



# 2 1992

## Who Were The Pioneers Of Bedford County Who Became Americans In The Revolutionary War?

As members of the Blair County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, most of us have ties to the settlers of the region which was erected as the eastern half of Bedford County in the year 1771 (*i.e.* encompassing the present-day counties of Bedford, Blair, Huntingdon and Fulton). This article will look at those settlers who became, through the Revolutionary War, the first *Americans* (as defined by their allegiance to the newly formed United States of America).

National identity (and patriotism to that national identity) is not something that is just based on a shared language, racial features or religious viewpoints. National identity is more deeply rooted in the common goals and ideals of the people. If the people possess the same ideals they will stand together and defend those ideals whether or not they are of the same race or religion; they become a *nation* through the process of identifying one with another. A national identity came to exist in the hearts and souls of the men and women who had emigrated from Europe to reside in the New World. That national identity was one of a desire for independence from European dominance and dependence on their own abilities to survive in the New World. The desire for self-government was encouraged by the various acts of the Parliament of Great Britain which aimed at stifling the growth of America's mercantile system. Even those individuals who were not directly involved in the merchant and trading industry were affected by the restrictive measures levied by the British Parliament. And so, without any conscious effort, the American national identity formed and matured.

As noted above, national identity is not based solely on physical characteristics of race or solely on psychological characteristics of theology. The Native Americans who inhabited this land before the coming of the Europeans had more than one national identity, even though they possessed many physical characteristics of race in common with each other. The Europeans, on the other hand, varied in national identities ranging from the Germans to the Italians to the British, and so forth, although they all possessed similar viewpoints derived from the same Christian Church. The thing which separated each European *nation* from her sister, and each Indian *nation* from her sister was the ideals and goals that each nation's members possessed in common. The fact that one Bedford County settler spoke English while his neighbor spoke German was of little consequence; they were both becoming Americans through their life experience - through the developing national identity.

The title of this article asks a question: Who were the pioneers of Bedford County who became Americans in the Revolutionary War? Another way of stating this question would be: Who were the early Bedford County settlers who empathized with the national identity that was developing in the colonial period and would result in the War for American Independence?

The First Census of the United States, taken in 1790, gives us clues as to the ethnic origins of the settlers at that time. The names recorded for the region reveal that English residents made up only about seventeen percent of the total population. The Welsh made up roughly seven percent while thirteen percent were Scotch. The Irish elements, combined, made up fourteen percent. These "Irish elements" included the Ulster-Scots, English-Irish and Ulster-Celts. The Germans comprised roughly thirty-two percent of the Bedford County population. The remaining seventeen percent was made up of various other Europeans such as the French and Dutch.

It is a generally accepted notion that the Revolutionary War was fought between the *English* natives of Great Britain and the *English* colonists. In many of the colonies that might have been correct and factual, but for the Bedford County region it was not totally accurate. As seen in the above figures, the Bedford County region was more German in ethnic make-up than English. The same is true of some of the eastern counties of Pennsylvania, most notably York and Lancaster. The fact of the matter is that each of those counties contributed a large number of recruits (especially German recruits) to the Patriot army.

The question might be asked: Why, if the majority of settlers in the Bedford County region were of German origin, did so many of them join in the Patriot struggle? I think the answer lies in the idea of national identity. Despite where they had come from, despite their language differences and their physical features, and despite their previous allegiances and loyalties, those early settlers held bonds of goals and ideals in common. The English and the Germans and the Irish, along with everyone else, experienced the same hardships and the same joys of frontier life, and because of that they understood what was necessary and essential for their survival - their mutual survival. It wasn't a case of the German settlers in the Bedford County region who joined the militia and the Continental Line fighting alongside English settlers; they were fighting alongside their *American* brothers.

When European emigrants arrived at the docks of American port cities, such as Philadelphia, they had a choice to make: they could either swear allegiance to the king and government of Great Britain, or they could return back to the land they had left. The Colonial Records of Pennsylvania contain a transcript of one such Oath of Allegiance which reads as follows.

*"We Subscribers, Natives and Late Inhabitants of the Palatinate upon the Rhine & Places adjacent, having transported ourselves and Families into this Province of Pensilvania, a Colony subject to the Crown of Great Britain, in hopes and Expectation of finding a Retreat & peaceable Settlement therein, Do Solemnly promise & Engage, that We will be faithful & bear true Allegiance to his present MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE SECOND, and his Successors, Kings of Great Britain, and will be faithful to the Proprietor of this Province; And that we will demean ourselves peaceably to all His said Majesties Subjects, and strictly observe & conform to the Laws of England and of this Province to the utmost of our Power and best of our understanding."*

By taking the Oath of Allegiance, the European emigrant forswore all allegiance and fidelity to the country from which he had come. A sincere expression of allegiance to Great Britain might have been secondary to that emigrant's primary desire to reside in the New World. (If France would have controlled the colonies on the North American continent, the emigrant might have just as energetically stated his allegiance to her king.)

The German emigrant who came to settle in the Bedford County region of Pennsylvania did not really change all that much after taking the Oath of Allegiance to the king of Great Britain. He continued to eat the same types of food that he had eaten in the German homeland; he continued to speak his German dialect; he practiced the trade that he had engaged in prior to his journey. The German emigrant would remain basically that - a German emigrant to America - until the *American* national identity began to emerge. It was the emergence of common ideals, influenced by common hardships and common experiences and needs which transformed the German emigrant, the Irish emigrant and the English emigrant into kindred souls. When those kindred souls shouldered their muskets and headed off to defend their families and homesteads they put aside, once and for all, their past allegiances. It was because of (and for the sake of) the Revolutionary War that the emigrants truly forswore their prior allegiance to their European homelands.

To the question: "Who were the pioneers of Bedford County who became Americans in the Revolutionary War", we can answer: They were men from many different nations who believed in the ideal that a separate, unique nation could be created in which a national identity of freedom and democracy would guide the actions of its citizens.

**REMINDER: The next quarterly meeting will be held on July 11 at  
12:00 noon at Kings Family Restaurant.**

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**Miscellaneous Chapter News~~~~~**

- \*\* During the 2nd Quarterly Meeting, held on April 11, a suggestion was made by Larry Smith that a committee should be formed to notify the local newspapers of SAR events (such as participation in Allegiance Sunday activities and observance of patriotic holidays). If different members of the chapter, residing in various parts of the country, would simply take it upon themselves to notify their local newspaper offices of the SAR's involvement and promotion of such events, the SAR (and our chapter in particular) might obtain more exposure.
- \*\* Members of the Blair County Chapter will not be participating in the Armed Forces Day parade in Altoona on Saturday, May 16, 1992, but will participate on May 25 in the Memorial Day parade.

**Yankee Doodle**

The most famous song of the Revolution, Yankee Doodle, has a murky history - one which is shrouded in obscurity and controversy. It was perhaps first mentioned in 1767 in Andrew Barton's opera libretto, *The Disappointment*; it has also been attributed to Dr. Shuckberg, a British army surgeon, who is claimed to have written it in 1775 to ridicule the American troops besieging Boston at the time. It is supposed to have over 190 verses, some of which are included below. The first one listed is a reaper's song which was sung in Holland a number of years before it surfaced in American folklore.

Yanker didel, doodle down,  
Diddle, dudel, lanther,  
Yanke viver, voover vown,  
Bothermilk and tanther.

Yankee Doodle came to town  
A riding on a pony  
Stuck a feather in his hat  
And called it macaroni

Father and I went down to camp  
Along with Captain Gooding,  
And there we see the men and boys  
As thick as hasty pudding.

And there we see a thousand men,  
As rich as 'Squire David,  
And what they wasted every day,  
I wish it could be sav'ed.

The 'lasses they eat every day  
Would keep a house a winter.  
They have as much that I'll be bound,  
They eat it when they're a mind to.

And there we see a whopping gun,  
As big as a log of maple,  
Mounted on a little cart, -  
A load for father's cattle.

And every time they fired it off  
It took a horn of powder,  
And made a noise like father's gun,  
Only a nation louder.

Sheep's head and vinegar  
Butter milk and tansy,  
Boston is a Yankee town  
Sing Hey Doodle Dandy.

First we'll take a pinch of snuff  
And then a drink of water,  
And then we'll say How do you do  
And that's a Yankee supper.

Now Tories all, what can ye say?  
Come -is not this a griper,  
That while your hopes are danc'd away  
'Tis you must pay the piper.

Yankee Doodle, keep it up,  
Yankee Doodle Dandy!  
Mind the music and the step,  
And with the gals be handy!

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