

LAMBING / WHITE



HISTORY OF
ALLEGHENY
COUNTY

Allegheny County

*Its History and Subsequent
Development*

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CONTENTS:

PREFACE.

CHAPTER I. FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TILL THE YEAR 1754.

CHAPTER II. CONTEST FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE OHIO VALLEY.

CHAPTER III. PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS BEGUN.

CHAPTER IV. THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN PENNSYLVANIA AND VIRGINIA.

CHAPTER V. WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD.

CHAPTER VI. THE ERECTION AND ORGANIZATION OF ALLEGHENY COUNTY.

PART II. FROM THE YEAR 1790 TILL THE PRESENT TIME.

PREFACE.

Believing that the Celebration of the Centennial Anniversary of the organization of Allegheny County would not be complete without a sketch of the territory embraced within the original lines of the county, and of that part of Western Pennsylvania from which the same was taken—virtually including the early history of Western Pennsylvania, such a history of the early settlement of Allegheny County, of the midnight raids by the Indians, of the bloody battles, of the hardships and privations endured by the pioneers, and, later on, by the wonderful development and growth of the same during the past century—cannot but be interesting to every citizen of the county.

The following historical sketch is presented to the citizens of Allegheny County by the Centennial Committee with the belief that no country nor age ever presented a more interesting and thrilling story of conquest, of settlement and development, than does the history of the settlement of Allegheny County, and of its subsequent marvelous growth and prosperity. As written in the felicitous style of the gifted authors, it can scarcely be improved upon by the touch of the romancer.

CHAPTER I. FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD TILL THE YEAR 1754.

The growth and development of our country, especially west of the Allegheny mountains, has been something phenomenal. Where a century ago or less nothing was to be seen but vast primeval forests or boundless prairies, inhabited by wild animals and savages only a little less ferocious, all has been changed by the rapid march of civilization.

The few villages that dared to spring up at that early day have become populous cities, the solitary cabins of the hardy adventurers have given place to thriving towns and villages, the forests and prairies have been transformed into rich agricultural districts, and in every direction lines of railroad are seen threading their course to carry the fruits of industry to a ready market. Telegraph lines facilitate communication, and over all, religion spreads her peaceful mantle, education sheds her cheering light, and a popular government secures for all equal rights. The peoples of the Old "World, confined to traditional grooves, contemplate with astonishment the gigantic strides of the Great Republic of the West, and speculate on what the end is to be, or whether there will be an end to this onward march of national prosperity and domestic happiness.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this extraordinary growth more marked than in Western Pennsylvania, nearly all of which was once included within the limits of Allegheny county. From the date of the arrival of the first white man at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, the natural advantages of that section of country was recognized as a future center of population and industry. But as time went on, and the various and inexhaustible

mineral resources of the surrounding country were gradually developed, it was seen with what singular generosity Nature had lavished her choicest gifts upon that favored spot. Cities sprang up that first emulated the great industrial centers of the world, then rivaled, and now threaten to surpass them.

Our cities, proud of the distinction they had won, excited the admiration of the world, when to! Dame Fortune, as if to show that Allegheny County was her favorite haunt, opened to the astonished gaze of her children and the world a new, and till then unheard-of source of wealth and pre-eminence, in the vast supply of natural gas, that leaves this locality without a peer on earth, and brings an amount of capital, industry and population to her, that even the most sanguine cannot but regard with astonishment.

The importance of this section of country from an historical point of view, is not less deserving of attention. Circumstances seemed from an early day to prepare it for the distinction it was afterward to enjoy. Few places have been so distinguished by the vicissitudes that marked the various periods of their history as Allegheny county, from the days when it was alternately the battle field and the hunting ground of conflicting tribes of red men, to the time in which it was finally settled, after having passed successively under the yoke of three nations of the pale faces—the French, the English and the Americans.

Fitting then it is that a country so distinguished for its favorable location, its inexhaustible mineral wealth, its boundless industries, its restless and rapidly increasing population, and its interesting history should celebrate the centenary of its erection, and that in a style in keeping with its importance. The past, the present and the future demand it. The past that it may not be forgotten; the present that its advantages may be made known and appreciated, and the future that it may recall with becoming pride the scenes of the days of other years, and

may bless the memory of those who have gone to their final rest, after having nobly performed their part in these busy scenes.

And first of the name "Allegheny." It is derived, as all authorities are agreed, from the designation of an aboriginal tribe, the "Talligewi," or "Alligewi," that inhabited the valley of the Allegheny river prior to the coming of the tribes found there by the first white adventurers. We shall not, however, pause to inquire into what little is known from tradition of this pre-historic nation; suffice it to say that it has left its name in a modified form so indelibly engraven, that it will be remembered so long as a river flows or a range of mountains rears its summit toward heaven. In process of time the Lenni Lenape, better known as the Delaware Indians, one of the most powerful tribes, or family of tribes, in North America, succeeded in gaining the mastery. But before the advent of the whites the vicissitudes of savage warfare had wrestled the supremacy from them, and bestowed it upon the indomitable Iroquois, or Six Nations, the "Romans of America."

That powerful confederation occupied the territory south of Lake Ontario, but claimed much more; and the dread of them reached from the shores of the Atlantic to the valley of the Mississippi, and from the headwaters of the Ottawa to the Carolinas. They laid claim to all Western Pennsylvania, and their claim was readily acknowledged by the remnants of other tribes that occupied it, especially the Delawares, their former rivals, whom they had conquered, and, in the language of the rude sons of the forest, "made women of." The Shawanese, who had been conquered by the Iroquois about the year 1672, were allowed to make their homes in the valley of the upper Ohio and in other parts of the State of the same name. Members of a few other tribes were also found scattered throughout the territory of Western Pennsylvania, but not in considerable

numbers. Such, in brief, was the disposition of the aboriginal tribes in the territory now engaging our attention at the opening of the period of authentic history. It would be impossible to form anything like an accurate estimate of the number of Indians of the several tribes living in Western Pennsylvania when the first white adventurers made their appearance upon the scene, both because no census was ever attempted, and because their residence was not permanent. Suffice it to say, that, considering the extensive territory, the population was very small.

The character of the Indians naturally gave rise to numerous towns and villages, or what were popularly designated as such, composed sometimes of the members of one tribe, at other times of the members of several tribes living together in harmony. These villages were usually quite small, consisting at times of not more than a few cabins, were for the most part located along streams, and were frequently moved from one place to another, as necessity or caprice dictated. Only a few of them will be mentioned in this place, on account of the part they played in the country's history. One of the principal of these was Kittanning, which was known to the French as Attique, situated where the town of the same name now stands, and which figured conspicuously in the French war prior to its destruction in September, 1756.

Another was Shannopinstown, located on the east bank of the Allegheny, about two miles above its confluence with the Monongahela.

Celoron, in the journal of his expedition, to be referred to later, says it was the most beautiful place he saw on his journey. But it was of little or no historical importance, though it was the only one within the limits of the present city of Pittsburg. Eighteen or twenty miles further down, on the north side of the Ohio, stood Logstown, the most important of all the Indian towns, as will appear in the

sequel. It was the point on the upper Ohio for trading and conferring with the whites.

A mile below the mouth of the Beaver river was Sakunk, seldom mentioned in pioneer annals; and about four miles below the present New Castle was situated Kiskakunk, a name variously spelled, which, though of Considerable size, was rather a place of meeting for the Indians themselves, than of importance to them in their relation to the whites. Besides these there were other villages, but so insignificant as not to be deserving of mention.

The nomadic life of the Indians and the fact that there were certain points at which they were accustomed to assemble from time to time, naturally led to the formation of paths or trails, which traversed the country in various directions. While forming means of easy communication for the natives, they were hardly less advantageous to the early traders and adventurers; and they were particularly useful in pointing out the best routes for military and national roads, more especially in the mountain districts. The most noted, and perhaps the most ancient of these was the Old Catawba or Cherokee trail, leading from the Carolinas through Virginia, Western Pennsylvania and Western New York to Canada. It was intersected by the Warrior Branch, which, coming up from Tennessee through Kentucky and Southern Ohio, entered Pennsylvania, and united with it somewhere in Fayette county. These were the only important trails that traversed the country north and south. Of greater importance, both to the Indians and whites, were the numerous trails that lead east and west. The most noted of these was the Kittanning path, which, coming up the Juniata and crossing the mountains at Kittanning Point, passed westward to the Allegheny river at the village of the same name, and after crossing the river continued its course to Detroit. Another of importance was Nemacholin's path, opened by a friendly Delaware of that name for the trader Col. Michael Cresap, in 1751. Starting

from the vicinity of Cumberland, Maryland, it crossed the mountains to the forks of the Ohio, with a branch from the top of the Chestnut Ridge to the mouth of Nemacholin's Creek, at the present Brownsville. But as Braddock adopted this path and robbed it of its Indian name, so did Dunlap give his name to the creek, and the red man is forgotten. A trail extended down the north bank of the Ohio to the mouth of the Beaver, and continued on into Ohio; and another from Logstown north to Lake Erie and the Iroquois country. There were other trails of minor importance, but it is not necessary to speak of them.

The better to understand the gradual development of the county from a forest wilderness to its present advanced condition, it will be necessary for us to go back to the time when the territory first came into the possession of the white man. Naturally enough errors were committed in the portioning out of the New World among their favorites by the powers of Europe, who claimed it by the right of discovery.

The ignorance of the geography of the recently discovered continent, the thirst for dominion, and the fabulous mineral wealth which was believed to lie hid beneath the surface of the New World, were elements of confusion that can hardly be appreciated at their proper value at the present advanced state of civilization and knowledge. Add to this that the revival of learning was then only beginning to dawn, thanks to the invention of printing, and men were not as yet fully released from the influence of the strange notions that had long prevailed regarding what lay beyond the "Gloomy Ocean." Evidences of this are found in abundance in the early accounts of the newly discovered continents, and in the grotesque figures that adorn some of the earlier maps.

While the thoughtless may smile at this display of ignorance, the philanthropist rejoice at the amelioration of man's condition, and the philosopher marks with pleasure

the development of the human mind; the student of our history will discover in it a source both of pleasure and perplexity: pleasure that some record, however imperfect, has come down to us, of the notions entertained by the early explorers; and perplexity to solve the historical and geographical problems upon which, unfortunately, they shed so little light. What a variety in the early maps; what conflicts in the early claims! Yet we must address ourselves to the task of unravelling them as well as circumstances and the information obtainable will permit.

As early as March, 1564, Queen Elizabeth granted to her favorite, Sir Walter Raleigh, a patent for a vast tract of country extending along the Atlantic seaboard of the New World, and back from it to an indefinite distance; but whether it could be so construed as to include the territory now embraced in Allegheny county or not, it would be difficult to determine, owing to the imperfect knowledge then had of the geography of this continent, and the consequent indefinite terms of the patent. Be that as it may, it is not a matter of importance, inasmuch as no permanent settlement was ever made under the patent, which soon lapsed, while he in whose favor it was granted, fell from the royal favor. Permanent possession dates from the charter granted by James I, May 23, 1609, to a company at the head of which appeared the name of the successful rival and inevitable enemy of Raleigh, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury. That the territory now included within the limits of Allegheny county was embraced in the scope of that charter, there can be no question, for the territory granted to the company extended two hundred miles north and as many south of Old Point Comfort, "up into the land throughout from sea to sea, west and northwest," as the charter expressed it. Thus was the claim of Virginia first established to the soil of southwestern Pennsylvania. But owing to the still indefinite knowledge of America, the rapacity of adventurers, and the desire of crowned heads to

please their favorites at little cost to themselves, it need not be a matter of surprise that charters were granted which conflicted with each other, and that the same lands were bestowed upon two or more persons or companies. A notable instance of this is the territory around the headwaters of the Ohio; for while, as we have seen, it was granted to Virginia in 1609, it was afterward included in the charter granted to William Penn by Charles II, dated March 4, 1681. By this instrument he was constituted sole proprietary of certain tracts of land which, in the terms of the charter, were to extend westward five degrees from the Delaware river, and to include all the territory from the beginning of the fortieth to the beginning of the forty-third degree of north latitude. Whether it was the royal pleasure to take from Virginia part of her territory and bestow it upon Penn, or that the king was ignorant of the exact terms of the former charter, it matters little; both colonies claimed the territory of southwestern Pennsylvania in virtue of a grant from the crown, and a long and bitter contest arose which will form one of the most interesting chapters of this history.

Although the English adventurers did not push into the forest with the same intrepidity as the French, they were early in the field in the country west of the "Allegheny Hills," as the range of mountains was at first called. Col. Henry Ward, who lived at the falls of the James river, sent one Mr. Needham in 1654, on an exploring expedition; who, crossing the mountains, entered the valley of the Ohio, and in ten years' time is said to have discovered several of the tributaries, not only of the Ohio, but also of the Mississippi. Thomas Woods and Robert Pallam were commissioned by Major General Wood, of Virginia "for ye flndeing of the ebbing and flowing of ye waters behinde the mountains in order to the discovery of the South Sea." These men, with an Appomatox Indian and one servant and five horses, started from the Appomatox town in Virginia on Friday,

September 1, 1671, crossed the mountains and descended to what is known as the Falls of Kanawha, where they marked some trees with marking-irons on September 17th.

They returned to the Appomatox town on Sunday morning, October 1st. In 1674 Captain Botts made another tour through the same country. As early as 1715 Father Marmet, of Kankaskia, wrote to the governor of Canada that "the encroaching English were building forts on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers," and, though this is incorrect, it shows the presence of the English in the vicinity at that time. Governor Spotswood, of Virginia, made an effort as early as 1711, to resist the French encroachments, by attempting to establish the line of Virginia settlements far enough to the west to interrupt the contemplated chain of communication between Canada and the Gulf of Mexico." In 1719 Governor Keith urged upon the lords of trade the erection of a fort on Lake Erie. No settlement, however, had as yet been made in the territory embraced within the limits of Allegheny county, and little precise knowledge was had of that section of country. But a short time before the middle of the last century greater activity began to be manifested; land companies were formed, and adventurers began to look wistfully to the country immediately west of the mountains. But the mountains themselves presented a barrier to the progress of settlement.

Though not elevated, the land on their summit was not so well suited for agricultural purposes as that on the hills and in the valleys beyond; yet, unless the consent of the Indians could first be obtained and forts erected for the protection of the pioneers against the inconstant savages, it would be impossible to occupy the land, even granting that the formality of an extinction of the Indian claim had been effected, both on account of the rapacity of the whites and the reluctance with which the Indians saw their hunting grounds pass into the hands of the palefaces. Companies

might be formed and lands located, but no permanent settlement could be effected without protection.

The savages naturally enough tolerated the traders, from the need they had of them, and they were not slow on their part in perceiving the profit they could derive from trade with the simple, unsophisticated natives. They were, in fact, an early and natural outgrowth of the eastern colonies, and they penetrated the wilderness far in advance of the foremost settlements. Though paying little heed to the laws of either God or man, they did not wholly forget their allegiance to the nation that had fostered them, and they generally prepared the way for the more permanent settlers. The more adventurous of this class had already reached the lakes on the north and the Miami on the west.

The gradual occupation of the country east of the mountains seemed to have brought the time for the settlement of the territory west of them, and a number of land companies were formed about this date, the most important of which was the Ohio Company, organized in 1748 by Thomas Lee, President of the Virginia Assembly, Laurance and Arthur Washington, and ten other Virginians, who, with a Mr. Hanbury, of London, joined in a petition to the crown for the grant of an extensive tract of land in the Ohio valley. Their petition was favorably received, and they were granted five hundred thousand acres south of the Ohio, and between the Monongahela and Great Kanawha, with the further privilege of taking up lands also north of the Ohio. The company was not required to pay any quit rent for ten years, but was to select two-thirds of its territory at once, and at its own cost construct and garrison a fort. This was the first, and it may be said, the only company to take up lands in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Negotiations had already been commenced with the Indians for the two-fold purpose of preserving friendly relations and of obtaining permission to erect one or more forts on the Ohio for the protection of the traders and the

pioneers who might settle there. They would also serve as a check to the threatened encroachments of the French, till permanent possession could be gradually taken of the country. Ultimate possession, however, was the object in view, and the Indians were not slow to perceive it, and complain and threaten. These threats and complaints were frequent; and as the colonies were still weak while the power of the Indians was not as yet broken, it was of the utmost importance to preserve friendly relations. A number of treaties were held which can only be briefly referred to in a sketch like the present. The principal treaty was that held at Lancaster, the preliminaries of which were arranged by Conrad Weiser, the colonial interpreter of Pennsylvania, and who afterwards met the delegates of the Six Nations with the commissioners of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, June 22, 1744. The conference lasted twelve days; did little credit to the commissioners, who studied to keep the Indians constantly under the influence of intoxicating drinks, and the result was that, while they gained their point, they gave occasion for just and bitter complaints for years to come. But the occupation of the Ohio valley was still the desired object, and on the strength of the peace concluded at Lancaster, negotiations were carried on both by Pennsylvania and Virginia looking to that end.

The first person to meet the Indians on the Ohio as the representative of the colony of Pennsylvania was Conrad Weiser, who. was commissioned by the president of the Executive Council, in August, 1748, to treat with the Indians at Logstown. He was made the bearer of valuable presents, which had been previously promised them, and was instructed to ascertain most carefully the number and feeling of the several tribes towards the English and French, and all such other information as would be valuable to the colonial authorities. Having made all necessary preparations he set out, crossed the

Susquehanna, passed up the Juniata, and followed the Kittanning path till he came near the Allegheny, when he turned southwest and came to that river some twenty miles above its confluence with the Monongahela. On the 27th he arrived at the terminus of his journey, where he immediately set about the fulfillment of the task entrusted to him. His efforts were successful in strengthening the bonds of friendship between the tribes and the colony, and winning the former from their leaning toward the French. He set out on his return September 20th, and made a report of what he had accomplished. From that time communication with the Indians on the Ohio became frequent.

The French were not all this time idle spectators of the actions of the English. Claiming by right of discovery all the lands drained by the Mississippi and its tributaries, they fixed the limits of their possessions at the summit of the Allegheny mountains, and prepared to make good their claim by the erection of a line of fortifications that should extend from the St. Lawrence to the mouth of the Mississippi. It is not the intention in this place to discuss the claim made by some writers in favor of La Salle's discovery of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers in the winter of 1669-70; it is highly improbable, and the best authorities reject it. The better to become acquainted with the geography of the country, drive out the English traders, secure the attachment of the Indians and prepare the way for the erection of the contemplated line of fortifications, the governor of Canada dispatched Louis de Celoron, a captain of infantry, in the summer of 1749, with a detachment of soldiers and friendly Indians to make an excursion down the Allegheny and Ohio. His mission, as he acknowledges in the journal which he kept, was but partially successful; everywhere he found a strong feeling in favor of the English, and he was on more than one occasion in danger of being attacked, notwithstanding the

strength of the attachment under his command. The first symptoms of the struggle between the French and the English now began to manifest themselves, but the treatment of this part of our subject will be reserved for a future chapter.

George Croghan, with the interpreter Andrew Montour, was with the tribes at Logstown in December, 1749, where he learned that the French had been endeavoring, but without success, to win the natives to their cause. The Indians were at that time in favor of the English erecting a fort for the protection of their traders somewhere on the headwaters of the Ohio. Croghan was again with them as the bearer of presents from the Governor of Pennsylvania, in the early part of the following year. The half-breed Joncaire, the agent of the French, was there at the same time, but his overtures were contemptuously rejected by the Six Nations. But, though the Indians signified their desire to trade with the colonists, they gave it clearly to be understood that they were not disposed to part with their lands.

Measures having for their object the settling of families south of the Ohio were now inaugurated by the Ohio Company; as a preliminary to which they sent Christopher Gist, a noted adventurer, to explore the country. On the last day of October, 1750, he left the frontier of civilization, crossed the mountains by the Juniata and Kiskiminetas route, and came to Shaunopinstown; from which he proceeded to Logstown. But it is remarkable that, in doing so, he passed down the north side of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers behind what is now known as Monument Hill, in Allegheny City, and thus remained ignorant of the existence of the Monongahela river, which forms its junction with the Allegheny at that point. From Logstown he passed southwest, and after spending the winter in his explorations, returned to the representatives of the company in the early part of the following year. In the next

November he was again on an exploring expedition, but this time south of the Ohio and between the Monongahela and the Great Kanawha, in what was properly the land granted to the company in whose employ he then was.

In April, 1751, Croghan was once more at Logstown, where he obtained formal permission for the erection of a fort at or near the mouth of the Monongahela. This, from motives of economy, the Pennsylvania Assembly refused to undertake. In fact, each of the colonies sought to evade the burden of securing the valley of the Ohio, though all recognized the imperative necessity of doing so. The initiative at length devolved upon Virginia, whose charter claims placed the forks, which was the key to the Ohio valley, within her jurisdiction.

In the meantime the French were steadily pushing their claims, and the dexterity with which they were generally able to manage the Indians, as well as the important fact that they did not want to occupy the land, but only to hold dominion over it and monopolize the trade, enabled them to win the natives and do much toward turning them against the English, whom they never really loved, but whom they found it advantageous to trade with. The spring of 1753 saw the French busily engaged in carrying out their purpose of erecting a chain of forts through the West. Those at Presqu' Isle and Le Boeuf, in northwestern Pennsylvania, were built in the early part of the summer of this year. But before entering upon the important history of the struggle between the French and English for the possession of the rich valley of the Ohio, and the key to it, the site of the present City of Pittsburg, a hasty glance will be taken at the progress thus far made in planting settlements west of the mountains. Prior to the occupation of the forks by the French, the territory west of the Alleghenies had become familiar to the colonists, thanks to the land-grabbers, traders and other adventurers, and a small number of frontier cabins sent their curling smoke

towards the sky through the forest trees. Celoron informs us in the journal of his expedition, that he found an English trading house on the Allegheny some distance above the mouth of Oil Creek, and that of John Fraser, the gunsmith, at the mouth of French Creek. There were also several cabins in the vicinity of the forks, one standing at the present Sharpsburg, another at Emsworth, below Allegheny City, one in the neighborhood of Sewickley, besides others. The most important settlement, however, was that of Christopher Gist at the spot on the Chestnut Ridge now known as Dunbar's Camp, which consisted of about a dozen families. Such was the condition of the country embraced within the original limits of Allegheny county at the commencement of the French war, a contest of vast importance not only to the colonies but to the world.

CHAPTER II. CONTEST FOR THE POSSESSION OF THE OHIO VALLEY.

The rising mists of war alluded to at the close of the last chapter soon became threatening clouds which grew more dark at every moment. It is not the intention to enter into any lengthy account of the complications of European politics, or the circumstances that led to a declaration of war between France and England, so disastrous to the former in the loss of her possessions on this side of the waters, and scarcely less so for the latter in schooling her colonies to the art of war, removing by the destruction of the French power the only check she had on their dependence, and training a leader for them whose name is written on the brightest page of the world's history, the illustrious Washington.

By the treaty of Utrecht, signed April 11, 1713, England acquired large tracts of territory from the French in America; but by far the most important of these was that lying south of Lake Ontario, upon which the Six Nations lived, which also included a recognition of that famous confederation as English subjects. This grant not only curtailed the territory of the French, but also cut off all hope of a direct line of communication with the valley of the Mississippi, and left the route by way of the lakes open to attack. This concession made the English heirs of the Iroquois conquests in the West, an advantage of the first importance.

As yet, however, the English seemed indifferent to the possession of the interior. Their charters of the seaboard colonies granted the territory "from sea to sea," but separate in organization, and jealous of each other, as well as of the crown, their policy was narrowed and their