



On November 10, 1723 a deed was recorded affirming the sale of 300 acres by Simon Hadley to Thomas John. These 300 acres included Harrogate or what was to become Harrogate. Thomas also had previously purchased a lot from William Penn, Jr.

### A Plethora of Thomas Johns

Sorting out the multiple Thomas Johns who lived at this time was a challenge. In my research, I found that the multiples shared a common heritage in Wales. So I made an assumption that our Thomas was Welsh. This is a fair assumption, I believe, as his heirs lived in the Welsh Tract in Pencader Hundred in New Castle County.

In 1681 William Penn Sr. sold land in Pennsylvania to Welsh Quakers. Penn sold in lots of 5000 acres to an individual who formed a “company” and resold the land in small lots to individual Quakers. The large areas were called Welsh Tracts. The first Welsh Tracts were in Upper and Lower Marion, Haverford, Radnor, Tredyffrin, Whiteland, Willistown, Goshen, East Town and part of West Town.

Early in the eighteenth century, Penn granted David Evans and William Davis 30,000 acres of land to be divided and deeded to settlers from South Wales. Some of these immigrants had already settled in Radnor township in Chester County. Again this land mass was known as the Welsh tract and was located partly in Pencader Hundred, NCC and Cecil County, Maryland. These new inhabitants established the Welsh Tract Baptist Meeting and the Welsh Tract Presbyterian Meeting. Due to disagreements over faith, some Quakers had parted from their Quaker churches and had become Baptists or Presbyterians.

In Wales, from ancient times, the Welsh used a patronymic naming system. This was no longer used from the 15th century onwards. But some Welsh still used the old system. In this system the male child uses the first name of his father as surname, usually separated by “ap”. So John Evans son, Thomas, would be named Thomas John or Thomas ap John, the ap disappearing over time.

There is a profusion of Thomas Johns among the Welsh. Our Thomas John may have been the son of John Evans of Radnor Township. Thomas had a survey done for 600 acres in New Castle County which I think was adjacent to Simon Hadley’s land. On an early schematic drawing of the

lands bought from William Penn, Jr. is a lot belonging to Thomas John. There is also a record of a Thomas John arriving in Pennsylvania in 1701 with the annotation that this record is a list of Welsh immigrants to Pennsylvania, 1701-1713, who were founders of a colony in Delaware.

We find Thomas in the tax lists of 1721 and 1722 listed as a landholder from New Garden Township. His wife was named Mary and she was a member of the Welsh Tract Baptist church. Thomas John died prior to 1746 (possibly in 1741). Thomas John had left his property to (wait for it) John and Mary Thomas, Nathaniel and Elizabeth Evans, Hannah John, and Jacob John. I have not been able to determine how the heirs were related to Thomas John. In 1746 they decided to sell the property to Jacob John.

### And then Disaster

Things seemed to go well for Jacob John. We find him on the tax lists from 1747 to 1764. He was granted £500 for in William Rowan’s will in November 1757 to guarantee the payment of Rowan’s debts. In July of 1752 he was witness to Benjamin Fredd’s will, who was a neighbor.

But all good things sometimes come to an end and in 1764 as advertised in the September 13, 1764 edition of the Pennsylvania Gazette, his land was seized by John Fairlamb, the Sheriff of Chester County, in execution of a suit by Isaac Jones.

I could not find a record of the nature of the suit and came upon no information about Isaac Jones. If I have located the same Jacob John in the records of the Welsh Tract Baptist Church, Jacob was in difficulty with them in January 1766. He was either sanctioned or disowned by the church for “breaking his covenant with the church by neglecting his place and it for a long time: 1. His immoral life by drinking to excess to the hurt of his family and 2. Great reason to fear he has been guilty of speaking untruths.”

Jacob John’s property was bought at the sheriff’s sale by Isaac Allen, who we will meet in next month’s column. By the time of the sheriff’s sale, Nathaniel Evans had died (1762 and is buried in Pencader Cemetery) and his wife Elizabeth had re-married and was the wife of John Singleton. They lived in White Clay Hundred, New Castle County. Hannah John had married a Mr. Hughes.