

## Newly discovered James Michener essay about growing up in Bucks County is being published for the first time

by [Stephan Salisbury](#), Posted: October 1, 2020- 8:48 PM



Back in the day, according to [James A. Michener](#)'s recollection, Doylestown was a duopoly.

There was the dominant "English" Doylestown about twice as large as the lesser "Germany," populated largely by Mennonites from the surrounding farm area, Michener writes in a recently discovered essay just published in the Bucks County literary and historical journal *Neshaminy*.

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The five-page, typewritten essay is dated Sept. 8, 1987. Don Swaim, executive editor of *Neshaminy*, came across the untitled piece in the files of the Doylestown Historical Society a year or so ago and has now published it in the journal.

Swaim said he was delighted by Michener's recollections and the vivid portrait of old Doylestown that emerges from the essay.

It seems, for one thing, that in pre-World War II Doylestown, Democrats were scarce among the "English" and the "Germans." The author of *South Pacific* and countless other best-selling books quotes his aunt as saying there was once a family of Democrats living on the edge of town, "but they weren't very nice people."

Michener once ran for Congress as a Democrat and lost. He died in 1997 at the age of 90.

The Michener family was not welcoming to difference, apparently. He notes in the piece that relatives were not happy that his new bride was Japanese American.

Michener goes on to describe his days as a paperboy, his school years, and his classmate Margaret Mead, who became an acclaimed anthropologist. Michener and Mead received the first two library borrowing cards when the new Doylestown library opened.

Swaim said in an interview Wednesday evening that Michener apparently gave the essay to Doylestown Intelligencer reporter W. Lester Trauch, for possible publication in the newspaper. The typescript, containing Trauch's editing comments and marks, was never published, for unknown reasons, and was given to the Doylestown Historical Society by the lawyer for Trauch's estate.

material as children get nowadays, and I have always felt grateful to Dr. Ross for the hard work he made us do.

Equally significant, however, was the town's ~~children's~~ <sup>fat</sup> library, named after Melinda Cox whose gift of money and books made it possible. It was run by two sisters, the Misses Price <sup>Lucie and Bessie</sup> ~~(Lucie and Bessie)~~ <sup>A</sup> who took positive delight in introducing children to books. They did a great job with me and told me at one time: 'I do believe you and Margaret have read every book on our shelves.' They were referring to an extremely gifted and precocious girl from ~~Doylestown~~ <sup>Hthcong</sup> ~~nearby village~~. Margaret Mead ~~editor: is this spelled~~ ~~nearby~~ and I later learned that when the library opened, Margaret and I received the first two borrowing cards issued.

I was late in realizing that our town and county had become a favorite resort for famous people, but my close friend, Lester Trauch, who came to our school from ~~Berlin~~ <sup>Doylestown</sup>, was even then

IMAGE

**COURTESY DOYLESTOWN HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Passage from the typescript of a newly discovered 1987 James Michener essay about growing up in Doylestown, with contemporaneous editing comments attributed to Doylestown Intelligencer reporter W. Lester Trauch. The long unpublished essay has now been published in the Bucks County literary and historical journal, Neshaminy.

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There it languished until Swaim heard about its existence and rescued it from the files.

Swaim says he has no idea why the piece was not published in 1987.

Neshaminy, which began publication last year, contains the essay in its Fall/Winter 2020 issue, now available in local Bucks County bookstores and on Amazon.com in both digital and print editions.



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