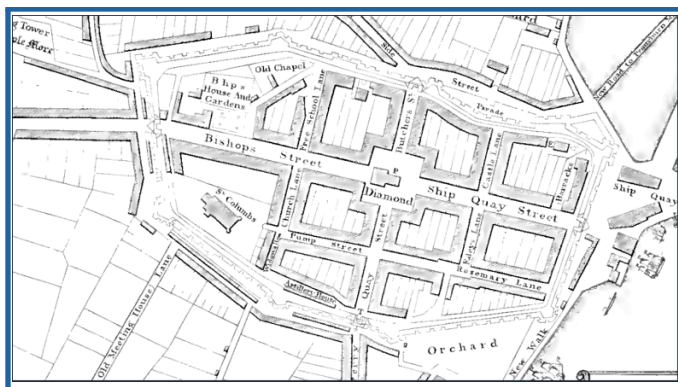


I finally figured out why it's the Diamond

Researched and written by T.P. Calhoun • October 28, 2026

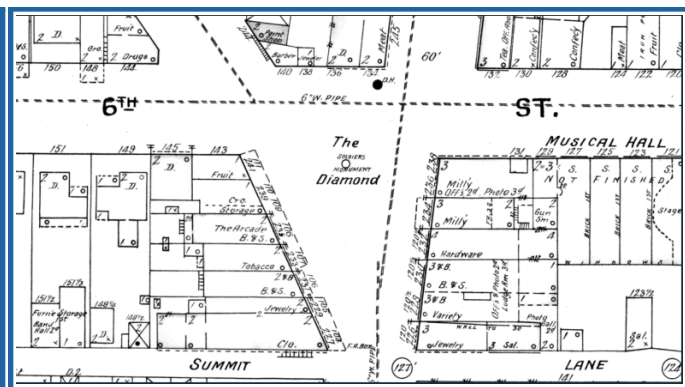
For 75 years I have wondered at East Liverpool's Diamond and wondered why we called a triangle a diamond. Occasionally I would pull up a map or Google Earth, even with the topology on, and try to imagine where the other half of the diamond had gone. Was there once a fourth side? Had a street disappeared? First of all, we are not alone - there are other non-diamond-shaped Diamonds.

I have discovered that in a particular regional ethnic and cultural tradition that I share - Scotch-Irish from Ulster - going back to the 1600s a town center or marketplace could be called "the Diamond." It did not have to fit the shape I was looking for. Our triangle belongs to a much larger family of public places, squares, markets, and commercial intersections called ... Diamonds.



Londonderry / Derry

Plan depicting 1690, printed 1835. The central space is labeled Diamond.



East Liverpool, Ohio

Sanborn map, November 1892, sheet 6. The original wording is "The Square or Diamond."

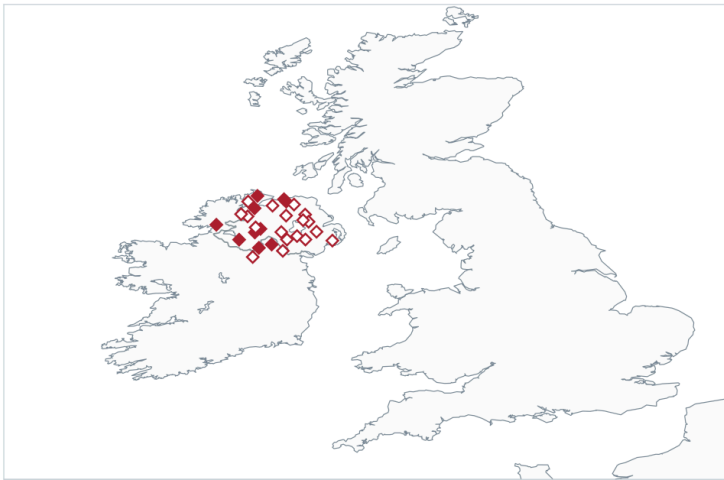
The maps above show Londonderry/Derry and East Liverpool - each with a diamond that is not shaped like a diamond! We don't know who decided to name our diamond "the Diamond" although I have ideas. One interesting discovery is where the name occurs. The examples we have found cluster overwhelmingly in two places: Ulster, the nine-county historic province in northern Ireland, and Pennsylvania. East Liverpool sits near the western edge of that American concentration, just across the state line. We are part of a regional pattern that is easy to miss when you know only your own Diamond.

Just look at the maps on the next page of ALL the known places that have or had town center-type diamonds. It is shocking how circumscribed the distributions are in Ireland and in Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The pattern across the Atlantic

The name came to Pennsylvania with Scots-Irish settlers from Ulster. Karen J. Harvey's study traces that connection through town plans, settlement histories, and the commercial life of several Pennsylvania Diamonds. Michael Montgomery's dictionary brings together examples of the word on both sides of the Atlantic. [1–2]

Ireland, Scotland and England



Ulster — enlarged

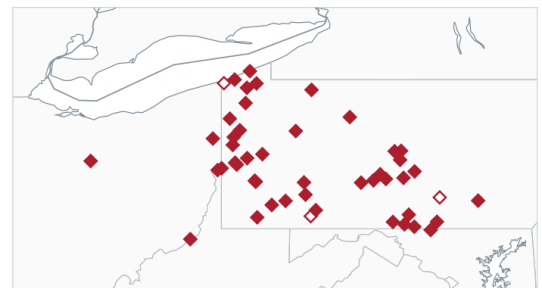


Britain and Ireland, with Ulster enlarged. Filled symbols identify sourced places in the map's inventory; open symbols mark leads or limited evidence. This earlier plotting omits Irish exceptions subsequently restored to our written register.

Contiguous United States



Pennsylvania and the Upper Ohio Valley

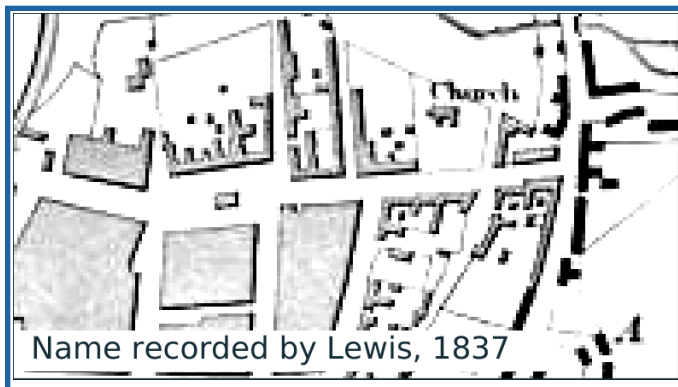


United States, with Pennsylvania and the Upper Ohio Valley enlarged. The cluster is concentrated in Pennsylvania, with extensions into neighboring states. Positions represent approximate town centers.

Our combined working registers contain fewer than 100 places and leads. That is what we have found so far, not a final worldwide total. “Common” fits the name within those two regional concentrations; it does not describe ordinary usage everywhere. There are exceptions outside both regions. Mansfield lies farther west in Ohio, so East Liverpool is near the western edge, not the westernmost Diamond. [3]

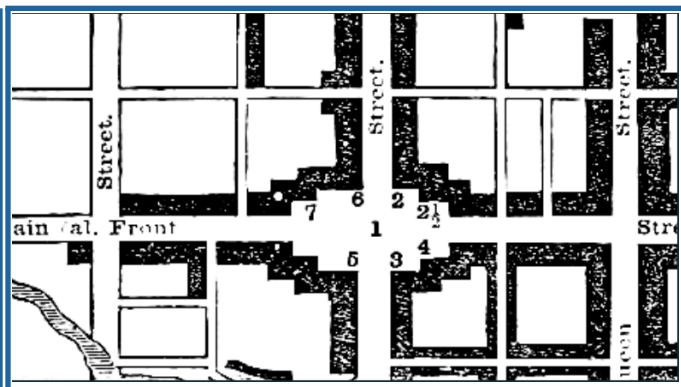
A family of marketplaces

Once I stopped looking for a particular outline, the comparisons became much easier to understand. These Diamonds can be rectangular, triangular, irregular, or elongated. Their shared name tells us something about the public place and the people using it; their shapes alone do not prove a common origin.



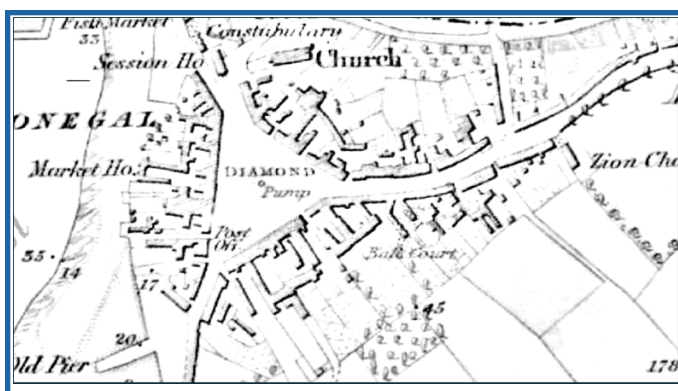
Coleraine, Ulster

1832 town plan. The map does not print Diamond; Samuel Lewis records that name for the town-hall square in 1837.



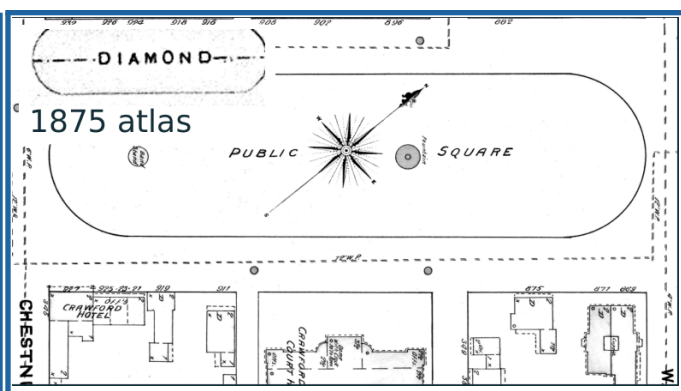
Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

1864 map. The original key identifies number 1 as "Diamond or Square."



Donegal town, Ulster

First-edition Ordnance Survey, 1830s survey. The native map label reads DIAMOND.



Meadville, Pennsylvania

1891 Sanborn map labels the oval "PUBLIC SQUARE". The inset DIAMOND label comes from a map dated 1875.

These are historic map extracts, not reconstructed town plans. The frames are comparable; their dates, orientations, and geographic scales differ. The Coleraine name and the Meadville inset are explicitly distinguished from lettering on the main maps. [4]

A much longer research brief is under construction which summarizes my work to date allowing me to return to it and anyone else to follow up who wishes to. My expectation is to find that some of my Scotch-Irish clansmen who were involved in business and real estate at the time decided on the name.

What we know about our Diamond

The older public square was at Third and Market. Commercial activity gradually spread uphill toward Fifth and Sixth Streets and the Market–Dresden junction. The center did not move all at once but it accelerated in the late 1870s.

A retained newspaper advertising capture dated December 4, 1880, places J. W. Gipner's millinery business at Diamond Square on Market Street. By the time of the 1892 Sanborn map, the two names were printed together. Those records establish that people used the name; neither tells us who first chose it. Accounts of the commercial shift during the 1880s help explain the junction's growing importance. [5]

We do not yet know why, when, and by whom the name was attached to East Liverpool. It might have arrived through Pennsylvania-born residents, merchants, surveyors, or some combination. The regional history gives us places and people to investigate, but no local naming individual or group.

Nor have we settled the word's ultimate origin. Harvey discusses an older crossroads usage in Ulster and the possibility of an Irish-language connection. That is a further question, not an established translation. The evidence for Scots-Irish transmission to Pennsylvania is much clearer than the explanation of how Ulster first acquired the term.

For now, I have answered the question that kept bringing me back to the map. East Liverpool's Diamond did not need a missing half. It had a name with a history, and we are near the western edge of that history's strongest American concentration. There is more to find, but now I know what I am looking for.

You are welcome to pursue things further. This has a lot to do with when England colonized Northern Ireland in the 1600s and crested "Plantations" that planted English and Scottish overseers above native Irishmen.

Sources and map credits

[1] Michael Montgomery, *From Ulster to America*, 2nd ed. (2017), online entry "diamond," Ulster-Scots Academy: ulsterscotsacademy.com/scotch-irish/futa/diamond.php.

[2] Karen J. Harvey, "Diamonds in the Rough: Scotch-Irish Town Planning in Northern Appalachia During the Early Republic," *Journal of Scotch-Irish Studies* 1, no. 2 (2001), 107–124, especially 108–115.

[3] RHKMI reconciled working registers, October 27, 2026. Counts include differing evidence levels; these are research inventories, not a geographic census.

[4] Derry: OS volume, 1835, BHL/Harvard. East Liverpool: Sanborn-Perris, 1892, sheet 6, LOC. Coleraine: Gardner, 1832; Lewis, 1837. Chambersburg: Schneck, 1864, key 1, Gutenberg 32268. Donegal: historic OS map in County Council conservation report, 2022, fig. 5. Meadville: Sanborn-Perris, 1891, sheet 3, Penn State; 1875 map in Crawford County atlas, 1876. Historic maps are public domain in the United States.

[5] Gipner ad, December 4, 1880, p. 2, retained capture; full masthead still needed. Gates, *The City of Hills and Kilns*, pp. 123–130, recorded in our research brief.