Welsh Place-Names
in Southeastern Pennsylvania

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THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF PENNSYLVANIA west of Philadelphia encompassing Montgomery, Delaware, and Chester counties is characterized by a large number of Welsh place-names. That names of this type should be found here is not unexpected in view of the early Welsh immigration to this area. What is surprising, however, is the fact that many of them originated long after Welsh immigration had ceased here and long after all Welsh tradition had died out. This is especially true of the Main Line section,[1] where Welsh names for communities, streets, houses, and estates became fashionable toward the end of the 19th century and where this fashion still persists today. Why an upsurge in the popularity of Welsh place-names occurred at such a late date needs explanation.

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[1] Originally the term *Main Line* designated the branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad which runs from Philadelphia to Paoli, intersecting parts of the three counties mentioned above. It then came to apply to the communities outside Philadelphia County which sprang up around the stations. Strictly speaking, therefore, it includes only the following communities listed in their order from Philadelphia: *Merion, Narberth, Wynnewood, Ardmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr, Rosemont, Villanova, Radnor, St. Davids, Wayne, Strafford, Devon, Berwyn. Daylesford,* and *Paoli.* Some other communities, not directly on the railroad, but adjoining others given here, have also long been considered part of the Main Line, such as *Bala, Cynwyd, Gladwyne,* and *Malvern.* Apparently the concept of the Main Line is expanding. I recently noted a real estate advertisement in which this term was applied to a new development in the vicinity of *Newtown Square,* Delaware Cty., about four miles south of the railroad. An interesting note in connection with the above-mentioned names is that some of them appear on the Main Line of the Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railroad in Southern Oklahoma. According to Tello J. d'Apéry, *Overbrook Farms: Its Historical Background, Growth, and Community Life* (Phila., 1936), p. 64, the records of the SFR show that on January 16, 1887, the Assistant Chief Engineer wrote to Thomas W. Jackson, then General Land Agent at Galveston, requesting him to furnish names for new stations. Mr. Jackson sent him the names *Wayne, Paoli, Wynnewood, Berwyn, Ardmore,* and *Overbrook* without any explanation as to their

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Part of this explanation can be found in the history of the early settlement of Pennsylvania and in the character of its first Welsh settlers.[2] Although founded by an Englishman, William Penn, primarily as a refuge for English Quakers, the new colony attracted as well a small group of Welshmen, who arrived in the New World shortly before Penn himself in 1682. Before emigration, their intent, based on a verbal agreement with Penn, was to found a settlement of their own to which they had already given the name *Welsh Barony*, where they could worship as they pleased, govern themselves in their own way, and where they could preserve their Welsh traditions and language. Some 50,000 acres west of the Schuylkill River had apparently been promised to them before their departure from Wales, and it was on this promise that their hope for an autonomous Welsh community within the commonwealth was based. Unfortunately, upon their arrival the apportionment of the land was such that their dream of a barony of their own became impractical and therefore never materialized. Despite the disappointment and the hardships of the early years, these first Welsh settlers were so successful in establishing their farms and so enthusiastic about their new home, that they were able to persuade others to join them. A second wave of Welsh immigration began at the end of the 17th century, but ceased completely by the end of the first quarter of the 18th century.

Although the quantity of the total Welsh migration was small, especially in comparison to that of the English and later of the Ger-

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origin. Since Mr. Jackson was a native of Pennsylvania, d'Apéry assumes and probably quite correctly that they were borrowed from the names given to stations along the PRR. *Overbrook*, incidentally, is also a station on the PRR, but is not included in the concept *Main Line* because it lies within the city limits.

[2] For detailed accounts of the Welsh immigration, of the areas settled by these people, and of the origins of the families which participated in the settling, see C. H. Browning, *Welsh Settlement of Pennsylvania* (Phila., 1912); T. A. Glenn, *Merion in the Welsh Tract* (Norristown, 1896), hereafter abbreviated *Glenn, MWT*; T. A. Glenn, *Welsh Founders of Pennsylvania*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1911–13); E. G. Alderfer, *The Montgomery County Story* (Norristown, 1951); H. G. Ashmead, *History of Delaware County* (Phila., 1884); J. S. Futhey and G. Cope, *History of Chester County* (Phila., 1881); G. Smith, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania* (Phila., 1862). The same sources also yield information on the Welsh place-names arising on the Main Line in the 19th century. A. Howard Espenshade, *Pennsylvania Place Names* (State College, Pa., 1925) includes many of the names discussed here, but details are lacking.

man migrations, its quality was a different matter. The Welsh who settled here at this time were not of the poor, uneducated class. For the most part they were men of money and position in their former homes. They were well educated, influential, and usually had enough means to acquire good-sized land holdings in the new colony. Freedom of worship and conviction were of utmost importance to them, and indeed it was for this reason alone that they could bring themselves to leave their native land. Most of these settlers were Quakers by faith; but Baptists — as well as members of the Church of England — also came, each group establishing its own places of worship. The impact of this small band of Welshmen upon the new colony was tremendous and cannot be overestimated. From the beginning they turned their attention to creating the new state and becoming the first lawyers, first physicians, and first statesmen of Pennsylvania. Development of their landholdings proceeded vigorously and without abatement, so that their prosperity in the New World continued. Attempts were made to preserve and to foster the Welsh language in the areas settled by these people, but because most of them were as much at home in English as in Welsh, civil and ecclesiastical business with their neighbors who spoke no Welsh was carried on in English. This was especially true of the Welsh residing in Haverford and Merion townships closer to Philadelphia. In the outlying areas such as Radnor and Gwynedd, the use of Welsh exclusively persisted for a somewhat longer time. As the Welsh migration declined and was superseded by waves of later English and German colonists, the Welsh language fell into disuse and, although it continued to be used in some areas for Church services until the Revolutionary War, it had virtually disappeared by the middle of the 18th century.

The land originally occupied by the Welsh, which was for a long time known as the *Welsh Tract*, included the following areas: Lower Merion and part of Upper Merion Townships in Montgomery County; Radnor and Haverford in Delaware County; and Tredyffrin, Whiteland, Willistown, Easttown, Goshen, and part of Westtown in Chester County. The Welsh who came in the second wave of immigration opened up new settlements at Gwynedd, Montgomery County, and in certain other sections of Chester County. The place-names listed below represent communities settled by these early Welsh immigrants within the territory outlined above. All of them,

with but three exception, are names transferred from Wales showing the place of origin of individual families or groups. Not all are of Celtic origin, but because even these were brought from Wales by Welsh settlers as a reminder of the former homeland, they will be considered Welsh within the context of this paper. On the other hand, place-names of Celtic origin brought to this area from English soil by English settlers do not enter the present discussion at all. Despite their etymologies, they belong rightfully to a study of English place-names of this region. The meanings of place-names transferred from Wales will not be discussed here. As names of communities in Pennsylvania, it is only of secondary importance, for example, that *Narberth* means "a slope abounding in bushes,"[3] that *Bala* is "an outlet, efflux,"[4] or that *Cynwyd*, meaning "primary evil, mischief," was derived from *Cynwyd ab Cynwydion*, once a powerful prince in Edeyrnion who spent the latter part of his life in a hermitage.[5] Meanings had nothing to do with their selection as place-names on this side of the Atlantic. They are, therefore, for the most part ignored here, except where they may clarify the name as used on Pennsylvania soil. It should be noted that three names dating from the early period of Welsh colonization (*Duffryn Mawr, Tredyffrin, Uwchlan*), originated here and were given to communities in outlying districts where the use of the Welsh language persisted for a longer period.

Duffryn Mawr, Chester County, is the former name of the present town of Green Tree, not far from Valley Forge. The name survives today only as a street name. In early documents the name appears occasionally as *Dyffryn Mawr*, which is the expected form. This is one of the few original Welsh names given to a settlement and means "Great Valley." Cf. W. *dyffryn*, probably derived from *dwfr* and *bryn* "hilly place through which water flows,"[6] and *mawr* "big." The area is situated on a hill overlooking the Great Chester Valley and the English translation of the name is reflected in the name of a now abandoned mill nearby whose buildings are still standing and whose name was *Great Valley Mills*. The town sacrificed its name in the late 19th century to railroad convenience.

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[3] J. B. Johnston, *Place Names of England and Wales* (London, 1915), p. 377.

[4] D. S. Evans, *Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Carmarthen, 1887–96), p. 429.

[5] T. Morgan, *Place Names of Wales*, 2nd ed. (Newport, Mon., 1912). p. 216.

[6] *Ibid*, p. 27.

Gwynedd, Montgomery County, appears as the name of two townships (*Upper* and *Lower Gwynedd*), an area settled toward the end of the 17th century by Welsh Quakers. This is the name used to designate North Wales, "The White Land" from W. *gwen* "white." The color white is said to have a symbolic, patriotic association of pure, beautiful, virgin land.[7] The English equivalent of Gwynedd, *North Wales*, was from the early period of the history of this region used to designate all of Gwynedd Township by its English inhabitants. Today the English designation persists, but is limited to the name of a borough within the township.

Haverford Township, Delaware County, is one of the first townships established in the Welsh Tract. It derives its name from *Haverford West* in Pembrokeshire, Wales, from which the early settlers had come. Because in early documents the name of the township appears sometimes as *Harford* and because this pronunciation persisted in the area for a long time, Glenn, the great historian of the Welsh Tract in Pennsylvania, believed that the form *Harford* was not a corruption of *Haverford*, but represented the common spelling of the day of the name *Hereford*, a county on the Welsh-English border. He suggests as a possible explanation for the difference between the two forms that at first some of the settlers had called their farms *Haverford* and that subsequently the entire township, originally called *Harford* (from *Hereford*) assumed the former name.[8] This explanation is unnecessary because I have found no basis for the assumption that individual farms had been given the name *Haverford*. Furthermore, a variant form *Harford* existed also for the original *Haverford West* in Wales.[9] If both *Haverford* and *Harford* existed side by side in Wales, it is reasonable to suppose that both forms were brought to the New World. The name itself is not of Celtic, but of Scandinavian origin.

Lampeter, Chester County, is a community established by Welsh Friends during the second wave of Welsh immigration at the beginning of the 18th century. The settlement took its name in honor of the place by the same name in Pembrokeshire. The name is not pure Welsh, but rather the anglicized version of the true Welsh *Llanbedr* "Church of Peter."[10]

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[7] H. M. Jenkins, *Historical Collections relating to Gwynedd* (Phila., 1884), p. 43–4.

[8] Glenn, *MWT*, footnote on bottom of pp. 39–40.

[9] Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 296.   [10] *Ibid.*, p. 355.

Merion, Montgomery County, was one of the first Welsh names to be given to the new settlements. Certainly it was one of the most popular of the Welsh names brought here and even today its popularity has not waned. Since many of the settlers came from *Merioneth*, Wales, it was natural enough for them to name the new township in honor of their former home. Today two townships exist with this name (*Upper* and *Lower Merion*). Around the old Merion Friends Meeting which still stands and functions, grew up a tiny village originally called *Merionville*, today simply *Merion*. The post office address for the community, however, is *Merion Station* (since the post office is located at the railroad station), in order to avoid confusion with another post office called *Merion* in the western part of the state.[11] Further away, to the north of Bryn Mawr, originally serving as a post office for Lower Merion Township and until very recently a small, sleepy country village, was *Merion Square*. This village was, however, to the apparent regret of its more traditionally minded inhabitants, renamed *Gladwyne* toward the end of the 19th century. The enclitic *-eth* seen in the Welsh form *Merioneth* never appeared in the name as it was used in Pennsylvania until very recently when a new apartment building in Wynnewood opened as *The Merioneth*.

Montgomery is found as the name of a county, as well as of a township and a town (*Montgomeryville*) within the same county. The names of the township and town were given by their Welsh settlers in honor of *Montgomeryshire*, Wales, a name of Norman origin. The county, however, established in 1784, was named for General Robert Montgomery. The county name was, needless to say, especially acceptable to the descendants of the Welsh settlers of this area.

Nantmeal, Chester County, settled about 1717, is applied to two townships, *East* and *West Nantmeal*, as well as to a community called *Nantmeal Village* located in the latter township. The correct spelling *Nantmel* appears in official records for the year 1722,[12]

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[11] Community names and names of their respective post offices do not always coincide on the Main Line. For example, residents of *Penn Valley* must have their mail addressed to *Gladwyne*, *Wynnewood*, or *Narberth*, depending upon the street address; residents of *Bala*, *Cynwyd*, or *Pencoyd* have mail addressed to *Bala-Cynwyd*. The distinction between the two types of names is confusing enough to the local inhabitant, but sometimes becomes a hopeless conundrum to the outsider.

[12] Futhey and Cope, *op.cit.*, p. 185.

but apparently the corrupted spelling became established not too long afterwards. The name itself is transferred from Radnorshire, Wales, from which the settlers had come. Its meaning (cf. W. *nant* "brook"; *mel* "honey") is reflected in the name of another township adjoining West Nantmeal, called *Honeybrook*.

Pencoyd, Montgomery County, is the name of an area along the Schuylkill River near the Falls on a line dividing Philadelphia from Montgomery counties. The area derives its name from the name of the farm held here originally by John Roberts, one of the leaders of the first group of Welsh settlers to arrive. The farm name in turn derives from the name of the Welsh estate of this family in Llyn, Caernavonshire, spelled variously as *Pencoed* or *Penkoed*.

Radnor Township, Delaware County, settled in 1683 by Welsh Quakers and one of the original townships in the Welsh Tract, was named for the shire in Wales from which the settlers had emigrated. The name, itself, however, is probably of Anglo-Saxon origin.[13]

St. Davids, Delaware County, is a community which takes its name from the Welsh Church of England organized here under a special charter by Penn in 1700. Strangely enough, although the members of this congregation all spoke and understood only Welsh originally (they made a special request for a Welsh speaking minister in 1701),[14] the name of the Church was from its beginning used only in its English form, though to be sure the patron saint of Wales is honored. It calls to mind the cathedral town of *St. Davids* in Wales.

Tredyffrin Township, Chester County, was, according to a tax list for 1722, known by its Welsh inhabitants as *Tre yr Dyffrin*,[15] i.e. "Town in the Valley," named for its location in the Great Chester Valley. As early as 1708, English settlers coming here attempted to translate this name as *Valleyton* or *Valley Town*, but the English name never gained any popularity and the township is known by its Welsh name to this day. Cf. W. *tre* "house, village, town" and *dyffryn* "water course, or valley through which a river takes its course."

Uwchlan, Chester County, is the name of two townships (*Uwchlan* and *Upper Uwchlan*) which were settled by Welsh Quakers in 1712.

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[13] Johnston, *op.cit.*, p. 410.

[14] H. Pleasants, *History of old St. David's Church* (Phila., 1907), p. 8—9.

[15] Futhey and Cope, *op.cit.*, p. 206.

There has apparently always been some vacillation in the spelling
of this name, older documents showing *Ywchlan* and *Youchland*.
The present official county map, however, spells the name as given
above. This is obviously a hybrid form, half Welsh, half English
and should be interpreted as "Upland" (cf. W. *uwch* "up"). In
tracing the history of the name in Pennsylvania, we find that
originally the entire area of what is today both Chester and Dela-
ware counties was one county called by the English who ad-
ministered it, *Upland*, The name was first recorded in 1648. Despite
its English appearance, the name is generally regarded as Swedish.
Since the Swedes had unsuccessfully attempted to settle along the
Delaware River before the coming of the English and since it is
known that many of these early Swedish settlers had come from
the Swedish province of *Upland* ("On the Land"),[16] it is not un-
likely, therefore, that one of their settlements along the river was
named in honor of the home they had left. However, in connection
with this name, it should not be overlooked that even earlier (in
1631) the Dutch had established in the same vicinity along the river
a fortified house which they called *Optlandt* ("On the Land"). This
tiny fortification was completely wiped out during the first winter
of its existence by an Indian attack and with its destruction ended
the first attempt to settle the western shore of the Delaware.
Whether or not the Dutch name had any influence upon the choice
of *Upland* as the name of the area cannot be established. At any
rate, when Penn arrived here in the latter part of 1682, it was
firmly established in English hands and the name *Upland* applied
not only to the settlement along the river (today's city of Chester),
but to all the land westward comprising today's Delaware and
Chester counties. Upon Penn's arrival, he caused the name *Upland*
to be changed to *Chester*. *Upland* survives today only as the name
of a borough just outside the city of Chester. Since the entire area
had been designated by the name *Upland* for so long, it was quite
natural for the Welsh who established themselves here in the early
18th century to use it as a name for their own settlement in a form
more familiar to them. Any connection of *Uwchlan* with the original
Swedish *Upland*, however, was completely broken at the end of
the 18th century when Chester County was divided in two, one part
retaining the name *Chester*, the other being named *Delaware*.

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[16] *Record of the Court at Upland*, ed. by E. Armstrong (Phila., 1959), p. 27.

These communities were, of course, not the only places in this part of Pennsylvania occupied by Welsh settlers during this period. Elsewhere, however, names of other origin were used to designate the new settlements and so will not be discussed here. The above list represents, therefore, only names of Welsh origin given to their new settlements by early Welsh settlers. They form a group quite separate from the later names of Welsh origin given to communities which developed in the wake of the railroad expansion.

All attempts to preserve the use of the Welsh language and Welsh customs in this part of Pennsylvania failed completely and it was not too long before the Welsh were completely absorbed culturally by their English neighbors. Nevertheless, the descendants of these early Welsh settlers continued to maintain the cultural and social leadership of their communities which their ancestors had initiated. Their Welsh ancestry, however, came to be thought of not in terms of Welsh tradition or Welsh heritage, but in terms of genealogy and geography. To trace the family tree back to Wales became in itself more important than continuing Welsh culture or the Welsh language. There were several reasons for this. Under ancient Welsh law, fines or other penalties could be levied upon even distant relatives of the guilty party, if he were unable to pay. This made it important for genealogies to be kept accurately. Moreover, depending upon ancestry, two quite distinct classes of Welshmen were recognized, those of pure Cymric stock, therefore of noble lineage, and those of the lower classes who did not have the necessary pedigree, or who were serfs. Class distinction, therefore, also required genealogical evidence. As stated above, the first Welsh immigrants to Penn's colony were people of means and education. It is not surprising, therefore, that they brought with them evidence of their ancestry, nor that genealogy continued to play an important role in the lives of their descendants despite cultural absorption by the English. This fact is reflected in the organization of the Welsh Society of Pennsylvania, established in 1798. The early secretaries of the Society had trouble with Welsh place-names (i.e., they no longer had any knowledge of the Welsh language). They took great pains to ascertain the Welsh ancestry of any member, but a quarter of a century elapsed before the Society's annual dinner, held on March 1st, took on the character of a celebration in honor of the patron saint of Wales, St. David. Of the Welsh language itself, not a

word appeared in the minutes of the Society for 70 years. The men who founded this society were wealthy and the society itself was small and exclusive, with a membership of about thirty. Non-English-speaking Welsh of the poorer classes, who came to the United States during the 19th century and who frequently stayed in Philadelphia for a time before moving to other parts of the country, were too poor to enter such a company. These, therefore, established their own St. David's Society in the early part of the 19th century.[17] This group had nothing in common with the descendants of the original Welsh settlers. Its members either moved on to other places or were completely absorbed by the surrounding population. The descendants of the early Welsh settlers, however, continued to maintain their influential position in this part of Pennsylvania and remained proud and conscious of their ancestry.

It was in the last quarter of the 19th century, at the time of the railroad expansion, that new Welsh place-names began to make their appearance. This was more than a century after all Welsh tradition had disappeared from the area. The designation of the stations with Welsh names along the lines built by the Pennsylvania Railroad was no accident. The man primarily responsible for what was to become the great fashion for this type of name was George E. Roberts, at that time president of the railroad company and a lineal descendant of one of the original Welsh families to settle here. Because of his personal interest in genealogies and in his own Welsh ancestry, he was instrumental in selecting Welsh names for the new stations along the railroad. The names chosen were either borrowed directly from Wales or had some other more indirect connection with that country. At the time of the building of the Schuylkill Valley branch of the railroad, he named two of its stations. The first, *Bala*, was named for his farm in that area, which in turn had been named for the town of *Bala* in Wales. The second adjoining station he named *Cynwyd* in honor of the town by the same name in Wales located not far from *Bala*. When the Main Line was built, stations were erected along the road to which names were given which also were borrowed directly from Wales. Thus *Narberth*, *Malvern*, and *Berwyn* came into being. Around these stations gradually grew up small villages which then assumed the names of the stations. *Wynnewood* received its name from the name of the farm (*Wynne*

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[17] A. H. Dodd, *Character of the Early Welsh Emigration to the United States* (Cardiff, 1953), pp. 32–3.

Wood) upon which the station was built, the farm having been named
in honor of *Thomas Wynne,* one of the first Welsh settlers, a phy-
sician, and prominent member of the first Legislative Assembly.
The village in this area, originally called *Libertyville,* soon assumed
the name of the station. The station of *Bryn Mawr* got its name from
a nearby estate of the same name owned by the Ellis family whose
family seat was at *Bryn Mawr* ("Great Hill") in Wales. The vicinity
which because of the large landholdings belonging to the Humphrey
family, descendants of the early Welsh settlers, had been called
Humphreyville, also lost its name and assumed that of the station.
Rosemont, while not of Celtic origin, should be considered one of
the place-names belonging to this group because it was borrowed
from the name of the nearby estate of *Rees Thomas,* another
descendant of one of the early Welsh settlers. When the North
Pennsylvania Railroad opened up in Gwynedd Township, the name
Penllyn was given to one of the stations around which a village grew
up assuming the same name. The name had its origin in the fact
that the locality was the home of *Edward Foulke* who had come to
Gwynedd in 1698 and who was a descendant of *Rhirid Flaidd, Lord
of Penllyn,* a 12th-century Welsh chieftain.[18]

One curious change of name occurred when the *Lower Merion
Post Office,* which served the village of *Merion Square,* changed its
name to *Gladwyne* in 1887. The change in the name of the post
office was necessary because the name *Merion* in various combina-
tions was used to designate other places in the vicinity, which
resulted in confusion in postal matters. The village of *Merion
Square,* thereupon, also changed its name to *Gladwyne.* The new
name was borrowed from a freight station, now no longer used, not
too far away on the Reading Railroad. Why the station had been
called *Gladwyne* is not clear, although it is supposed to have been
transferred from another defunct station elsewhere on the same
railroad.[19] Whatever the reason, the name was appropriate in view
of the growing fashion for Welsh names in the locality. The renaming

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[18] For the genealogy of this family, see Glenn, *MWT,* pp. 92—7.

[19] This information was supplied to me by John Nugent who a few years ago
wrote a series of popular articles for the *Main Line Times* on the origin of place-
names in this area. He informed me that an examination of the archives of the
Reading Railroad brought to light the fact that *Gladwyne* was originally the name of
one of its freight stations in Philadelphia. I was unable to obtain access to the rail-
road archives for confirmation of this statement.

of *Merion Square*, however, was not completely to the liking of all
its inhabitants and even today the issue has apparently not been
completely settled. An attempt in 1927 to change the name back
to the original one officially failed. A few years ago, however, a new
post office building and a shopping center were erected in the village,
and carved in stone above the door of the post office itself stands
the defiant inscription *Merion Square!*

At the time the railroad was building its line westward from
Philadelphia, the land through which the road ran was still for the
most part countryside. Gradually with the advent of easier transport-
ation, the farm land became consolidated into estates, villages grew
up, and toward the end of the 19th century the area began to take on
the character of the fashionable Philadelphia suburb it is today.
Not only did it contain the homes of the wealthy and socially elite,
but it became famous for the number and quality of the private
schools and institutions of higher learning which became established
here and of which Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges are the out-
standing examples. The Main Line came to represent not only
wealth and family background, but political conservatism and
cultural leadership as well, and its Welsh place-names acquired a
prestige which has not dimmed with the years.

In connection with the prestige attached to the Welsh place-
names of this area, it is interesting to note how a new community
founded in 1890 in the eastern part of Montgomery County, an
area which had never known Welsh settlers, by people who were
not Welsh, got its name *Bryn Athyn*. This community was establish-
ed as a center for the New Church (Swedenborgan) and is today
the site of a famous cathedral still in the process of being built in
the medieval manner. The name *Bryn Athyn* was intended to mean
"Hill of Cohesion" and, indeed, is always defined this way. The
following quotation from the Church Archives gives an account of
how the name came into being.

"When names were being discussed for the young community
then being formed at Alnick Grove, near Huntingdon Valley,
Penna., Bishop William F. Pendleton apparently was not satisfied
with any of the names suggested, as he wanted something with a
more significant meaning. Then in an informal conversation with
Mr. S. H. Hicks he mentioned his liking for Welsh names. Mr.
Hicks, who was of Welsh birth, then said, 'Bishop, I will buy a

Welsh dictionary, if you will look up a name.' This he did, and the Bishop who thought he would like something expressing the idea of unity, found the two words, *Bryn* for hill, and *Athyn* meaning tenacious or cohesive. Thus the name was formed which was finally adopted by a majority vote of the Society."[20]

Whether the Mr. Hicks mentioned here actually spoke Welsh is not clear at all from the account. It seems doubtful in view of the fact that he offered to buy a Welsh dictionary so that the Bishop could find a name with "significant meaning." There can be no doubt, however, that a Welsh name was thought highly desirable in imitation of the current fashion for such names along the Main Line, nor can there by any doubt that the community wished to reflect by its name the unity of purpose of the new religious settlement. Unfortunately, from the Welsh point of view, since *athyn* is an adjective, the name is really to be interpreted as "Clinging (tenacious) Hill," a meaning quite different from that which Bishop Pendleton had originally intended. The error, however, has not changed the fact that the name has a pleasant ring, nor has it altered in any way the dedication of the community to its religious tenets.

That Welsh names as a mark of social and cultural distinction are still fashionable along the Main Line today is demonstrated by the names such as *Chetwynd, Merioneth,* and even the pseudo-Welsh *Tedwyn,*[21] which were given to new apartment buildings erected here within the last few years. The fact that Welsh names are euphoneous — consisting of dissyllabic or trisyllabic forms, whose spellings are pleasing to the eye, although frequently challenging to the tongue — lend them a charm of which no one is unmindful and contributes greatly to their popularity. It should not be forgotten, however, that their popularity is primarily a modern phenomenon, arising as the result of the grafting of new place-names of Welsh origin on an older stock, under the influence of a small, select group whose pride in ancestry and leadership in community affairs left an indelible mark upon the local topography.

Bryn Mawr College

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[20] Quoted from a letter to me by Mary Alice Carswell, Librarian, Academy of the New Church, Bryn Athyn, Penna.

[21] For the builder's wife, *Ted,* with the suffix-*wyn* in imitation of place-names such as *Wynnewood, Wynnefield, Bal-Wyn* (a new development so named because of its location in the vicinity of *Bala* and *Wynnefield,* Philadelphia).