion, of the building of bridges, turnpikes and canals, of steam and railroads. The war of the Re-

bellion shook the country from centre to circumference and brought with it many changes. The present is a period of comparative quiet and seeming maturity, but it too will soon be followed, we cannot doubt, by changes and advances as remarkable as any that have preceded it.

The history of this region needs to be amplified. Many prominent families have their American origin here. The lives of the actors in the successive eras should be written. The historian, the genealogist and the antiquarian will find much to do. To further this work, so far as is in our power, is our chosen task. The evolution of an empire from a wilderness is our theme.

INTEREST in American ancestry is on the increase. Research into the family history is the fashion. The institution of the patriotic associations, like the Sons of the Revolution and the Colonial Dames, has given an impulse to this study.

OUR forefathers settled upon the lands while yet the Indians traversed them in their wanderings. No safeguards, no walls, no armies were placed there to keep the nomads back. Just as many Indians were there after the initial settlers came as were there before.

Think of the risks taken by the pioneers, and the courage required!

Do you say the history of this period is commonplace, colorless, peaceful? True, the streams of the Perkiomen region did not run red with the blood of tomahawked whites, nor did its hills echo the war-whoop of infuriate savages, bent on butchery. Never was the home of any of its dwellers consumed by flames kindled by the torch of the Indian.

Shall we decry our ancestors because they lived in amity with the children of the forest? Rather let us honor them the more. A thousand-fold greater glory attaches to a record of peace and goodwill than to pages of history covered with the stories of quarrels, wrongs and bloodshed.

A MATTER of prime interest to family history is the place in Europe from which the immigrant ancestor came. In the great majority of cases this information is lacking.

The officers of the Montgomery Historical Society are: President, Hon. Hiram C. Hoover, Hooverton, Pa.; Vice Presidents, Wm. H. Holstein, R. F. Hoffecker; Secretary, Mary Jones, Norristown; Treasurer, Wm. McDermott, Conshohocken; Trustees, Jones Detwiler, J. K. Gottwalds, H. W. Kratz, Elwood Roberts.

WHAT the Perkiomen region greatly needs is ready access and quick transit. Its picturesqueness and fertility invite rural housekeepers. It must within a very few years become the suburban home of wealthy city people. The supply of this want cannot be far distant. The enterprising gentlemen who are running trolley roads, like spiders' webs, over our fair country, will see to this. With termini at Norristown, Perkiomen Junction, Pottstown, Allentown, Bethlehem and Lansdale, electric cars will traverse these beautiful hills and vales. Rapid, frequent, ample means to come and go are sure to come.

#### Old-Time News.

Pensylvanische Geschicht-Schreiber, Germantown, (Saur's paper), April 16, 1743: Von Mackunsche haben wir Nachricht dass bey einer kurtzen Zeit her eine Menge schwartze Raupen grossen Schaden gethan; sie frassen des Gras, den Weitzen, das Welschkorn, Haber, Flacks und Kuechen-Genuess.

The same, February 16, 1745: Die vorige Woche starb Wichert Lewering oknweit Germanton, seines Alters 107 Jahr.

The same, June 16, 1748: Jacob Froelich der Lumpen-Mann wohnhaft an der Germantoner Stross bey Antoni Henckel gibt Kramer-Waaren vor leinene Lumpen vors Pfund ein Pens werth.

The same, November 16, 1749: Michel Hælligas zu Philadelphia ist gestorben. Auch der alte Peter Wentz in Madedsche.



**HENDRICK PANNEBECKER,**

**Surveyor of Lands for the Penns. 1674-1754. Flomborn, Germantown and Skippack. By Hon. Samuel W. Pennypacker, LL. D. Privately Printed. Philadelphia: 1894.**

The foregoing is the title of a work recently issued. It is an important contribution to our local history of the colonial period. After patient research, covering at least a quarter of a century, Judge Pennypacker has written a biography of the founder of his family in America. Whatever comes from his pen is characterized by fine judgment, clear statement and conscientious treatment, and in the present instance a commendable sense of filial regard pervades his work. The book is an enduring monument to the gifted author's worthy ancestor. It is a model for local biographers and historians.

Interwoven with the biography are a number of facts giving much light on Pennsylvania history. Translations of original Dutch letters written at Germantown in 1684; the report of the Pennsylvanian to the Dutch Mennonites, dated March 1, 1773, concerning the condition of the churches in the colonies, and giving the names of the preachers at that time; an account of copper mining in Pennsylvania, translated from a rare work published in Germany in 1727, are of this character.

In 1891 Judge Pennypacker visited Europe and spent considerable time at places known to have been the home of the Pannebeckers. At Flomborn, in the Palatinate, he found many of the inhabitants to be his kinsmen, who received him with the honor due to his judicial, social and literary position. He brought away with him much material bearing on the family history, among which was a series of photographic views, delineating the town hall, the market square, the churches and other quaint objects in the ancient dorf.

The volume contains one hundred and sixty-four octavo pages. It is printed on paper hand-made for the edition. One hundred and fifty copies were printed. None were sold.

The illustrations, in half tone, are: Autograph of Hendrick Pannebecker, in

1706; Pannebecker arms; portrait of Johann Pfannebecker, Grossherzoglich Hessischer Geheimer Regierungsrath; Flomborn; Heidelberg Bible of 1568 with family record; Skippack; portrait of Sarah Pennypacker Walker; George Washington's letter dated Camp at Pennybacker's mill, 26th Sept., 1777; portrait of Hon. Isaac S. Pennypacker, United States Senator from Virginia; draft of Franconia township, by Hendrick Pannebecker, in 1734; portrait of Hon. Samuel W. Pennypacker, LL. D.; and portrait of Brevet Major General Galusha Pennypacker, U. S. A.

There is given a list of one hundred and forty-four members of the Pennypacker family who participated in the war of the Rebellion—in both the Federal and the Confederate armies—holding positions from major generals to privates.

We cannot omit an expression of our interest in the recital of the ghost story. It is familiar to many of the residents of the Perkiomen valley. The ghost was seen, in 1738, on the farm of Frederick Reimer, who lived on the bottom land of Society run, about two miles northwest of the present Zieglerville. It has been told for a century and a half in the colloquial German of the neighborhood, ever thrilling the hearer. Here we have the same impressive story in true English, translated from *Erscheinungen der Geister*, published by Saur, in Germantown, in 1755, and reproduced in the *Geistliche Fama* at Berleburg, in Germany.

**LIFE OF HENDRICK PANNEBECKER.**

Hendrick Pannebecker was born on the 21st of March, 1674, or within a day or two of that date, and, according to convincing evidence, in Flomborn, a rural village in the Palatinate, about ten miles from the city of Worms. The Pannebeckers came from Holland to the Palatinate. The name is composed of two Dutch words, *pennen* and *bakker*, and means a tile maker. He was an early emigrant to Germantown, living there in 1699, or some years earlier. He was of the Reformed faith. In 1699 he married, in Germantown, Eve, the daughter of Hans

Peter Umstat, who arrived in Philadelphia on October 12, 1685. Until some time in the year 1702 he lived in Germantown. He then removed to Skippack creek, about two miles from the present Evansburg, and spent the remainder of his life there. He became a leading spirit in that locality. He purchased land at various dates; a partial list given in the book foote up 4012 acres.

He was a surveyor, and it is supposed that he laid out the Skippack road in consequence of a petition to the court dated June, 1713; also that he made the survey of Skippack and Perkiomen township in 1725.

Among the other important surveys made by him were these: Fifty acres for the New Hanover Lutheran congregation, completed April 17, 1719; soon after December 3, 1722, a road from Plymouth road northward to Perkiomen creek, and thence "to the Indian ford on Schuylkill," which is still the main road between Norristown and Phoenixville; in March, 1725, a road from the grist mill of James Shattick and William Love, on Skippack road, to the King's road; on September 6, same year, a road from "Thomas Rutter's iron works to the Great road leading from Manahatawney to Philadelphia;" March 2, 1726, a road from "Colebrookdale furnace to Pool forge, and from thence to the Great road leading to Philadelphia;" in March, 1727, a road from the upper part of Salford township to the "Great road from Skippack;" the same month another, "from a creek by John Jones' house, in the upper part of Gwineth, to Susquehanna road;" September 2, 1728, a road "beginning att a Beach tree near ye north Branch of Perkiomen," and proceeding "to the great road called Skippack road, about a run called Sacarass run;" in March, 1731, he laid out the township of Franconia; September 2, 1734, he surveyed a road from Henry Pawling's place to the church near Skippack; and September 10, 1738, he made a survey of the glebe lands of the St. James' Episcopal church, on the Perkiomen. In 1733 he surveyed for the proprietaries the manors of Springfield, Manatawney and Perkasié.

Hendrick Pannebecker died suddenly on the 4th of April, 1754, aged eighty years and two weeks. He had eight children:

Martha, born June 15, 1700; married Anthony Vanderslice; died September 15, 1761.

Adolph, born 1708; died May, 1787.

Peter, born March 8, 1710; married Elizabeth Keyser; died June 28, 1770.

John, born August 27, 1713; married Anneke Keyser; died June 14, 1784.

Jacob, born 1715; married Margaret Tyson; died May 27, 1752.

Henry, born 1717; married Rebecca Kuster; died about May 31, 1792.

Barbara, born about 1720; married, March 30, 1738, Cornelius Tyson.

One other, believed to be Susanna, wife of Peter Keyser, Worcester.

We cannot forbear quoting at length the interesting account given by Judge Pennypacker concerning the title to the first land owned by the New Hanover Lutheran congregation.

#### ORIGIN OF THE NEW HANOVER LUTHERAN CHURCH.

The Lutheran people near the Swamp in New Hanover township, in 1719, "having associated themselves into an Ecclesiastical Community, determined to purchase a piece of land whereon they might erect a place of worship and a grave yard for burying their dead, and it so happening that John Henry Sprogall, one of their Community and Persnasion, being at that time possessed of a large Quantity of land in these parts, did willingly make a True Gift and Donation of Fifty acres of his Land, appropriating the same for the use and behoof of the said Lutheran Community forever, Requesting the said Community to build a Church, a School-house, a Graveyard and what other suitable Conveniences they thought proper." He requested Henry Pannebecker to lay out and survey fifty acres for the purpose, which survey was completed April 17, 1719, and George Boone, to prepare a deed, but through some neglect this important paper was never executed. The Lutherans entered into possession, raised a contribution among themselves, built a church and a school-house,

and had them completely finished in 1721. About the same year, becoming more numerous and the congregation being too large for the building, they raised another contribution and erected a larger church and school-house "far preferable to the former." In 1746 they awoke to a knowledge of the fact that Sprogel was dead, and that "owing to the Sloath and Neglect of the Elders and Churchwardens" they had no title except it was shown by Sprogel's conveyance of other lands described as adjoining those of the church. Henry Pannebocker, Valentine Geiger, George Jerger, Johanna Christiana Sprogel, widow of John Henry Sprogel, Jr.; John Frederick Richards and Anna Elizabeth Hoppin, sister of Sprogel and a widow, February 10, 1746, united in a certificate of these facts, and appearing before John Potts, one of his Majesty's justices, declared they were "Real Truth." Upon this paper the title depends, and to the happy carelessness of the elders we owe the preservation of the history of the origin of the Lutheran church at the Swamp.

H. S. D.

#### Folk-Names of Places in the Perkiomen Valley.

##### FALKNER SWAMP.

At first, of course, there were no names. The wilderness did not need any. With the advent of settlers they became necessary, and there was no delay in coining them. The people did not wait for the surveyor to come with his compass and chain to lay out by arbitrary lines the bounds and metes of sections of land; nor for grave judges to grant humble petitions to have certain divisions legally designated by formal names. On the contrary, names for local use sprang into being spontaneously, and the limits to which they applied were governed by the natural and physical features of the new country. There was a happy simplicity about this nomenclature. Apparently no thought was taken of what the name should be, only that it convey a distinguishing meaning.

The names so evolved by the common people were not adopted by the civil authorities, nor were the districts covered

by them made political divisions. The settlers clung tenaciously to the names and so for three or four generations did their successors. They are still to a great degree current among the descendants of the pioneers.

The valley of west Swamp creek in this way received the name Falkner Schwamm—in English, Falkner Swamp; a double name conveying two pieces of information: Falkner, after Daniel Falkner, the agent of the Frankfort Land Company; Swamp, meadow or bottom land, descriptive of the character of the soil. The Frankfort Company owned upwards of twenty-two thousand acres of land, extending from the Schuylkill river about the present Pottstown north-eastward, to the present Pennsylvania. Daniel Falkner was a seller of land and all the newcomers were buyers; Falkner was known to everybody in the province, and everyone knew where lay the land he desired to sell. How appropriate and how meaningful was the name Falkner Swamp!

The first official name given to any portion of the Swamp creek valley was Hanover township. Afterwards Frederick township was set up, and later Douglas township, and still later Hanover was cut up into New Hanover and Upper Hanover.

The boundaries of Falkner Swamp may be given in a general way as follows: on the north are the South Mountains, on the south the Stone hills, on the west the Fox hills, and on the east the ridge rising from the left bank of Society run. Swamp creek, having as its tributaries Society run, Spack run, Minister creek, Schlegel's run and Goshenhoppen run, flows in a winding course through the valley.

Dr. Muhlenberg, in his autobiography, gives an amusing account of the difficulty he experienced on the day of his arrival at Philadelphia, on Thursday, the 25th day of November, 1742, in finding the way to New Hanover. He had not heard of Falkner Swamp. He says: "I inquired of the innkeeper where New Providence and New Hanover were located. He did not know, but brought in a German from the country, who was just then in town