The life and career of James Logan connected the generation of William Penn and the founders of Philadelphia and Germantown to the next generations of immigrants instrumental in building the United States.

LOGAN’S ORIGINS
James Logan (1674-1751) was born in Lurgan, County Armagh in Ireland of poor Scottish parents. His father was a schoolmaster who fled Scotland because he and his wife, Isabel Hume, were Quakers and was in danger due to the Jacobean uprising following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that put William III and Mary II on the throne of England. The Logan family soon moved to Bristol, then England’s third largest city. James was well educated by his scholarly father and replaced his father as schoolmaster. At a young age, he mastered Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French and Italian, and he taught himself mathematics from Isaac Newton’s works.

James Logan was raised in a Quaker home. In 1699, he met William Penn while he was in Bristol seeking to break into the linen merchant business. At this time, Penn had married his second wife, Hannah Callowhill, daughter of a well-to-do Bristol Quaker linen merchant. Logan was the exception to the rule that William Penn was a poor judge of men! In the event that changed his life forever, Penn invited James Logan to be his secretary on his final trip to Pennsylvania.

As Penn’s secretary, Logan, became the go-between for Penn and his wife with all the details of their busy lives, including dealing with the builders of Penn’s country mansion at Pennsbury Manor. Penn made Logan Clerk of the Council of Pennsylvania and Secretary of the Province. He shared responsibility for all land purchases in Pennsylvania (which was mostly virgin forest) with Isaac Norris. He was responsible for making remittances to England. Logan was given the unpopular post of Receiver General of Pennsylvania – in effect, the tax collector in chief. Logan was also placed in charge of Indian affairs.

A SUCCESSOR TO PENN
In 1702, during the War of the Spanish Succession, which caused a recession in Pennsylvania because of trade losses and piracy, Logan schemed to make trade deals to pay the Proprietor’s bills. The fur trade was very lucrative at this time. Logan was seen by his adversaries, during this period 1702-1709, as the advocate mainly of the Proprietor’s interests. Therefore, he was, at first, unpopular politically in Pennsylvania. While Logan was managing affairs in Pennsylvania, Penn had returned to England where he was put into debtors’ prison in London because of his conflict with the family of his treasurer, Phillip Ford.
Logan and Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Hamilton worked together as Scots and Quakers in conflicts with the Pennsylvania Assembly. Logan became convinced that strict pacifist Quaker principles were not practical to rule a province. Logan was often caught in the middle between advocates of strong executive power over a weak democracy. In 1709, he made a visit to England to attempt to straighten out Penn’s financial affairs. Logan had little money and he resolved to return to America to seek his own fortune. He became Presiding Judge at the Court of Quarter Sessions in Pennsylvania. In 1714, after two unsuccessful earlier courtships, Logan married Sarah Read. They had three children, Sarah, William, and Hannah.

LOGAN AND THE LENNI-LENAPE
At first, Logan used William Penn’s method of treating native people with respect, patience and friendship. As Penn’s Indian agent, he spoke their language, and they often camped at Stenton on their way to trade in Philadelphia. Logan revived the lucrative fur trade and the Lenni-Lenape people trusted him as they had William Penn. He is credited with inventing the Conestoga wagon, which he used to transport animal hides provided by the Indians in the fur trade, from which he and the Penn family benefitted handsomely.
After 1735, however, Logan supported the very different policies of the proprietors who succeeded William Penn after his death in 1718, by his sons, Thomas and William Penn. They forced the Lenni-Lenape people to sell their ancestral lands in the upper Delaware River valley to white settlers. Logan produced what he purported was a copy of an old deed executed in 1686 that “proved” the Indians’ forebears had transferred land to William Penn. This included the Forks of the Delaware, which was prime fishing ground.

The Penn Proprietors were deeply in debt and they wanted to sell the Indians’ lands for big profits. The payoff was the infamous Walking Purchase of 1737, a rigged contest between Indians and white professional walkers -- who ran, not walked – to steal land from the Indians. Logan got all he wanted for his ironworks and fur trade businesses. The Penns’ deceit was aided and abetted by Logan, according to Westlager’s History. As a result, “The Delawares [Lenni-Lenape] stood alone with no one on their side,” now that William Penn was gone.

LOGAN AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT
As a scientist, Logan was an active participant in the Scottish Enlightenment. In 1728-1735, he conducted experiments on the reproduction of maize (Indian corn). He tutored the American botanist, John Bartram in Latin, and he introduced Bartram to the famous Swedish biologist Carolus Linnaeus. He invested in the Durham iron furnace in Bucks County. Benjamin Franklin was also a protégé of Logan and was often a guest at Stenton, when they would discuss science and philosophy. Logan published a full account of his botanical experiments in 1739 in Latin.

He collected the largest personal library of his day in the colonies, over three-thousand volumes, which he willed to the Library Company of Philadelphia, intact. He confessed that “Books are my disease.” In 1701, Logan became Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, and served for five years, at pay of one-hundred pounds per year. In 1736, he was Council President and then he became acting governor for about two years after the death of Governor Gordon. The new State House in Philadelphia, now Independence Hall, was built during this period.

James Logan was a progressive politician. As Mayor of Philadelphia, he allowed Irish Catholic immigrants to participate in the city’s first public Mass. He opposed the pacifism of fellow Quakers and their resistance to war taxes; he encouraged to give up their seats in the assembly so the assembly could make war requisitions.

TRIBULATIONS
In his personal appearance, Logan was said to be tall and well proportioned, with a graceful and grave demeanor. His hair did not turn gray with age, nor did he need reading spectacles.

In, 1728, at age 54, Logan fell on ice and broke his left hip, leaving him crippled thereafter. In 1739, he suffered a stroke that paralyzed his right side. Later, he suffered from palsy, more paralysis and loss of his speech. When he died in 1751 at age 77, it was said that he was “the region’s most influential statesman, its most distinguished scholar, and its most respected – though not its most beloved – citizen” (www.ushistory.org).

STENTON MANSION
James Logan built his country home Stenton during 1723-1730. It was situated on his 511 acre estate, located six miles from Philadelphia. Logan named his house “Stenton” for the village and parish of Stenton in East Lothian, Scotland, where his father was born.

This was early in the Georgian period of architecture (1720-1830), when the classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome was adopted by architects like Andrea Palladio in 16th century Italy, and Inigo Jones and Christopher Wren in 17th century England and in her colonies. The Georgian style prescribed a formal symmetrical composition with the front door in the center, windows balanced each side of center, all surmounted by the dentilled cornice below the hipped roof. Stenton has side light windows beside the front door and a transom above. The front façade is divided into thirds by four thin brick two-story pilasters to stress their classical inspiration. Originally, it had a hood around the front door. There is a brick string course above the first floor.

Stenton is said to be the earliest such Georgian manor house in the region. It was of brick when most homes were constructed of plentiful local schist. Stenton is a free adaptation of a small Irish manor house, the home of a country squire. This house of red brick, with dark headers, measures fifty-one by forty feet. Its symmetrical formal front façade is carefully laid in Flemish bond brick work. (Flemish bond has one stretcher between headers, with the headers centered over the stretchers in the course below.) Stenton’s irregular side and rear facades are laid in English bond. (English bond has alternating stretching and heading courses, with the headers centered over the midpoint of the stretchers, and perpends in each alternate course aligned.) The house was designed by John Nicholas, master builder (c. 1756).

The large entry hall was laid with herringbone brick work, supported by cellar-level arches. The staircase devotes luxurious space to the broad stairs. The low risers and deep treads ease the climb to the second floor. “The beautiful and grand staircase wrapped along three wainscoted walls all the way to the third floor…and it… led to a balustrade [and gallery] (still extant in 1823) and a cupola on the roof [with a copper weather vane] (gone before 1823) served as a kind
of crown for the top of the house, rendering it taller and grander than it appears today,” says Stenton: A Visitor’s Guide. Stenton contains many pieces of family and period furniture in William and Mary, Queen Anne, Early Georgian, and Chippendale styles. This house is such an elegant vision from the past and it lives on today!

DESCENDENTS AND TRIBUTES
James and Sarah’s son William Logan (1717-1776) inherited Stenton. He and his wife Hannah Emlen Logan (1722-1777) used it mainly as a summer residence. On William’s death, his son George (1753-1821) inherited Stenton. George was educated as a physician at the University of Edinburgh, but he and his wife Deborah Norris Logan (1761-1839) lived at Stenton, operating it as a working farm. He corresponded with fellow gentleman farmer Thomas Jefferson about farming. During the Battle of Germantown in 1777, the Logans’ freed slave, Dinah, saved Stenton from burning by British soldiers. Both General George Washington and the British General Sir William Howe used Stenton briefly as their headquarters. George Logan served in the Pennsylvania State Legislature and represented Pennsylvania in the United States Senate (1801-1807).

After 1860, the Logan family did not live at Stenton regularly, but leased the land to caretakers and tenant farmers. This neglect in the later 19th century prevented the house from being modernized with electricity, water, gas and central heating, and that preserved the historic interiors! In 1899, the Logan family granted The Pennsylvania Society of the Colonial Dames of America the “privilege of restoring and preserving this fine old house.” In 1910, the City of Philadelphia purchased Stenton, now sitting on five remaining acres, from the Logan family, and the Dames continue to preserve and educate about Stenton.

In Philadelphia, we acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of James Logan when we travel on Stenton Avenue, live in or visit the Logan neighborhood, and visit Logan Circle that has borne his name since 1825.

Bibliography