



*“The best Country for
 working folk & tradesmen
 of any in the world.”*

Two Irish Settlers in America

1720s-1740s

In 1790 Irish colonists and their descendants made up one fourth of the white settlers in Pennsylvania, and substantial minorities in other colonies. Among them were ROBERT PARKE, a well-to-do Quaker from Dublin, and FRANCIS CAMPLE, a Catholic from northern Ireland. Both wrote accounts of their new lives in America.



A Map of the British Plantations on the Continent of America, 1738, detail. Many Irish and Scots-Irish immigrants settled in Pennsylvania in the 1700s, in the farmland west of Philadelphia.

Robert Parke, an Irish Quaker in Pennsylvania

Letter to Mary & Thomas Valentine, his sister & brother-in-law in Ireland, October 1725

Parke emigrated with his parents and several siblings in 1724 and soon purchased land near Philadelphia. In a letter to relatives back in Ireland, he dispels the rumor that they were not "Satisfied in Coming here, which was utterly False" and encourages them to come to America, "it being the best Country for working folk & tradesmen of any in the world."

Dear Sister
 Mary Valentine

This goes with a Salutation of Love to thee, Brother Thomas & the children & in a word to all friends, Relations & well Wishers in Generall as if named, hoping it may find you all in Good Health, as I with all our family in Generall are in at this present writing, & has been Since our Arival, for we have not had a days Sickness in the family Since we Came in to the Country, Blessed be god for it, my fater in Particular has not had his health better these ten years than since he Came here his Ancient age considered. Our Irish Acquaintance in general are well Except Tho Lightfoot who Departed this Life at Darby in a Good old age about 4 weeks Since Thee writes in thy Letter that there was a talk went back to Ireland that we were not Satisfyed in Coming here, which was Utterly false; now let this Suffice to Convince you, In the first place he that carried back this Story was an Idle fellow, & one of our Ship-Mates, but not thinking this Country Suitable to his Idleness; went back with Cowman again he is a Sort of a Lawyer, or Rather a Lyar as I may term him therefore I wod not have you give Credit to Such false reports for the future, for there is not one of the family by what likes the Country very well and Wod If we were in Ireland again Come here Directly it being the best Country for working folk & tradesmen of any in the world, but for Drunkards & Idlers, they Cannot live well any where it is like to be an Extrardin<ary> Country; We were all much troubled when we found you did not Come in with Cap^t Cowman as Expected nor none of our acquaintance Except Isaac Jackson & his family tho,

at first Coming in one thinks it Something odd but that is Soon over, Land Is all of Prices Even from ten Pounds; to one hundred pounds a hundred, according to the goodness or else the Scituation therof, & Grows dearer every year by Reason of Vast Quantities of People that Come here yearly from Several Parts of the world, therefore thee & thy family or any that I wish well, I wod desire to make what Speed you can to Come here the Sooner the better, we have traveled over a Pretty deal of this country to Seek for Land, & (tho) we met with many fine Tracts of Land here & there in the Country, yet my father being Curious & somewhat hard to Please Did not buy any Land until the Second day of the 10th mo: Last and then he bought a Tract of Land Consisting of five hundred Acres for which he gave 350 pounds, it is Excellent good land but non Cleared Except about 20 Acres, with a Small log house, & Orchard Planted, we are going to Clear some of it Directly, for our next Sumer fallow we might have bought Land much Cheaper but not so much to our Satisfaction, We stayed in Chester 3 months & then we Rented a Place 2 mile from Chester, with a good brick house & 200 Acres of Land for 1 pound a year where we continue till next may we have Sowed about 200 Acres of wheat & 7 acres of rye, this Season we Sowed but a bushel an acre 3 pecks is Enough on new ground I am grown an Experienced Plowman & my brother abell is Learning, Jonath<an> & thy Son John drives for us he is grown a Lusty fellow Since thou Saw him we have the finest plows that can be, We plow up our Summers fallows in may & June, with a Yoak of Oxen & 2 horses & the<y> goe with as much Ease as Double the number in Ireland, We plow & like wise Sows our wheat with 2 horses, a boy of 12 or 14 years old Can hold Plow here, a man Comonly hold<s> and Drives himself, they Plow an Acre, nay Some Plows 2 Acres a day, they Sow wheat & Rye in August or September. We have had a Crop of oates, barley & very good flax & hemp Indian Planted a bushel of white Potatoes Which Cost us 5 shill^s & we had 10 to 12 bushels In Crease this Country yields Extrardinary Increase of all Sorts of Grain Likewise for Nicholas hopper had of 3 acres of Land & at most 3 bushels of Seed Above 80 bushels Increase, so that it is as Plentiful a country as any Can be if people will be Industrious, wheat is 4 Shill^s a bushell, Rye 2^s: 9^d oats 2^s: 3 pence, barley 3 Shill^s, Indian Corn 2 Shill^s all Strike measure, Beef is 2 a pound Sometimes more & Sometimes less, mutton 2 1/2, Pork 2 1/2 [] pound Turnips 13 pence a bushel heap'd measure, & so Plenty that an acre Produceth 200 bushels, all Sorts of provisions are Extrardinary Plenty in Philadelphia market where Country people bring in their Comodoties their Markets are on the 4th days and the 7th days this country Abounds in fruit Scarce an house but has an Aple, Peach, & Cherry Orchard, as for Chesnuts, Wallnuts & hazel nuts Strawberrys, Billberrys & Mulberrys they grow wild in the woods & fields in Vast Quantities, they also make great Preparations against harvest, both Roast & boyled, Cakes & Tarts & Rum, Stand at the Lands End, so that they may Eat & Drink at Pleasure, a Reaper has 2 shill^s & 3 pence a day, a mower has 2 Shill^s & 6 pence & a Pint of Rum beside meat & Drink of the best, for no workman works without their Victuals in the bargain throughout the Country, a Labouring man has 18 or 20 pence a day in Winter, the winters are not so Cold as we Expected nor the Summers so Extreme hot as formerly, for both Summer & Winter are moderater than ever they were known, in Summer time they wear nothing but a Shirt & Linnen Drawers & Trowsers which are breeches & Stockings all in one made of Linnen they are fine Cool wear in Summer, as to what thee writt about the Governours Opening Letters it is Utterly false & nothing but a Lye & any one Except <a> bound Servantt may go out of the Country when they will & Servants when they Serve their time may Come away If they please but it is Rare that any are such fools as to leave the Country Except mens business Require it, they pay 9 Pounds for their Passage (of this mony) to go to Ireland there is 2 fairs yearly & 2 markets weekly in Philadelphia also 2 fairs yearly in Chester & Likewise in Newcastle, but they Sell no Cattle nor horses nor no Living Creatures but altogether Merchants Goods, as hatts, Linnen & woolen Cloth, handkerchiefs, knives, Scizars, tapes & treds buckles, Ribonds & all Sorts of Necessarys fit for our wooden Country & here all young men and women that wants wives or husbands may be Supplied. Lett this suffice for our fairs As for [Quaker] meetings they are so plenty one may ride to their choice of 10 or a Dozen in 6 morning I desire thee to bring or Send me a bottle of good Olye fit for guns, thee may buy it in Dublin, Martha weanhouse Lives very well about 4 mile from

“Vast Quantities of People that Come here yearly from Several Parts of the world”

James Lindlys we Live all together Since we Came into the Country Except hugh Hoaker & his family who Lives 6 or 7 mile from us & follows his trade Sister Rebecka was Delivered of a Daughter y^e < . . . > day 11 month Last past its name is mary Abels wife had a young son 12 months Since his name is Thomas; Dear Sister I wod not have thee Doubt the truth of what [I] write, for I know it to be true tho I have not been Long here I wod have you [c]loath your selves very well with Woolen & Linnen, Shoes & Stockings, & hats, for

“Dear Sister I wod not have thee Doubt the truth of what [I] write, for I know it to be true tho I have not been Long here”

Such things are dear [expensive] here, & yet a man will Sooner Earn a Suit of Cloths here than in Ireland, by Reason workmens Labour is So dear, A wool hat costs 7 Shill^s, a pair of mens Shoes 7 Shill^s, wemens Shoes Cost 5 Shill^s & 6 pence, a pair of mens Stocking yarn costs 4 Shill^s feather beds are very dear here and not to be had for money. Gunpowder is 2 Shill^s & 6 pence a pound Shott & Lead 5 pence a pound, I wod have you to bring for your own use 2 or 3 good falling Axes, a pair of beetlerings & 3 Iron wedges, for they are of good Service here, your Plow Irons will not answer here, therefore you had better bring 1 or 2 hundred of Iron you may bring your Plow Chains as they are < . . . > also a good [awnd] Iron There other Letters going to that gives you an Accompt what to bring into the Country & also for your Sea Store or else I should not omitt it but besure you come with Cap^t Cowman & you will be well Used for he is as honest a man & has as Civill Saylor as any that Cross the Seas which I know by Experie[nce] the Ship has been weather bound Since before Chirstmass by reason of frost & Ice that floats about in the River & the Saylor [being] at a Loo[se E]nd came down to C[hester] to See us [&] we have given them < . . . > Dear Sister I desire thee may tell my old friend Samuel Thornton that if he could give so much Credit to my words, & find no Iffs nor ands in my Letter, that in Plain terms, he could not do better than Come here, for both his & his wife’s trade are Very good here, the best way for him to do is to pay what mony he Can Conveniently Spare at that Side & Engage himself to Pay the rest at this Side & when he Comes here if he Can get no friend to lay down the mony for him, when it Comes to the worst, he may hire out 2 or 3 of <his> Children, & I wod have him Cloath his family as well as his Small Ability will allow, thee may tell him what things are Proper to bring with him both for his Sea Store & for his Use in this Country I wod have him Procure 3 or 4 Lusty Servants & agree to pay their passage at this Side, he might sell 2 & pay the others passage with the mony, I fear my good will to him with be of Little Effect by reason he is So hard of belief, but thou mayest Assure him from me that if I had not a Particular Respect for him & his family I Should not have writ so much for his Encouragement, his brother Joseph & Moses Coats Came to See us Since we came here they live about 6 or 7 miles apart & above 20 from where we live, Unkle James Lindly & family is well & T[h]rives exceedingly, he has 11 Children & Reap’d last harvest about 800 bushels of wheat, he is as triving a man as any where he lives, he has a thousand Acres of Land, A fine Estate, Unkle Nicholas hopper lives very well he rents a Plantation & teaches Scool & his man martin hobson dos his Plantation work Dear Sister I think I have writ the most needful to thee, but Considering that when I was in Ireland, I never thought a Letter to<o> Long that Came from this Country, I wod willingly give thee as full an Account as Possible, tho I Could have given thee a fuller Accompt of what things were fit to bring here, but only I knew other Letters might Suffice in that point, I desire thee may Send or bring me 2 hundred Choice Quils for my own Use for they are very Scarce here, & Sister Raichell Desires thee wod bring hir Some bits of Silk for trashbags thee may buy them in Johns Lane also 6 yards of white Mode or Silk for 2 hoods & She will Pay thee when thee Comes here, I wod have brother Thomas to bring a good new Saddle with a Crooper & housin to it by reason the horses sweat in hot weather for they are very dear here A Saddle that will cost 18 or 20 Shill^s in Ireland, will cost 50 Shill^s or 3 pounds & not so good Neither he had better get Charls Howell to make it Lett the tree be well Plated & Indifferent Narrow for the horses here are not So large as in Ireland but the best drawers & finest Pacers in the World I have known Several that could Pace 14 or 15 miles in a hour I write within Compass, as for womens Saddles, they will not Suit so well here, I wod not have thee think much at my Irregular way of writing by reason I writt as it offerd to me, for they that write to you should have more witt than I can Pretend to< . . . >

Francis Cample

An Irish Catholic in Pennsylvania

Journal, 1737-1742

EXCERPTS

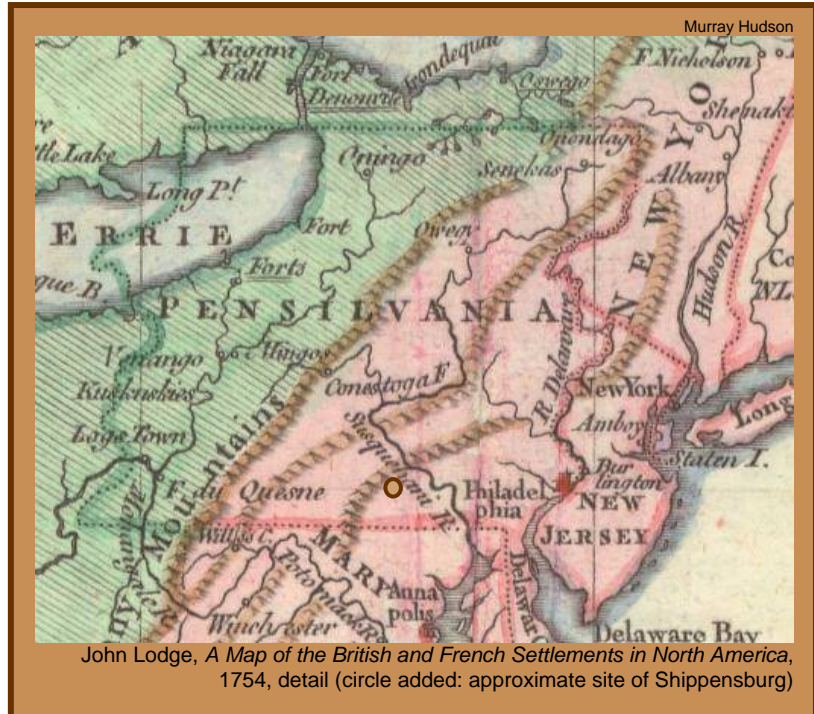
Francis Cample emigrated in 1734 from Dublin, Ireland, and became a successful merchant, farmer, and land agent in the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania. In these selections from his lively journal, he describes the creation of the town Shippensburg.

September 14th, 1737. I came here ten days ago, not as a matter of necessity, but as a matter of choice, and I find the country all that my friend, Mr. Shippen, represented it to be. . . .¹ It is

not the grandeur of rocks, cascades and romantic glens, but it is the beautiful panorama of forest and plain spread out in all their beauty which meets you everywhere, and which will, at no very far distant day, become the happy home of intelligent, God-fearing people, when the savage shall have passed forever from its borders. This is the kind of grandeur which surrounds me, and this is what attracted me hither. New settlers are arriving here weekly, most of them have scattered out and settled along the streams and in the woodlands. They are generally a hardy, industrious, intelligent and pious people, who are well fitted to endure the privations and overcome the difficulties that must ever be encountered in the formation of a new settlement. The entire people of this settlement is of Irish origin and Presbyterian in faith. I have been told by some of the first settlers that there is not a single family here who are not natives of the Province of Ulster.

April 10th, 1738. We have a little hamlet here of a few houses, in one of which I live and keep a little stock of goods for sale. Some of my time, however, is occupied in surveying, and in other duties. If my employments are not very lucrative, they are healthful; with this, and the blessings of God, I shall be happy. James McCall, to-day, in sinking the well in front of his house, deeper, he struck a fine stream of good water, which will be of great advantage to us all. Mr. John Reynolds this morning proposed selling me a portion of his plantation, lying south-east of our little hamlet; but whilst there is still so much land in the hands of the Penns, which can be had without paying a profit to a first purchaser, it would be a mistaken policy to buy his.

June 4th, 1740. Our settlement is increasing rapidly, and our village, which has been named Shippensburg, has several substantial houses in it. The stone house of Samuel Perry, in which the Widow Piper now keeps tavern, together with that of Daniel Duncan, just finished, are both good substantial two-story houses. The stong house at the Branch, built by Samuel Rilppey, two years ago, is also a very fine house. In addition this Mr. R<ippey> is not erecting along the Branch, a few rods below his house, a large, square, stong building for a distillery. These, with the two-story, log houses which have recently been erected, lead us to believe that we shall have, ere long, a town of some importance.



John Lodge, *A Map of the British and French Settlements in North America*, 1754, detail (circle added: approximate site of Shippensburg)

¹ Ellipses in Miller et al. edition.

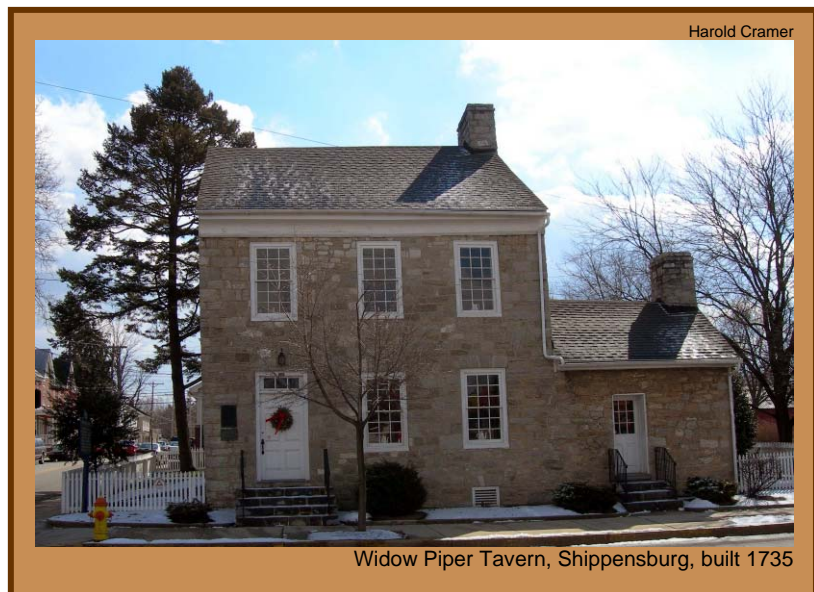
Oct. 10th, 1740. The building of our little fort, and the digging of the well within its enclosure, has been a good work. Had it not been for the recent killing of young Alex[ande]r Askew, near to where Robert McNinnis was shot seven years ago, the friendship of the Indians might not have been suspected, and this very necessary work might have been postponed until a more serious calamity would have overtaken us. I have no confidence in the friendship of these savages, and have always felt that we have been warming a viper which will some day show us its fangs. Our only safety, in my opinion, depends wholly upon our vigilance and the preparation we make in our defence. A portion of Fishburn's Brewery was damaged by fire to-day.

May 1st, 1741. Mr. Shippen has written to me that he intends soon to lay out his town, which he intends naming Shippensburgh or Shippenstown, by both of which names it has already been called. Whether it will be laid out in the direction of the Spring, or whether it will follow the crooked path made by the Indians, now the road, he has not stated, and probably will not know himself until he comes to make the survey. I sold to-day, to Richard Long for £6 16s[hillings], the heavy pine logs I bought from Mr. Shippen, and cut along the run east of us with which I had intended building a house. With these logs Mr. Long will build a large, two-story house. This afternoon we had one of the most terrific thunder storms it has ever been my lot to witness.

Several trees in the vicinity were stuck with lightening, and the rain fell in torrents, flooding the low lands around us. The woods from the foot of the hill east of us, to the hill beyond, is now one sheet of water; and the flat below the Spring on the west is impassable. Mrs. Jean Morrow died this morning, after 86 years.

December 20th, 1741. I this day completed the survey of the road leading from the Widow Piper's tavern, through the woods, past Cessna's plantation. This is a continuation of the road which I surveyed from a point beyond the church on Middle Spring, past Andrew Culbertson's, into the village, opposite the said tavern. A severe and disgraceful fight took place today, at William Reynolds' tavern, between Neil McLean and John McCall, in which both were badly injured. Both are stout men, and are disposed to be quarrelsome when under the influence of liquor, which is too often the case. David Magaw was badly injured yesterday by a kick from his horse, but I think he is not dangerously or fatally injured. A number of families arrived here yesterday from Ireland, most of whom are from Antrim and Derry; one is from Down. Two of these families are named McCullough, two Thompson, one McConnell, one McNair, one Maxwell, one Jenkins, and one Linn. Last week a man, with his family, named McComb, a brother of High Rippey's wife, arrived from the county of Fermanaugh. These families

“it is the beautiful panorama of forest and plain spread out in all their beauty which meets you everywhere, and which will, at no very far distant day, become the happy home of intelligent, God-fearing people, when the savage shall have passed forever from its borders. This is the kind of grandeur which surrounds me, and this is what attracted me hither.”



form a total of about sixty persons. Andrew Gibson, who has taught school during the Summer season, for the past four or five years, in McCall's barn, died last night, aged about 40 years. Governor Thomas, in company with some other Colonial officials, paid our village a visit last week, and remained over night at the Widow Piper's tavern. Were I permitted to express an opinion of those who occupy high official positions, I would say that there is something rather too stately in the Governor's manner and bearing — something which smacks too much of the tyrant — to make him popular with the people. It may not be just to form an opinion of a man, based upon an acquaintance of but a single evening; and yet I have found that first impressions are seldom wrong. Our fort has not been occupied since the Governor ordered the withdrawal of the soldiers from it last Spring. Yesterday we put Thomas Edmonson and his family into it to take care of it. His wife is a careful woman, and he, when sober, is trustworthy and reliable. Throughout the day he has been drinking too much, and is somewhat jolly, and has christened his new home Fort Edmonson. When returning home from surveying, we met two wolves in the woods not half a mile from the village. At first they did not appear to be much alarmed; but when they found we were advancing toward them, they struck eastward, growling.

March 10th, 1742. A quarrel occurred last night out at the Spring amongst a party of drunken Indians, during which, four of their cabins were set on fire, and burned to the ground. One of the Indians, named Bright Star, a desperate man, was seriously injured in the fight, and will likely die of his wounds. I saw him not an hour ago, and considered him then in a dying condition. These savages will give us trouble yet.

“The entire people of this settlement is of Irish origin and Presbyterian in faith. I have been told by some of the first settlers that there is not a single family here who are not natives of the Province of Ulster.”