

I of the Susquehanna Company Account Books, to record the half-share deeds which he and his son, Billa, granted, along with many other transactions instrumental in their efforts to populate the Westmoreland region. Finally, in 1787, he wrested complete control of the Company from the Connecticut proprietors and moved the Account Books to Pennsylvania.¹⁴ He planned on populating the Company's vacant land with so many settlers that Pennsylvania would have no choice but to recognize individual land titles.

By the early 1790s the radical faction of the Susquehanna Company had gained virtual outlaw status. Within a few years after serving a jail sentence in Philadelphia, Franklin, with the encouragement of the "wild Yankees" as they were called, moved the Company's headquarters from Wilkes-Barre to Athens, Pennsylvania. There, he reactivated the Account Books and, in 1795, opened a land office. While the Company continued to sell shares to individuals, its main thrust was to grant entire townships to proprietors who functioned as land speculators.¹⁵ These speculators resold the land, hoping to make personal profit while the Company benefited by the increased number of settlers holding title under Company authority. The new assistant clerk, David Paine, began to record deeds in Account Book *Liber C* on the page immediately following the last entry recorded in Connecticut seven years earlier. Many grants of townships include a list of all the settlers in whose rights, or shares, the township was granted. Business was so brisk that *Liber C* was quickly filled. It was followed by *Liber D*, *E*, *F*, and *H*. Entries in each of these *Liber* follow a partially chronological, partially random order. *Liber C* has a grantee-grantor index, but the remaining *Liber*s do not.

Two other Account Books serve as general indexes. *Liber G* is an alphabetized ledger of proprietors to whom deeds were conveyed between 1766 and 1778. The major portion of *Liber G* is preserved with the Account Books in the Connecticut Historical Society and, thus, has been microfilmed. A segment of it, containing entries for the letters S-W, seems to be incorporated into another index of proprietors in the Franklin Papers at the Pennsylvania State Archives.¹⁶ The second and more comprehensive index is the volume currently labeled *Liber A*, but which actually is an index for the period 1754-1798. It lists the original proprietor, number of shares purchased, to whom and when they were conveyed, when the transactions were recorded, taxes paid, and township in

14. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 8:425-9. Franklin arrived in Wilkes-Barre between 7 and 20 Feb. 1787, 9:59, 65; "Records of the Proceedings of the Court of Commissioners . . .," John Franklin Papers, Pennsylvania State Archives; also *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 9:119-22.

15. For a list of Townships granted see *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 10:566-77.

16. The Franklin Papers were at one time owned by O. N. Worden, an inveterate collector of local history. *Yearbook*, Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, 1920, 39.

which settled. This index was probably prepared in response to a Company directive in 1795 to "make out a complete list of the names of the proprietors, and annex thereto the proportion of land to which they are severally entitled — that said list shall be entered at large on the Record of said Company."¹⁷ It should not be confused with the original *Liber A* which was missing in 1862 when the Account Books were found.

The Account Books also exist in photostat and summarized typescript form in addition to the original manuscript and the microfilm. The photostat copies were made by Julian Boyd in 1929 as part of his work on *The Susquehanna Company Papers*. Boyd bound the photostats together in ledger-style binders, but minus their indexes and in such a way that volume and page numbers do not correspond directly with the original *Liber*. He then prepared typescript summaries of the deeds and nearly completed a file card index of names, as if his plan had been to publish this summarized version of the Account Books as an accompanying volume to *The Susquehanna Company Papers*.¹⁸ Other circumstances intervened however.¹⁹ The photostats, typescript summaries, and index were laid aside at the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society in Wilkes-Barre where Boyd had worked on the project. Since then, *Liber* D and I have disappeared, apparently victims of the 1936 flood, but the remaining photostats, typed summaries, and index are available for research.

Official public records, particularly Pennsylvania county records, United States census and tax records, and Pennsylvania Land Office records, augment the information contained in the Account Books, but the accurate use of these public documents depends upon an understanding of the process of the settlement of individual land titles and the contemporary Pennsylvania laws in effect. Initially, Pennsylvania county records were not open to Susquehanna settlers. Before the Divestiture Act of November 1779, counties recorded the land transactions of only those individuals who acquired their land by Pennsylvania warrant and survey. The Susquehanna settlers, not following that procedure, were considered to be intruders. In effect, the Westmoreland Records substituted for Pennsylvania county records. Consequently, when sovereignty in the area officially passed to Pennsylvania in 1783 and Northumberland became the county of jurisdiction, none of the Susquehanna settlers' deed, tax, or probate records appeared in the Northumberland records. As Pennsylvania residents without a county, the Susquehanna settlers lived free of taxes for the ensuing five years and were truly without the law.

17. Susquehanna Company Account Book, *Liber C*, 399-404; *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 10:216.

18. Twelve volumes of documents were originally planned. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 11:xiii.

19. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 1:viii.

To rectify this situation and to persuade Connecticut-Pennsylvanians to accept their status as Pennsylvania residents, Luzerne county was formed in 1786 from that part of Northumberland which encompassed the Susquehanna Company settlements. Settlers were offered the opportunity of affirming their allegiance to Pennsylvania and selecting officials to represent them in the state legislature. An act confirming land titles to actual settlers in selected townships was passed, suspended, and then repealed.²⁰ Several deeds of transfer were recorded at this time, although few were based upon legal Pennsylvania warrants or patents.²¹ Most settlers found the requirements of the Confirming Law unacceptable, however, and preferred to wait for more equitable legislation. It was over ten more years in coming.

The first report of Luzerne County official business illustrates the Susquehanna settlers' general unwillingness to comply with Pennsylvania law. Timothy Pickering, the author of the report, lamented the sparseness of official transactions which he received to record while serving as chief county officer from 1787 to 1791. As the Recorder of Deeds, one of the positions Pickering held, he claimed deeds and mortgages would have filled only three-fourths of one folio volume or about 125 pages. During that same nearly five year period, Pickering recorded only eight wills in the Register's office. Letters of Administration were more numerous, but most of them involved victims of the 1778 Indian attack and after that business was settled, Pickering issued scarcely six administrations a year. The Prothonotary's office did the most business according to Pickering's calculations, accounting for 20 to 40 actions per year, but even that had dwindled considerably by 1791.²² Researchers will find these earliest Luzerne County records to which Pickering refers transcribed in the opening pages of the regular Luzerne County records.

Tax lists provide another possible source for locating Susquehanna settlers. Records indicate that tax collection under Pennsylvania jurisdiction commenced in 1787 when Luzerne County began to function as a political unit.²³ However, it seems that the earliest extant tax list dates from 1796, and it is reprinted in several local and county histories. The most important tax list for studying Susquehanna settlers is the United States Direct Tax of 1798. A levy on real property and slaves, it is often called the Glass Tax due to its formula for assessing the number of windows and window panes in a dwelling. Very few states have complete lists, but Pennsylvania is one of the fortunate. Lists are complete for every county in existence at the time the tax was levied. To use the list

20. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, (Act, 28 March 1787) 9:82; (Suspended, 29 March 1788) 9:366; (Repeal, 1 April 1790) 10:112.

21. See for example *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 10:350, or *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st series, 10:551-2.

22. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 10:145.

23. Butler Papers, Wyoming Historical and Geological Society, reprinted in Harvey-Smith, *Wilkes-Barre*, 3:1628; see also 1687.

most efficiently, it helps to know the township in which the Susquehanna settler owned property or resided as of 1 October 1798. It is possible to identify both the owner and the occupant of the property; the dimensions of the dwelling and outbuildings; the building materials; the number of stories, windows, and window panes; the names of adjoining proprietors; and the acreage and value. The lists are available on microfilm at the Pennsylvania State Archives and at the National Archives.

Census records, both federal and state, offer yet another source for studying Susquehanna settlers. The federal censuses of 1790 and 1800 should be consulted, although being population counts, they provide little specific information beyond location, and the name of the head of the household and the number of people living in the house. The state of Pennsylvania also conducted a population enumeration. Taken every seven years from 1799 to 1862, and called the septennial census, it was used to determine representation in the General Assembly. Unfortunately, only the 1800 septennial census return is extant for Luzerne County. It lists the name of each taxable and information concerning blacks and slaves. The State Archives holds the original returns, microfilmed for general use.

The most extensive complement to the Susquehanna Company Account Books are the records collected when the Susquehanna settlers' individual land titles were eventually settled. These records are currently available in the Division of Land Records, Pennsylvania State Archives. The Pennsylvania Compromise Law of 1799 created a board of Commissioners whose job it was to examine Connecticut claims, determine their veracity, and award title. This process of title certification allowed room for much controversy and three different boards were constituted before a group of commissioners who could work together was finally appointed in 1801. Of the more than 250 Susquehanna Company townships, the Commissioners initially qualified only seventeen as complying with the terms of the law which required granting and settling dates prior to the Trenton decision of 1782. Two townships, Bedford and Ulster, were later removed from the list of seventeen, leaving only fifteen townships whose inhabitants were eligible to claim land under the 1799 law. The terms of the law provided that individuals holding property under Pennsylvania warrant within the fifteen townships were to be compensated upon release of land they had obtained before 1782, and Connecticut settlers on the same piece of land were to be certified as owners provided they could prove an individual chain of title and the grant of the township, both under the rules and regulations of the Susquehanna Company. For the most part, individual deed papers, the Susquehanna Company Account Books, and the Westmoreland Records contained the only extant documentation to prove a claim. The Commissioners collected these pieces of evidence, creating quite a sizeable record group. Claimants whose records were validated received a certificate upon which a patent was to be issued pending the payment of repurchase and land office fees.

Records of the Commissioners operating under the Compromise Law of 1799 were entered into volumes titled "Minutes of Evidence Respecting the Titles of Connecticut Claimants." The surviving pages are bound in *Connecticut Claimants*, volumes 2 and 3. Volume 1 of the set is a chronological abstract of claimants deeds recorded in Luzerne county deed books.²⁴ Copies of evidence books bound by individual townships are also available at the Wyoming Historical and Geological Society.

Not every certified Connecticut claimant was able to secure title to the entirety of his land under the terms of the 1799 law. In cases where a Pennsylvania landholder had secured title to the same piece of land after the Trenton Decree of 1782, a conflict still remained. The problem festered until 1807 when the Pennsylvania legislature finally passed an amendment to the Compromise Law allowing Pennsylvania landholders to receive compensation for releases of land which they had obtained after the Trenton Decree.²⁵ The records of the commissioners settling claims under this law are bound in a volume titled *Book of the Fifteen Townships*. The volume is reprinted in the *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd series, volume 18.

The settlement of individual land titles was finally completed in 1810 with the reinstatement of the previously disqualified townships of Bedford and Ulster. All claimants who could prove acquisition and occupation of their lots prior to March 1787, with the further stipulation that Ulster claimants must trace their title to the first grant of that township made in 1775 and not later regrants, qualified for a certificate for a patent.²⁶ Deeds and documents gathered under this law are bound in a volume titled *Journal of the Commissioners, 1810*, and it is also reprinted in volume 18 of the 2nd series of the *Pennsylvania Archives*.

It is important for researchers to understand that by these three laws, that is, the Compromise Law of 1799, the 1807 Amendment, and the Bedford and Ulster Act of 1810, all certified Connecticut claimants' surveys and patents supplanted surveys and patents for the same piece of land in the Pennsylvania survey and patent books. Pennsylvania certificates and surveys granted to Connecticut settlers in the seventeen townships are recorded in twelve volumes titled *Seventeen Certified Townships, Surveys and Certification*. Another volume titled, *Certified Townships, Luzerne*, lists by township all individuals who received certificates, to whom that land was ultimately patented, and the survey and patent volumes and pages. Still another volume, *Classification 17 Townships, Luzerne County*, contains lists for each of four classifications of land for every certificate granted in 15 of the 17 certified

24. These deeds were recorded in an effort to legitimize land transfer subsequent to the original Susquehanna proprietor's settlement.

25. 9 April 1807. *Susquehanna Company Papers*, 11:519; *Laws of Pennsylvania* (Smith's Laws), 4:411-2.

26. *Laws of Pennsylvania* (Smith's Laws), 5:127-131. For a summary of all Pennsylvania laws relating to Connecticut claimants see "General Index" bound *ibid.*, 5:79-86.

townships. The valuations for the temporarily disqualified townships of Bedford and Ulster are bound in a separate volume titled *Classification and Valuation Bedford and Ulster*.

Documents gathered under the various laws settling Connecticut claims were retained by the Land Record Office, but stored for decades where their existence eluded even the most persistent researchers.²⁷ Currently they are again available. Filed alphabetically by townships, they consist of applications, claims, deeds, oaths of single title, and miscellaneous records. Many are the original documents from which Susquehanna Company and Luzerne County records were copied. Two sets of microfilm of many of the documents do exist, one prepared by the State of Pennsylvania and one by the Genealogy Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but both are non-targeted and non-indexed and, thus, difficult to use.

One further set of sources graphically locates and describes land warranted and patented to Connecticut claimants. These are the connected land draft maps, popularly called warrant maps. They are drawn according to currently existing township lines and are completed for the sections of Luzerne and Bradford counties which hold most of the original seventeen townships. The earliest drawn warrant maps show only the Connecticut claimants' warrants, whereas those most recently constructed show the conflicting, overlapping warrants of Pennsylvania landholders and Connecticut claimants. Copies are filed in the current county of jurisdiction in both the County Commissioners' and the Recorder of Deeds' offices. They also may be purchased from the Division of Land Records.

All Susquehanna settlers did not become Connecticut claimants. Those who had settled after 1782 in over 200 non-certified townships were ineligible to claim land under the Compromise Law of 1799 and its amendments. These settlers could attempt to warrant their land directly from the state of Pennsylvania, purchase it from the Pennsylvania landholder, or move elsewhere. Appropriate sources for each of these options should be checked if your Susquehanna settler does not appear among the Connecticut claimants.

Certain secondary sources provide additional assistance in searching for individuals involved with the Susquehanna Company. Of particular note are those whose authors had access to original Susquehanna Company records.²⁸ The earliest of these is Charles Miner's 1845 *History of Wyoming*. Miner's references included the Susquehanna Company Minute Book and a portion of the Westmoreland Records. Next in time is Horace Hollister's *History of the Lackawanna Valley*, appearing in

27. Apparently deposited in the loft of the old Executive Building. Herman V. Ames, "Report on the Public Archives of Pennsylvania," in *Annual Report of the American Historical Assn.*, 1900, 2:267-293. In 1957 many documents were recovered from the attic of the Capitol Building.

28. For specific references see the author's manuscript on this subject.

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land Records were "rapidly going to decay" and deserved a more honored
place than the "musty-coup" they occupied in Wilkes-Barre, but did
acknowledge assistance for access to them. He also used the minutes of
Susquehanna Company meetings published in 1852 and 1853 in the
"Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania," both in *Colonial*
Records, 9, 10, 13-16; and in *Pennsylvania Archives*, 1st series, 3, 4, 6,
9-11. A third local history, Stewart Pearce's *Annals of Luzerne County*
(Philadelphia, 1860), relied upon the same records as Hollister. The first
local historian to have access to the Susquehanna Company Account
Books was the Rev. David Craft. Both his *Historical Discourse of the*
Wyalusing Presbyterian Church, printed privately in 1870, and his
History of Bradford County (Philadelphia, 1878), contain material he
extracted from the four Account Books he could find in 1868 or 1869
when visiting the Connecticut Historical Society. Craft also used the
Minute Book and many of the records in the Pennsylvania Land Office
relating to the Connecticut controversy. Oscar Jewell Harvey's *A History*
of Wilkes-Barre, 1 and 2 (Wilkes-Barre, 1909), and 3, posthumously by
Ernest J. Smith (1927), was the only local history prior to Boyd and
Taylor's *Susquehanna Company Papers* to be based upon all of the Sus-
quehanna Company Minute and Account Books. One other secondary
source, *The Luzerne Federalist*, should not be overlooked. As the only
local newspaper, it carried the final and accepted lists of Connecticut
claimants for each certified township, as well as other usual items such as
advertisements, marriage and death notices, and lists of letters remaining
at the post office.

In summary, it is fairly safe to say that if your Connecticut ancestor
did move to Pennsylvania under the rules and regulations of the Sus-
quehanna Company, you will be able to locate him using one or more of
the sources discussed. If, after living in Pennsylvania, your ancestor
moved out of the state before securing legal title to his land, the record of
his activities may only appear in the Account Books of the Susquehanna
Company. No single source is more important for tracing a Susquehanna
settler.

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Franklin, John, 1749-1831.

Papers, 1754-1828.

(4 folders)

Organization: Arranged chronologically.

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Record 1 of 1

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The Susquehanna Company was a land company organized in the colony of Connecticut in 1753 and 1754 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. The dispute was between the Company settlers, and settlers who held Pennsylvania titles to the same land. The land controversy between the two states was settled in the early 1800s, with the help of the Pennsylvania Compromise Law of 1799, which created a board of Commissioners whose job it was to examine Connecticut claims, determine their veracity, and award title. Not every Connecticut claimant was able to secure title to the entirety of his land under the terms of the 1799 law. In cases where a Pennsylvania landholder had secured title to the same piece of land after the Trenton Decree of 1782, a conflict still remained, and the settlement of individual land titles was not completed until 1810.

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Even then, all Susquehanna settlers did not become successful claimants. Those who had settled after 1782 in over 200 non-certified townships were ineligible to claim land under the 1799 Law and its amendments. These unfortunate settlers had to choose between attempting to warrant their land directly from the state of Pennsylvania, purchasing it from the Pennsylvania landowner who had title to it, or moving elsewhere.

John Franklin (1749-1831) was a leader of the Connecticut settlement in Pennsylvania beginning in 1774, and was also a member of the Pennsylvania legislature, 1796, 1799-1803, 1805.

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Summary: These papers of John Franklin relate mainly to the Susquehanna Company land controversy. 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; a 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; a letter from Joseph Reed, President of the Supreme Executive Council, Philadelphia to Colonel Zebulon Butler, April 2, 1779; and correspondence of the Wyoming Committee (a committee representing the settlers from Connecticut at Wyoming) regarding efforts to settle its dispute with the committee representing the landholders under Pennsylvania, 1783.

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Also included are a transcript of a 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, Pa. of Colonel John Armstrong and his men, October 120, 1784, and February 6, 1814; requests addressed by John Franklin and others to Benjamin Franklin, President of the Supreme Executive Council, 1786; a letter to John Franklin from his son Biller regarding the death of the son's wife, April 14, 1824; a 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.

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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; an abstract from the journals of the treaty made at Albany with the Six Nations, 1775; an 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; and records of the proceedings at Hartford of a Court of Commissioners appointed by the proprietors of the Susquehanna purchase, 1786-1787.

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Finally, also present are a 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; 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; and a paper-bound index listing names under the heading "proprietors taken in by committee" for six years between 1768 and 1785. In the index is a list of land titles, indicating original proprietor, to whom conveyed, and when conveyed and recorded, and in many of the margins are scribbled notes, apparently by John Franklin, some of them relating to early nineteenth century matters.

Indexes: Finding aid in the repository.

Location: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, P.O. Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026, (Ms. Group 52)