

MG-52

JOHN FRANKLIN PAPERS
1754-1828

MICROFILMED

MICROFILMED

4 folders in 1 box (part)

Vault

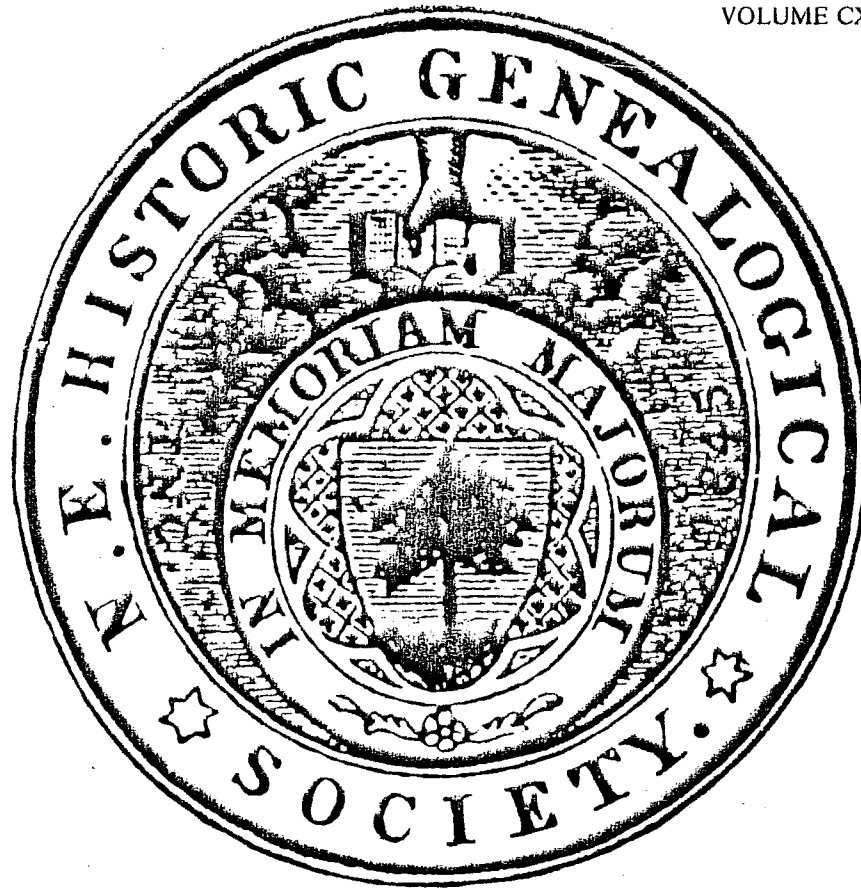
Papers of John Franklin (1749-1831), leader of the Connecticut settlement in Pennsylvania beginning in 1774 and a member of the Pennsylvania legislature, 1796, 1799-1803, 1805. These papers relate mainly to the long-standing controversy over land titles in northeastern Pennsylvania between settlers from Connecticut encouraged by the Susquehanna Company and settlers who held land under Pennsylvania titles. Correspondence includes transcripts of letters between Governor James Hamilton of Pennsylvania and Governor Roger Wolcott of Connecticut, and between Hamilton and Deputy Governor Thomas Fitch of Connecticut, 1754; transcript of a letter from Governor Robert Morris of Pennsylvania to Fitch, September 20, 1754; letters from individuals in Connecticut to Colonel John H. Lydius of Albany, 1754-1755, 1764; letters from Thomas Life in London to Jonathon Trumbull, April 7 and May 5, 1773; letter from Joseph Reed, President of the Supreme Executive Council, Philadelphia to Colonel Zebulon Butler, April 2, 1779; correspondence of the Wyoming Committee ("committee representing the settlers from Connecticut at Wyoming") regarding efforts to settle its dispute with the committee representing the landholders under Pennsylvania, 1783; transcript of letter from Alexander Patterson to John Dickinson, President of the Supreme Executive Council, Philadelphia, October 20, 1783; correspondence between John Franklin and Roger Sherman of New Haven, 1784; letters from Franklin to the Governor of Connecticut, May 10, 1784 and William Samuel Johnson, member of Congress, 1784-85; letters from Franklin describing the operations at Wyoming of Colonel John Armstrong and his men, October 20, 1784, and February 6, 1814; requests addressed by John Franklin and others to Benjamin Franklin, President of the Supreme Executive Council, 1786; letter to John Franklin from his son Biller regarding the death of the son's wife, April 14, 1824; letter from Franklin to Constant Matthewson, representative in the state General Assembly, commenting on the possible division of Bradford County and other matters, January 14, 1828.

Among the other papers are a copy of Governor Roger Wolcott's opinion on settlement of the Susquehanna area, January 7, 1854; a list of members of the Susquehanna Company who took land in 1762-1763; depositions and other papers relating to Indian deeds, 1761 and undated; copies of several resolutions and other actions of the Connecticut General Assembly, 1773-1784; abstract from the journals of the treaty made at Albany with the Six Nations, 1775; extract from the proceedings of the Court of Commissioners held at Trenton, New Jersey to settle the controversy between Connecticut and Pennsylvania settlers, November 12, 1782; petitions of Wyoming settlers to the Pennsylvania General Assembly, 1783; committee reports to the Pennsylvania General Assembly and excerpts from the printed proceedings of the Assembly regarding the Wyoming settlement, 1783-1785; records of the proceedings at Hartford of a Court of Commissioners appointed by the proprietors of the Susquehanna purchase, 1786-1787; commission issued to

John Franklin as an agent of the Susquehanna Company, signed at Hartford by Joel Barlow and others, May 17, 1787; printed copies of acts of the Pennsylvania General Assembly concerning settlement and land titles in northeastern Pennsylvania, 1797, 1803; and a Pennsylvania House of Representatives report on the possible removal of Judge Hugh Henry Brackenridge, accompanied by a copy of a letter from the judge, 1804. Also, paper-bound index listing names under the heading "proprietors taken in by committee" for six years between 1768 and 1785; included in the index is a list of land titles, indicating original proprietor, to whom conveyed, and when conveyed and recorded; in many of the margins are scribbled notes, apparently by John Franklin, some of them relating to early nineteenth-century matters.

On permanent loan from the Susquehanna County Historical Society and Free Library Association (Montrose); presented on behalf of the society by Charles H. Ainey (New Milford), 1952.

Folder 1 - 1754-1783
" 2 - 1784-1785
" 3 - 1786-1828
" 4 - Partial Index to Records of Susquehanna Co.



THE
NEW ENGLAND
HISTORICAL AND
GENEALOGICAL
REGISTER

FOLLOWING CONNECTICUT ANCESTORS
TO PENNSYLVANIA:
SUSQUEHANNA COMPANY SETTLERS

Donna Bingham Munger

If your Connecticut ancestors moved to Pennsylvania between 1769 and 1800 they probably did so under the auspices of the Susquehanna Company. This was a land company organized in the colony of Connecticut in 1753/4 specifically for the purpose of settling the area along the upper Susquehanna River in the colony of Pennsylvania. A few proprietors of the Company or their representatives moved into Pennsylvania in 1762 and 1763, but Indian retaliation delayed any consequential settlement until the 1768 treaty at Fort Stanwix. Almost immediately thereafter, hundreds of "Yankee" families began to move into the Wyoming Valley taking New England customs and traditions with them, along with a land dispute which was to last the better part of half a century.

Although much is known about the Susquehanna Company, the individuals who made it up remain largely unknown. It is not sufficient to assume that searching the common records of the Pennsylvania county of jurisdiction for particular references to Susquehanna settlers will produce satisfaction.¹ In most cases the Susquehanna settler remained a political anomaly, deriving his right to hold land directly from the Company itself, not from the governments of Pennsylvania or Connecticut. Only when the land controversy between the two states was nearing settlement after 1800 did the Pennsylvania records begin to include the bulk of Connecticut Susquehanna settlers. For evidence of earlier involvement in the Company and settlement in Pennsylvania, the researcher must turn to other sources.

In seeking individuals, the best way to begin is by consulting the index of each volume (no comprehensive index exists) of the published eleven volume series, *The Susquehanna Company Papers*, Julian P. Boyd, ed., 1-4 (Wilkes-Barre, 1932 and Ithaca, 1962) and Robert J. Taylor, ed., 5-6 (Ithaca, 1967-71). These volumes carefully document the political controversy between Pennsylvania and Connecticut. They also provide a beginning to the study of the economic problems created by the controversy over land settlement. Each individual who purchased shares in the Company between its inception in 1753 and the beginning of settlement in Pennsylvania in 1769 is cited, and those who were more active in Company business are cited several times. However, for a complete study of any individual involved with the Company, and to identify individuals who purchased shares after 1769, additional sources must be consulted.

1. George E. McCracken, "The Connecticut Pennsylvanians," *The American Genealogist* 55 (1979): 81.

The single most important source for studying a Susquehanna Company settler is the group of Account Books of the Company. These books document, in detail, the financial activities of the Company and include a reference to virtually every individual directly involved with the Company. However, despite several attempts by historians to collect or to publish all Company records, from Charles Miner and his *History of Wyoming* (Philadelphia, 1845) through Boyd and Taylor's *The Susquehanna Company Papers*, the Account Books remained unpublished and generally inaccessible over the years.² This situation has recently changed with the microfilming, by the Connecticut Historical Society, of its collection of original Susquehanna Company records, including the nine volumes of hitherto unpublished Account Books. Now it is possible to locate and study every individual shareholder involved with the Susquehanna Company. To use the Account Books effectively, however, it is necessary to understand how they relate to other Company records and to official public records, and the role they played within the Company.

The original Susquehanna Company records fall into two distinct groups. One group is the minutes of meetings and land records kept by the Company proprietors, mainly in Connecticut, but between 1781 and 1803 in Pennsylvania. The other group is the minutes of meetings and land records kept by the settlers in Pennsylvania between their arrival in 1769 and the beginning of Pennsylvania jurisdiction in 1787. The proprietors' records are those which traditionally have been called the Susquehanna Company Records (see Table I). The settlers' records are known as the Westmoreland Records (see Table II).

The Susquehanna Company, or proprietors' records, begin with a Minute Book. The Minute Book recorded both the minutes of the business meetings and the Company's financial transactions. The Company clerk entered individual subscribers' names, number of shares purchased, and the amount paid, intermixed with the minutes of the meetings. An individual became a Company member or subscriber by purchasing a right, also called a share, as an enrollment fee. A share represented an equitable interest in all of the land held by the Company. There was no limit to the number of shares a person might buy, and a share might be split between two or more persons. This method of selling shares, their meaning as an equitable investment in unsettled land, and the practice of recording their sale in the Minute Book continued from the formation of the Company in 1753 to the beginning of settlement in 1769.³

The Minute Book exists in several forms today. The original is in the Connecticut Historical Society where it has been since its recovery from

2. For a discussion of the history of the Susquehanna Company records contact the author who is currently preparing a manuscript for publication.

3. For a comprehensive discussion of shares see *The Susquehanna Company Papers*, 10:215, note 5 and 11:352-4.

Table I
Susquehanna Company Records¹

Description	Location	Pagination
MINUTE BOOK		
Vol. I Articles of Agreement & Minutes of Meetings, 1753-1774, 1782-1802	Original CtHS ² Compromise Commissioners Copy, Penna. State Archives Published, <i>Penna. Archives</i> , 2nd ser., Vol. 18; <i>Susquehanna Company Papers</i>	
ACCOUNT BOOKS		
<i>Liber A</i> —Records of Deeds 1769-1773 (?) — Index, Grantee-Grantor (Entries and page references indicate this may belong to missing <i>Liber A</i>)	Missing 1862 Original CtHS (loosely placed in and microfilmed as part of <i>Liber I</i>)	
<i>Liber B</i> —Records of Deeds with Index, 1773-1778	Original CtHS Photo WHGS ³	1-387 1-195
<i>Liber C</i> —Records of Deeds with Index, 1778-1795; Minutes, 1795	Original CtHS Photo WHGS	A-D, 1-651 196-525
<i>Liber D</i> —Records of Deeds, 1795-1798	Original CtHS Photo missing	1-180
<i>Liber E</i> —Records of Deeds, 1795-1798; Minutes, 1796	Original missing Photo WHGS; Penna. State Archives	1-557 526-802
<i>Liber F</i> —Records of Deeds, 1795-1802	Original CtHS Photo WHGS; Penna. State Archives	1-278 804-943
<i>Liber G</i> —Records of Conveyances, 1766-1778	Original CtHS Photo missing	
<i>Liber H</i> —Records of Deeds, 1798-1803	Original missing Photo WHGS; Penna. State Archives	1-349 944-1118
<i>Liber I</i> —Records of Deeds kept by John and Billa Franklin, 1786-1796	Original CtHS Photo missing	1-276
<i>Liber A</i> —Records of Conveyances, 1754-1798 (incomplete)	Original CtHS Photo missing	

1. All records except the missing *Liber A* are available on microfilm at the Connecticut Historical Society and the Pennsylvania State Archives.

2. Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

3. Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre.

the John Franklin homestead in Athens, Pennsylvania, in 1862.⁴ Stumbled upon by Judge Edward O. Herrick, the Susquehanna Company Records apparently had remained in the house of the last real Company leader, John Franklin, as the house changed ownership following his death. The owner in 1862, Zephon Flower Walker, a civil engineer and surveyor, married to a granddaughter of Franklin, used the records in his surveying research and to prepare a manuscript on the land controversy. The records then came to the attention of Judge Herrick who, in his retirement, made it a hobby to search in the homes of old families in the area for documents of local interest. He realized their value and arranged their donation to the Connecticut Historical Society where he was sure they would be safer and more accessible than in a private collection. The Minute Book was duly accessioned, but many of the Account Books were set aside and since then have been subjected to a series of events not unlike a game of lost and found.

The Minute Book, in its easiest form for the researcher to use, may be found accurately reprinted and interspersed chronologically in *The Susquehanna Company Papers*. A copy of the original Minute Book, made in 1801 by the Commissioners enforcing the Pennsylvania Compromise Law, is part of manuscript group 275 in the Pennsylvania State Archives. This copy was the manuscript which formed the basis of the reprinted Minute Book as it appears in volume 18 of the second series of the published *Pennsylvania Archives*. The *Archives* version contains several errors in copying, but benefits by the addition of minutes found interspersed in the Account Books.

A series of Account Books follows the Minute Book. In 1769, when shareholders in the Susquehanna Company began serious settlement in Pennsylvania, the clerk initiated the use of Account Books for the purely business transactions of the Company. Two and a half Account Books were filled during the first phase of settlement. In them, the clerk recorded the sale of all new shares to subscribers as well as the transfer or conveyance of shares from an original subscriber to his heir or grantee. Apparently many of the original subscribers had no intention of becoming settlers. They seem to have purchased shares as a family investment, planning upon settlement for their sons or nephews. Each actual settler, however, was required to produce his own shareholder's certificate or record of conveyance before he was eligible for a specific lot. Hence, the Company record of the conveyance of a share from one individual to another was as important as the initial record of the sale of the share.

The first Account Book, titled *Liber A*, covered the period 1769-1773. It was missing in 1862 when the Account Books were recovered from the Franklin homestead. The discoverer of the Account Books, Judge Herrick, attributed the demise of *Liber A* to a court house fire in Montrose,

4. Edward O. Herrick, Jr., to Charles Hosmer, 26 June 1862, Connecticut Historical Society.

Pennsylvania, where the Account Books may have been stored at one time.⁵ A grantee-grantor index to *Liber A* does exist, however, and subscribers and their transfer of shares or property, if not the specific details, can be traced.⁶ The second Account Book, *Liber B*, covers the period September 1773 to February 1778. It has an accompanying grantee-grantor index. The third Account Book, *Liber C*, continues in general chronological order from 1778 through 30 January 1787 when the Company clerk in Connecticut recorded his last entry on page 108.⁷ *Liber C* was not to be used again for recording purposes until 1794.

The other group of Company records is the Westmoreland, or settlers' records. They were generated by settlers' committees in Pennsylvania and are actually a composite of most of the surviving town books of the several original townships and the records of the unified township, later county, of Westmoreland. They record the minutes of meetings, land surveys, lot numbers, and some vital statistics. Township surveys were conducted whenever the required minimum number of settlers, usually twenty, applied for settlement. As part of the survey, townships were subdivided based upon the quality of the land. A subscriber's share became an actual piece of land when he drew lots in one, two, three, or more divisions depending upon the number of shares he owned. During the first five years of settlement, 1769-1774, surveys and lot numbers were recorded in the individual town books of each authorized township: Kingston or Forty, Wilkes-Barre, Plymouth, Pittstown, Nanticoke or Hanover, Exeter, Providence, Salem, and Newport.

In 1774 the entire area of Pennsylvania claimed by the Susquehanna Company was incorporated into one town and named Westmoreland. An adjacent area being settled in a similar fashion by the First and Second Delaware Companies was included.⁸ The town Westmoreland was attached to Litchfield County, the most westerly of Connecticut counties, to provide the town a legal base within which to function. Justices of the peace and a probate judge were appointed which, for the time being, satisfied Susquehanna settlers who felt the need for legal authority in their rapidly growing area. For the Connecticut General Assembly, the formation of the legally constituted town was the final admission of its claim to lands west of the Delaware River, although a sizeable faction in the Assembly temporarily succeeded in denying the Westmoreland representatives their seats.

5. *Ibid.* The only documented court house fire in Montrose is reported in *The Susquehanna Register*, 24 Nov. 1842.

6. This index is currently erroneously placed (not bound) inside of *Liber I* and microfilmed as part of that *Liber*. However, pagination matches none of the extant *Liber* and names indexed refer to transactions documented in *Liber B* as taking place between 1769 and 1773. It can only be the index to the original *Liber A*.

7. John Franklin moved the Account Books to Wilkes-Barre between 7 and 20 Feb. 1787, where he used them in Company hearings to determine the actual amount of land already settled under Company rules and regulations. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 11:59, 65.

8. Extant records of the Delaware Companies have been included in *Susquehanna Company Papers*.

Table II
Westmoreland Records¹

Description	Pagination	Chronological Order
Vol. I—Records of the Town of Westmoreland Begins 1779	1-622	3
Vol. II—Records of the Town of Westmoreland Ends 1782	623-1033	4
Vol. III—Records of the Town of Westmoreland (Actually the Town Book of Wilkes-Barre, 1770-1777)	1034-1397	1
Vol. IV—Ledger A (1777-1782, addenda 1801)	1-170	2

1. Original or manuscript copies and typescript copies located in Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, Wilkes-Barre. Typescript copy of Ledger A, Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University.

The newly appointed Westmoreland officials assumed the record-keeping functions for the merged Susquehanna Company townships and those records form part of the Westmoreland Records. One separate volume of probate records, dated 6 January 1777 to 16 June 1783, also resulted. The original is in the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in Wilkes-Barre, and it has been reprinted in the *Proceedings* of the Society, volume 18, and separately as *The Wyoming Valley Probate Records* (1923). It is also available on microfilm through the Library of the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Two years after incorporation of the town, the Connecticut Assembly granted Westmoreland full privileges as a Connecticut county, primarily to ease the burden of carrying court cases to Litchfield. The boundaries of Westmoreland remained the same, but the change in status facilitated the formation of outlying districts and its political responsibilities increased. For the first time it was able to levy and collect taxes, making it much easier to support its militia regiment formed to defend the Susquehanna settlers from Pennsylvania and Indian hostilities. The earliest tax lists begin with the August 1776 list of inhabitants. A yearly listing continued for the next five years. The original tax lists for the first four years, 1776 through 1780, are among the Sheldon Reynolds manuscripts in the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society. They have been published in Horace Hayden, "List of Taxable Inhabitants," *Proceedings*, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society (1898-99):205-42. The tax list for 1781 is printed in Horace Hayden, *The Massacre of Wyoming* (Wilkes-Barre, 1895), 78-83.

Many entries from the Westmoreland Records have been printed in *The Susquehanna Company Papers* and in the *Proceedings* of the

Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, but many also remain unpublished. The unpublished material includes deeds, land transfers, and vital statistics. The original Westmoreland Records (or manuscript copies), and typescript copies are in the collection of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in Wilkes-Barre.⁹ They total four volumes. The third volume, paged 1034-1397, is the first volume chronologically and actually is the Town Book of Wilkes-Barre, the largest of the first five settling towns. This volume includes minutes of most of the settlers' meetings between 1770 and 1777, and many deed records. The fourth volume, paged 1-170, is the second book chronologically. Titled Ledger A, it continues the record of the settlers' business into 1782, although the recording dates are not in order. At the end of this volume, collected and added in 1801, are copies of deeds and lists of settlers of the five settling towns: Forty, later Kingston; Wilkes-Barre; Plymouth; Lackawanna, later Pittstown; and Nanticoke, later Hanover.¹⁰ The remaining two volumes, paged 1 to 1033, cover the period from 1779 to 1782 and contain most of the land deeds for Westmoreland after it became a county. Surviving town books for two townships settled before 1782, Salem and Hanover, are not incorporated into the Westmoreland Records, but they are also in the collection of the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

Strangely enough, nearly seven years after Connecticut lost its long-standing battle with Pennsylvania for political autonomy in the disputed region, the Account Books of the Susquehanna Company came back into use. Although the Trenton Decree, emanating from a 1782 Federal Court decision, nullified all Connecticut jurisdiction in Pennsylvania, it left the issue of individual land ownership unsettled.¹¹ As a result, over the next few years, the management and direction of the Susquehanna Company changed considerably. Despite the fact that a moderate faction within the Company honored the spirit of the Decree and discontinued the Westmoreland land, probate, and tax records, a more radical faction of the Company fought for control.¹² Colonel John Franklin became its acknowledged leader. By 1785 he had mounted a new effort to grant half-shares to men who would settle and aid in the resistance to Pennsylvania law.¹³ Franklin initiated his own Account Book, now labeled *Liber*

9. Erroneously reported missing in *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 11:247, note 4.

10. A typescript copy of Ledger A is also in Pattee Library, Pennsylvania State University, University Park.

11. The actual date of the proclamation announcing the Decree was 6 January 1783. For the Decree see *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 7:247-9.

12. The Westmoreland Records remained in the private possession of Zebulon Butler who recorded an occasional deed after 1782. Shortly before his death, the Records passed to his son, Lord Butler, who made them available to the Compromise Law Commissioners in 1801. The Commissioners then placed the Records in the County Commissioners' Office. Some of the volumes later fell into private hands before ultimate donation to the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

13. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 8:247.