

**William Hansell, Blacksmith
Darby PA
1757-1800**

The generations of the Hansell line I am following go like this:

1. Peter David Hansell 1724-1786
2. William Hansell 1757-1800
3. Thomas Hansell 1786-1865
4. James Stiner Hansell 1811-1881
5. Ella Hansell (Lippincott) 1844-1914
6. James Hansell Lippincott 1871-1957

William is the second child of Peter David and Dorothy Hansell. If my compilation of circumstantial “evidence” is anywhere close to reflecting the early life of the Hansells (see *The Whereabouts of Peter David Hansell*), I can make a few guesses about William’s early years. There is minimal information about his middle years and then he died at 43. His estate papers provide a small window into the community of Darby in 1800, but they reveal more about his neighbors than William. Nevertheless, undaunted by the lack of material, I’ll try to round out his life a bit.

Early Years in Upper Darby

William was born on December 28, 1757, sixteen months after his brother David. Fifteen months later, George arrived and so it would go until there was a total of eleven children (nine boys and two girls). Second in line, William held older-brother status in the family.

Circumstantial pieces of information place the family living near the hamlet of Garrettford in Upper Darby with father Peter David Hansell working at a tannery.

Taking advantage of the upward mobility available to children of the new settlers, all the Hansell boys went into occupations that were relatively less backbreaking than tannery work. William undoubtedly was apprenticed to a blacksmith, which would have occurred when he was 14 or 15 (around 1772). Interestingly, William Garrett of Upper Darby, who owned a tannery and on whose land the Hansells lived, had a blacksmith shop and a blade mill.

In colonial times, the blacksmith played a necessary and important role in his community and his trade provided entrance into the upper middle class.

Apprenticeship usually lasted about five years. The boy signed a contract agreeing to behave well and to work hard for the blacksmith. The blacksmith promised to pass on his skills and to provide a home for the boy. Parents often paid to have their sons apprenticed, and basic schooling was included in the contract. The blacksmith taught his apprentices to read, write, and do arithmetic. He understood that this knowledge was as important as any of the metalworking skills the boys would learn. The blacksmith used arithmetic every day in his work to calculate weight, size and angles. He also needed to do “merchants accmpts”--accounting--to accurately charge his customers and to pay his own bills.

Apprenticeship was rarely an easy time for a boy. He was considered a servant, expected to do anything the master blacksmith asked. Apprentices sometimes ran away, and the master blacksmith believed it was his right to punish them for bad behavior. But apprenticeship was the best way to learn a good trade in colonial America, and most boys settled into the work.

The Blacksmith by Christine Peterson

Revolutionary War

There are references to a William Hansell participating in militia groups during the Revolutionary War:

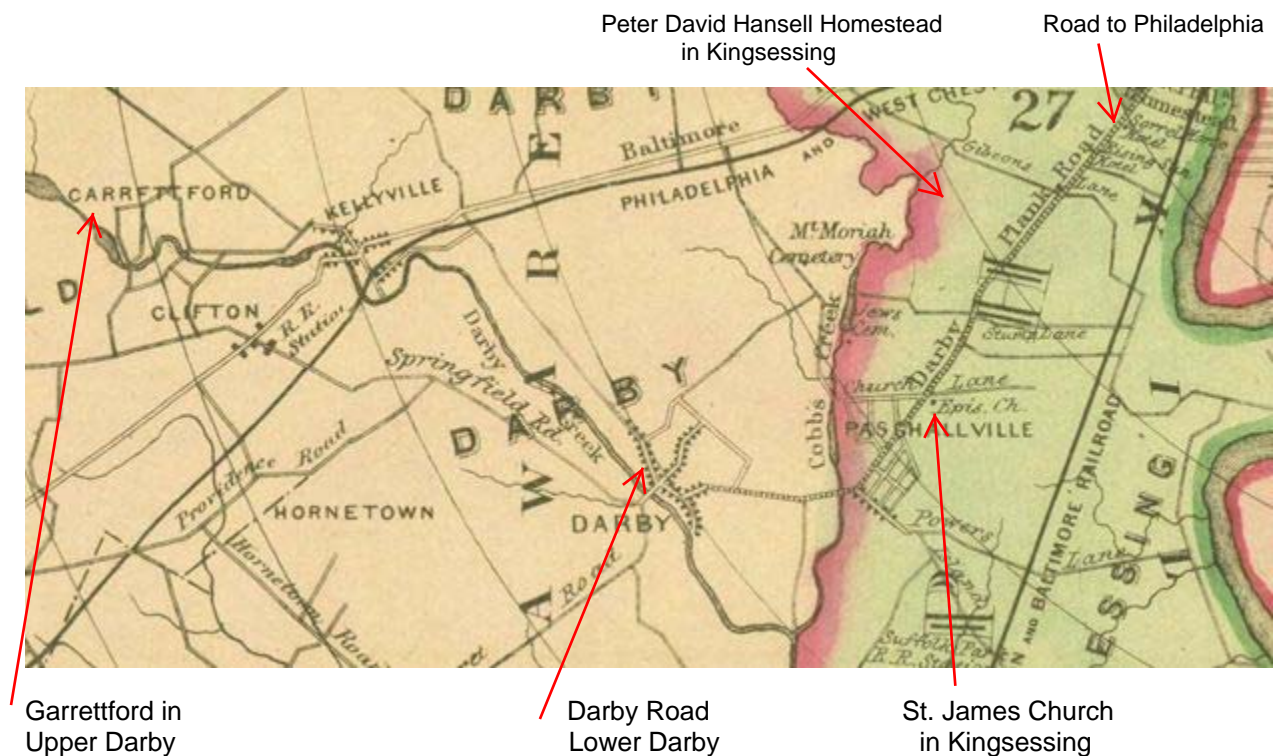
1777 - City of Philadelphia Militia: As of 9-9-1777, a William Hansell is on the muster roll of the Fourth Regiment of Foot, Captain John Byrne's Company. William Hansell was promoted to sergeant on October 2. This militia organization was composed of men drawn from the Walnut and Chestnut Wards in downtown Philadelphia. This implies William Hansell was living in downtown Philadelphia when he joined this unit.

1780 through 1785 - The name William Hansell appears in various lists of Chester County Militia, 1st Company, 4th Battalion. These lists include many of the men living in Darby at this time.

In 1779 a William Hansell, Philadelphia, Blacksmith, is included in the *Names of Persons Who took the Oath of Allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania between the years 1777 and 1789*. Peter David Hansil and David Hansell of Kingsessing are also on this list.

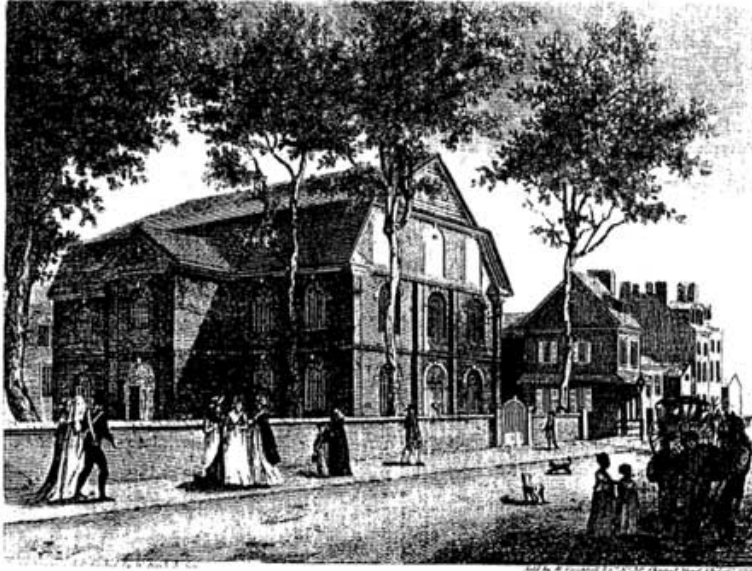
So 20 year old William may have made an early foray into Philadelphia during the tumult of the Revolutionary War, but in 1781 he appears on a Lower Darby tax list and there he remains until his death. I bet Sarah Morris lured him from Philadelphia back to Darby, near her mother, less than two miles from William's family now living in Kingsessing, and a little more than seven miles from Philadelphia.

In 1782, William was on hand to witness the deed for the second of three parcels his father purchased in Kingsessing.



12 Miles Around Philadelphia, published by RL Barnes 1860

Marriage and Life in Darby



The St. Michael's and Zion German Lutheran church records list Nov. 16, 1783 as the date of a marriage license for Sarah Morris and William Hansell.

Which church? I don't think there are any clues to figure this out. St. Michael's Church was built in 1743 on the SE corner of Cherry and 5th Street in Philadelphia.

St. Michael's Church, William Birch, 1800

To accommodate the growing church congregation, Zion Church was erected in 1769 at the SE corner of Cherry and 4th. In 1783, the pastors were, respectively, John Christopher Kunze and Dr. Justus Henry Christian Helmuth.

Records show that Ann and Elizabeth, daughters of Peter David and Dorothy Hansell, were baptized at St. Michael's/Zion. Two of William's brothers were also married in St. Michael's/Zion.



Zion Church, William Birch, 1800

Five months after her marriage, the newly-wed Sarah Morris Hansell was disowned by the Quakers for marrying William. The *Early Church Records of Delaware County, PA Darby MM* report: "Sarah Hansell formerly Morris married out of unity to one not a member against advice of Friends disowned, dated April 1, 1784."

In Darby, William was appointed a constable in 1788, and in 1791 William Hansell and Richard Lloyd were appointed overseers of the poor.

William must have belonged to the historic Darby Fire Company #1, though I have not found records. This company was organized in 1775 and claims to be the oldest volunteer fire company in Delaware County, Pa., the second oldest in the state of Pennsylvania and the fifth oldest in the country. Their website reports:

In the beginning each member had to provide two leather buckets to be kept ready and not used except for fires. If they were used for other purposes the members were fined. Widows were responsible for keeping their buckets available for use by the firemen unless they remarried.

Darby tax records show that by 1795 William had expanded his taxable property to one house and lot, one shop and lot, a horse, and one cow. In tax lists that note occupations, William is listed as a smith or blacksmith. A 1998 letter to Ed Bradford from John Hansell of Berlin, NJ relates that William was a locksmith in Darby. This is a skill that went hand in hand with blacksmithing.

Here is a clipping from *The Pennsylvania Gazette* about a run-away apprentice. The one cent reward gives the impression William may not have cared very much if he ever saw John Adams again!

ONE CENT REWARD

RAN AWAY from the subscriber, on the 3d of July, an apprentice boy to the blacksmith business, named JOHN ADAMS, about eighteen years old, about 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, sandy hair; had on, when he went away, a drab coloured coattee striped muslin jacket, and nankeen trowsers. Whoever takes up said run-away, and will bring him home, so that his master may get him again, shall have the above reward, but no charges, paid by WILLIAM HANSELL. Darby, Aug. 6, 1796.

A 12-22-1784 *Pennsylvania Journal* advertisement submitted by Henry Paschall lists 11 lots for sale in Darby ranging in size from two to nine acres. Interested persons are directed to contact William Hansell "living near the premises" if they wish to view the lots. Some of the lots are located along the "great road leading from Philadelphia." This was the main road from Philadelphia which ran through "downtown" Darby and continued south.

The "Glass Tax" - 1798 Pennsylvania US Direct Tax List

This month (12/2012) as we face the looming "fiscal cliff" and the Federal budget is a bit in arrears, it is ironic that the very first property tax assessed on its citizens by the new Congress of the United States of America would provide information about William Hansell. The US government needed money to fund the "Undeclared War with France" and the Federal Property Tax Act of 1798 was passed to raise \$2,000,000. Few tax lists have survived, but some of the Pennsylvania returns are available at Ancestry.com.

The tax was popularly called the "glass tax" because one of its provisions was to tax homes that were valued at over \$100, most of which had expensive glass rather than oiled paper or vellum windows. Panes of glass were difficult to make, expensive to purchase, and had a known value. On the other hand, the wood and labor to build a house were not accurately quantifiable given the boundless forests and the can-do spirit of the homeowners.

This is how William was assessed for his dwelling and blacksmith shop. Images at Ancestry.com, Pennsylvania US Direct Tax Lists, 1798, Chester & Delaware County.

Image 425 - 1 Dwelling House, Valued at \$400

Image 438 - Description of Dwelling House:

Name of Occupant:	Wm Hansell	
Name of Owner of Property:	Francis Howell	
Size of Lot:	80 perches	one-half of an acre
Description of House:	2 stories, 5 windows, 60 lights	
Location of House:	Darby Street by Nathan Pearson	Pearson was a joiner and coffin maker

Image 433 - Building on 15 perches, valued at \$120

Image 445 - Description of Building: The entry for William Hansell is the last line on this page, the ink has faded, and his name has not been indexed. I believe it reads as follows:

Occupant:	Wm Hansell	
Owner of Property:	Ebenezer Worth	grandson of Thomas Worth from England, a Quaker who settled in Darby and purchased land directly from William Penn in 1682
Building Description:	30 x 30, frame, smith shop	

Using the number of panes of glass in the house as an economic indicator, William's house had about half the average number of "lights" as his neighbors. A small sampling shows a range from 6 to 260 lights with an average of 133.

Using the average (\$510) of the total assessment of \$48,535 for the 95 dwellings valued in Darby as an indicator of wealth moves William's economic status up a bit as his assessment was \$400.

So we know William and Sarah lived on Darby Street. William's blacksmith shop seems to be grouped with a few other commercial properties located on lands owned by Ebenezer Worth.

William Hansell's Estate Papers

William's life was cut short by something and he died at age 43 on July 16, 1800. William is buried in the family plot (Lot 27, Section A) at St. James Church in Kingsessing. He was the fourth Hansell to be buried in this lot purchased by his father. Peter David Hansell died in 1786 and William's brothers John and David died in 1796 and 1798, respectively.

William died without a will. His estate papers (available at the Delaware County Archives) shed some light on William's life in Darby. Unfortunately, the accounting of the credit side of his books is summed up--we only have a total balance for inventory (£126), advances on sales (£32) and accounts receivable (£164). But his debits are itemized and include many of the people in Darby who provided goods and services.

William died July 16, 1800 and by the 29th Sarah Hansell, Dr. Jonathan Morris (maybe a uncle of Sarah) and John Rively (shopkeeper in Darby), as co-administrators, filed paperwork with the Delaware County register of wills to start the estate process.

In February of 1802, the administrators petitioned the Orphan's Court for the County of Delaware to allow the sale of William Hansell's lot in Kingsessing. This was granted.

In August of 1803, the administrators placed an advertisement in the *Aurora General Advertiser* announcing an auction at Gray's Ferry to sell the Kingsessing lot. The three-quarter acre lot was sold to John Conchy, a Southwick merchant, in September of 1803 for \$140.

The estate was finally settled in July of 1805. By some creative act of bookkeeping the debits and credits balanced out at about £409. Given the convoluted "bartering" system of the time, it is not clear to me if any money actually changed hands between Hansell's estate and the merchants in Darby. It looks as though Sarah may have retained 88 of the 140 pounds (or dollars) sale price for the Kingsessing lot.

The first twelve items of cash paid for the administration of William Hansell's estate are:

Sarah Hansell, John Nively & Jonathan Morris De

		£	s	d
	Administrators to the Estate of William Hansell Dec			
1	To Cash paid for Administration	0	15	9
2	To Cash paid Coffin	3	0	0
3	To Cash paid for winding Sheet	1	2	6
4	To Cash paid for grave	0	12	6
5	To Cash paid Abraham Fowler a hired servant	40	0	0
6	To Cash paid Henry Gardner Dr Dr	10	12	6
7	To Cash paid Abija Rice for Crying Vendue	1	2	6
8	To Cash paid at praisement & residue	0	10	4
9	To Cash paid at arbitration with Fowler	0	1	9
10	To Cash paid James Steeb 1 Bond	39	0	0
11	To Cash paid William Craig Bond	40	17	1/2
12	To Cash paid for Stamp paper	0	3	9

The remaining items include all expenses associated with selling the Kingsessing lot, etc.

Most likely, Fowler and Gardner worked in William's blacksmith shop, either as apprentices or assistants. Abija Rice, the crying vendue, was an auctioneer.

The page of “Debts Due Sundry Persons from the Estate of William Hansell” lists 44 people. Some of them are:

Richard Lloyd, £19 (grist and sawmill, judge, relatively wealthy and probably de facto mayor of Darby)	Jonathan Morris £19 (medical doctor, co-administrator of William Hansell’s estate and brother of Sarah Morris Hansell)
Mary Oliver, £10 (shopkeeper)	John Rively, £11 (shopkeeper)
Elizabeth Smith, £14 (tavern keeper)	Charles and Thomas Pearson, £1 (tanner)
Jesse Sharpless, £12*	Uriah Rose, £1 (shoemaker)
Isaac Sullender, £4 (taylor)	Benjamin Pearson, £4 (retailer of spirits)
Henry Siddon, £1 (shoemaker)	Jonathan Bonsal, £1 (taylor)
Francis Howell, £10 (landlord of Hansell’s dwelling)	Ebenezer Worth, £7 (landlord of Hansell’s shop)
Dr. Vanleer, £1 (medical doctor)	Samuel Coates, £1 (cooper)
Henry Wood, £2 (joiner)	

*Jesse Sharpless rented a building next to William Hansell’s smith shop. Some Darby tax records indicate Jesse Sharpless lived in Philadelphia. There is a Jesse Sharpless (one and the same?) in Philadelphia who earned lasting notoriety for exhibiting and charging admission to see a “lewd” painting at his home in Philadelphia. This resulted in the first obscenity trial in the United States in 1815.

Sarah Morris Hansell

The century had turned and the widow Sarah Morris Hansell, with maybe 88 pounds in her pocket and a number of young children clinging to her skirts, did what?

This problem is addressed in the book *Life After Death: Widows in Pennsylvania, 1750-1850* by Emily Wilson. As outlined in this book, Sarah certainly met the common profile of most widows in Pennsylvania.

Sarah Morris Hansell was 38 when her husband died. She had been married for 17 years. Her children ranged from two to 15 when William died. Sarah would live another 33 years. It doesn’t look as though she was left with much money when William died, unless it was kept in a sock, hidden from the estate inventory process. But she came from hardy Quaker stock, was apparently educated, presumably had a family support network, and all her boys grew up to prosper in their chosen occupations.

Sarah was born probably in Darby on September 9, 1762, daughter of David Morris and Ann Pearson. She had siblings Hannah, Joseph, Thomas, Jonathan and Mary. Her father died around 1773 and it looks as though Ann Pearson Morris and her six children moved to Philadelphia and eventually back to Darby.

William and Sarah spent their married years in Darby, and, after William’s death, the widow Sarah and her children moved to Philadelphia.

END NOTES

I have not provided footnotes. This is not intended for publication. On the other hand, I haven't plucked this information from thin air; there is a source for all this material. My interpretations and attributions may be incorrect. If anyone wants to know where specific information came from, just let me know!

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<p>1790 Census, Darby, Delaware County, PA</p> <p>William Hansell 2 males under 16 1 male 16+ 3 females</p> <p>6 total</p>		<p>Year: 1790; Census Place: Darby, Delaware, Pa.; Series: M637; Roll: 8; Pg 100; Image: 308; Family History Library Film: 0568148.</p>
<p>1800 Census, Lower Darby Township</p> <p>William Hansel 2 males under 10 2 females under 10 1 female 10-15 1 female 26-44</p> <p>6 total</p>	<p>official enumeration day 8/4/1800, about one month after William Hansell died.</p>	<p>Year: 1800; Census Place: Lower Chichester, Delaware, Pa.; Roll: 38; Pg: 430; Image: 174; Family History Library Film: 363341.</p> <p>The top part of the image is Lower Chichester; the lower part of the image is Lower Darby</p>
<p>1800 Septennial (Tax) Census Delaware County, PA, Darby Township</p> <p>Sarah Hansell</p>		

The Blacksmith by Christine Peterson, Marshall Cavendish, 2010

Revolutionary War

1777 - PA Archives, Series 6, Vol. 1, page 274. Philadelphia Ward information from Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on internet
PA Archives, Series 5, Vol. 5, 1780 page 712; 1783, page 680
PA Archives, Series 6, Vol. 3, 1785 page 211

Hansell Family Book by Ed Bradford

(<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~edbradford/ed/books/hansell.pdf>)

The Historic Mansions and Buildings of Philadelphia by Thompson Westcott, 1894, found at archive.org or Google Books. This book outlines the history of St. Michael's and Zion German Lutheran churches in Philadelphia.

Merry Anne Pierson, genealogist of Pearson/Pierson family; some work found at the Ancestry World Tree Project: "Early Church records of Delaware Co, PA Darby MMM. p. 266, Sarah Hansell formerly Morris married out of unity to one not a member, against advice of Friends disowned, dated 1 April 1784"

Proceedings of the Delaware County Historical Society, 9-26-1895 to 12-5-1901, Vol. 1, "Some Ancient Records of Darby," page 29 mentions William Hansell. This is a Google Book

A source not yet investigated: At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, call number De 4A, is a book entitled *Records of Darby Township*

Tax Records

Delaware County PA History (<http://delawarecountyhistory.com/>)
Created by historian Keith Lockhart. Tax records, maps and much more.

Ancestry.com:

Pennsylvania, Tax and Exoneration, 1768-1801
Pennsylvania Septennial Census 1779-1863 (1793 lists all taxable inhabitants in Darby and their occupations)
Pennsylvania US Direct Tax Lists 1798

History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania by Henry Graham Ashmead, 1884, page 512
1799 tax list with occupations for Lower Darby

Explanation of the 1798 Direct Tax: <http://www.drbilllong.com/LegalHistoryII/TaxIII.html>

Delaware County PA Government Archives (<http://www.co.delaware.pa.us/depts/archives.html>)
Administration Records, William Hansell #185, 7/29/1800
Orphan's Court Estate Records, William Hansell #151, 2/23/1802; William Hansell, #208, 11/26/1805

Sale of William Hansell's Lot in Kingsessing, EF Book 19, Page 279

Philadelphia County Deed Indexes and Deeds

Plats (<http://www.phillyhistory.org/PhotoArchive/>)
Deed and Plat Indexes (<http://philadox.phila.gov/phillyhistoricalindex/>)
Deeds (<http://phila-records.com/historic-records/web/>)

History of Chester County by John Smith Futhey, 1881 (or 1995), page 774 Worth family information

Newspapers: GenealogyBank.com and Accessible-Archives.com

Maps

Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network (<http://www.philageohistory.org/geohistory/>)
Harvard Map Collection, Digital Maps (<http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/maps/digitalmaps/>)
Norman B. Leventhal Map Center at the Boston Public Library (<http://maps.bpl.org/>)

The Debit Economy of 1830s New England, by Tom Kelleher, Old Sturbridge, Inc., Sturbridge, Mass.
Explains the debits/credits system in place when William Hansell died. Found at the Old Sturbridge Village website www.osv.org Also read *What a Dollar Would Buy in 1838: A Research Note*

Sarah Morris Hansell's ancestors:

Griffith Hugh Pugh and Morris Families at <http://www.gwyneddmeeting.org/history/griffith.htm>

Welsh Founders of Pennsylvania by Thomas Allen Glenn, Genealogical Publishing Company, 1970. Page 139 contains a family tree which includes the marriage and children of Sarah Morris and William Hansell

Miscellaneous Things of Interest

Two bits of information have stuck in my head about early Quakers in Philadelphia, one about a Morris family and another about a Thomas Pearson. I don't know if these are direct ancestors of Sarah Morris Hansell.

Genealogy of the Morris Family of Philadelphia, Descendants of Anthony Morris, Volume 1, by Robert C. Moon, 1898 (found at archive.org)

Page 171: *Many of the immigrants dwelt in caves along the banks of the Delaware, then a high, bold shore called Coaquannock. "Some dug holes and caves in the dry banks of the river, propped the superincumbent earth up with timbers, and hanging their pots and kettles on improvised stakes and hooks at the entrance, speedily had warm and comparatively comfortable lodgings in the style of what hunters used to call 'half-faced camps.'"*

Page 175: The narrative goes on to say: *"Inhabitants of the Caves in the Delaware Bank were deemed tenants of the Proprietary, and were liable to receive notice to quit at any time..."*

Thomas Pearson, a cave dweller, and a question about the derivation of the word Tomahawk from *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Volume 3, page 358.

"TOMAHAWK."—The origin of this word is in dispute. Webster says it is "Indian; Algonkin *tomehagen*, Mohegan *tumnahegan*, Delaware *tamoihecan*." In Church's History of King Philip's War, 1716, p. 24, it is printed "*tomahog*." And yet, all these authorities to the contrary notwithstanding, in a small volume published of late years, giving the genealogy of Benjamin West, the distinguished American artist, the following remarkable statement as to the origin of the word is given in apparent good faith: "In the year 1677 or 1678 one Thomas Pearson from England settled in a cave on the west bank of the Delaware River, now below Philadelphia. He was a blacksmith by trade, and it is said wielded the first smith's hammer in Pennsylvania. About the first work done was to make small axes for his Indian neighbours, who in their short way termed him *Tom*, or *Tommy*. In their language the word *hawk* signifies any tool used for cutting. Hence the origin of the word *tomahawk*." This Pearson was the grandfather of Benjamin West. Webster gives the definition of the word thus: "An Indian weapon, being a wooden club, two feet or more in length, terminating in a heavy knob; applied also to the Indian hatchet." Is there any authority for the connection of the word with Tommy Pearson?

Brownsville, Pa.

HORACE EDWIN HAYDEN.