

Some Stories of Bucks County Place Names

Do you have any idea where the following places are, or how they got their names?
They are all real places in Bucks County!

Devil's Half-Acre
Featherbed Hill
Castle Valley
Playwicky
Sugar Bottom
Pickpocket
Elephant
Chicken Foot

Give up?

Devil's Half Acre is a bit of land located between the Delaware Canal and the River Road in Plumstead Township. It is believed that the place got its name during the period the Canal was being built in the 1830s. At that time whiskey and other strong drinks were sold there, and drunken parties were common. It was a *bad* place!

Featherbed Hill is in western Doylestown Township. There are a couple of stories about how the hill received its name. One describes a weary traveler who placed a lone feather on a rock atop the hill, then lay down on it. He claimed that this hard "mattress" was his "featherbed." Another tale tells of a man moving his household goods across the hill only to have his featherbed rip. Feathers were scattered all over. They were stuck in trees and bushes, and blown in the wind. According to this story, this was what gave the hill its name.

Castle Valley is the name of a small settlement in Doylestown Township on Neshaminy Creek. Almshouse and Lower State Roads cross there. Above the Creek is a hill. In the 1700s, atop the hill, a young man named Tom Meredith began building a stone and wood castle. Tom hauled the rocks up from the valley below and cut the logs for the castle himself on the wooded hillside. He died before he could finish his tower and complete his vision. But, it's said that many of the stones from the castle were later used to build a bridge over the Creek at this spot.

Playwicky comes from a Lenape Indian word meaning "the place full of turkeys." It describes what, in William Penn's time, was the site of a Lenape village or settlement in Lower Bucks County. The site is located in today's Lower Southampton Township.

Sugar Bottom is the name of both a road and an area in Warwick Township along Neshaminy Creek. Today, Bridge Valley Elementary School is on Sugar Bottom Road. One theory for the name comes from the sugar that was made there at one time from the sorghum plant. A sorghum mill, used to crush and extract the juice from the sorghum plant was supposedly located there.

Pickpocket is a tiny village that was located at the place where Emilie and Newportville Roads cross – right on the line between Bristol and Middletown Townships. Stories are told about a robbery that occurred there, giving the place its name. It was also a place that “Roma” people – sometimes called “Gypsies” – gathered at one time. Some of these people were thought to steal from their neighbors, and people were fearful of “pickpockets.”

Elephant is a small settlement surrounding a hotel of the same name in Bedminster Township. The hotel’s signboard featured a picture of an elephant.

Chicken Foot is a spot in southern Middletown Township where five roads came together. On old maps, the pattern the roads made looked like a chicken’s foot. It was a landmark for many residents of Lower Bucks County.

**Here are a few more strange or funny names –
No one knows for certain where these names came from!**

Slobery Run – a short stream in southwestern Plumstead Township

Mount Misery – the location of an old school house near Bridgeton in Upper Bucks County (and the name many kids might want to give to school today!)

Dimple Creek – a small stream in Haycock Township that connects to Tohickon Creek

Coppernose – A steep hill in Solebury Township between the villages of Lumberville and Lumberton overlooking the Delaware River

It might be fun to check out a map of Pennsylvania and look for unusual, strange or humorous place names in other counties around the state! How many can you find?