

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, April 24, 2017

England's Plans in America, 17th and 18th Centuries: For nearly 150 years leading up to American Independence in 1776, England's hierarchy had plans for North America. Until the accession of King George III to the throne in 1760, these were mostly very successful plans based on English law, enabling Great Britain to gain the upper hand over France and Spain in North America. Despite the fact that many American colonies were founded to escape religious persecution at home, they did not want to cut off ties with the mother country, and brisk trade and communication continued. Although accents varied, as they did in all parts of the British Empire, English was the common language.

Division of land varied somewhat from colony to colony and continued when these colonies became states after the American Revolution. All were divided into counties and then further divided. In New England and upstate New York, you are always in a town unless you are in a city. Farmers may be far from the town center, but they are in the town. In Pennsylvania, areas like this are called townships, which do not include any settlements larger than villages. Small and large towns are called boroughs and usually have a mayor and town council. Until about 50 years ago, Pennsylvania did not have mayors except in the cities; boroughs were headed by an elected burgess and a borough council. Townships do not include boroughs. Boroughs are part of the county but not of the township. They elect supervisors, tax collectors, etc., and are responsible for greatly varying residents' services, often including public roads.

In nearby Pennsylvania, examples are as follows. Across the state line, only 3/10 of a mile from Auburn Heights, we are bounded by Kennett Township of Chester County. Kennett Square is a borough geographically in the middle of this township, but the governing bodies are separate. Villages in the township are places such as Mendenhall, Hamorton, and Rosedale. Just to the west is New Garden Township. A borough surrounded by this township is Avondale. Villages too small to be boroughs are Landenberg and Toughkenamon. In southern Chester County, in addition to Kennett Square, boroughs are Avondale (the smallest), West Grove, and Oxford. West Chester, in the eastern part of Chester County, is the county seat. When I studied populations, heavy industry ruled the land, and both Phoenixville and Coatesville, both in Chester County, were larger than West Chester.

Delaware also followed English practice in land division but was different from Pennsylvania. Originally William Penn's "Three Lower Counties on the Delaware," it officially broke away from Pennsylvania only three weeks before the Declaration of Independence was signed. Small towns in Delaware have mayors, but townships do not exist. Instead, each county is divided into hundreds, a practice used in England. Today, Delaware's hundreds have no government and are used mainly to describe land deeds and legal papers. Yorklyn is partly in Christiana Hundred and partly in Mill Creek Hundred, divided by Red Clay Creek. Sometimes this boundary has determined electoral districts, and sometimes it dictated which public school a student would attend, but there is no "hundred" government. None of the urban-sprawl communities around Yorklyn have a town government. Hockessin, Greenville, and Centreville are taxed and serviced only by New Castle County and the State of Delaware.

Counties in Pennsylvania are run by commissioners who have offices in the county seat. I'm not sure how many there are; a few years ago, Chester County had only three. In Delaware, a very old-fashioned Levy Court system was in place in New Castle County until 1966, with three elected Levy Court Commissioners, one of whom would be selected as president. It was replaced by a County Executive and County Council (as the legislative branch), which had a president and about six elected members. In Delaware's lower counties, the Levy Court system lasted even longer.

I never wanted to get into politics, but I've known a few politicians. Burgesses (and mayors) of Kennett Square were George B. Scarlett, C. Gilbert Hazlett, Walter M. Grace, Warrington Guthrie, Leon Spencer Jr. (and several more). Scarlett had a responsible job with NVF in Kennett and was for many years in the State Senate at Harrisburg. Grace was a Justice of the Peace and could survey much of what was going on in the borough from his second-floor courtroom at State and Union Streets. Spencer was a graduate of Muskingum College at New Concord, Ohio, also the alma mater of Astronaut John Glenn. Both Scarlett and Grace were trapshooters, and I shot with the latter often

prior to his untimely death in 1951. He was captain of the Yorklyn Team in the Maryland-Delaware Trapshooters' League in 1947.

Since we live in a small state, it's easy to have contact with the governor. Starting with Walter W. Bacon (1941-1949), the only Delaware Governor I haven't met is Senator Tom Carper (1993-2001), although I've seen him and heard him speak. The others have been Elbert N. Carvel (1949-1953 and 1961-1965), J. Caleb Boggs (1953-1961), Charles L. Terry (1965-1969), Russell W. Peterson (1969-1973), Sherman W. Tribbitt (1973-1977), Pierre S. duPont, IV (1977-1985), Michael N. Castle (1985-1993), Ruth Ann Minner (2001-2009), Jack Markell (2009-2017), and John Carney (2017-). Carvel, Boggs, Peterson, Minner, and Markell have visited Auburn Heights.

Since the English were in charge first, the large immigrations of the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, creating a great melting pot called the United States, have not affected our systems of government and land divisions, copied from earlier government practices in Great Britain.