TOPONYMY

BY BENJAMIN L. MILLER

The place names of a region and their derivation are of general interest and occasionally possess distinct geographic or historic value. The material here given was collected in a study of the earlier maps and published descriptions of the region. An attempt has been made to make it as complete as possible but doubtless there are omissions. If several different origins have been given for specific names and difficulty has been experienced in determining the correct origin, the various explanations have been cited. Several obsolete names are included.

The names given to the natural features of Northampton County and to the settlements and political divisions reveal several different tendencies, some of which are worthy of mention. It is therefore possible to classify the place names of the county into several groups that will include practically all the names that have appeared on various maps and in other publications. These are briefly described. To save space, only a few names in each group are cited.

1. Indian names.—The Indians attached names to some of the most important streams and mountains. These were chosen because of some characteristic feature and were generally compound words; almost complete sentences in some instances. The early settlers endeavored to retain some of these names but with indifferent success. Some of the names were long and were perhaps spoken by the Indians indistinctly or with variations by different individuals. Therefore it is not surprising that when these names were reduced to writing there should be variations. The best example of this in this region is the name "Monocacy." The writer has found in the records and maps thirty-seven spellings as given on a later page. Of course, some of these may be due to typographic errors, carelessness or indifference.

Fortunately, the meanings of many of the Indian names have been preserved to us in a manuscript of John Heckewelder, a prominent Moravian missionary to the Delaware Indians. This manuscript was edited by William C. Reichel for publication in the Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society under the title "Names which the Lenni Lenape or Delaware Indians gave to Rivers, Streams and Localities within the States of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and Virginia, with their Significations." (1872) Much valuable matter has been obtained from this source.

When the Indian term was retained by the early settlers there were gradual changes by which eventually a corruption became general.