

Dreisbach Family Association

March 2013 Newsletter - revised Oct 2014©

Martin Dreisbach: Part 2, revised:

This is a revision of the original March 2013 newsletter after the discovery of new facts concerning the amount of land he purchased and the location of his house (see Sept. 2014 DFA Newsletter for details).

Martin moved to Buffalo Township, Union County, PA, in 1773, arriving at a tumultuous time. To put Martin's life on the frontier into context, very brief discussions of the complex French and Indian War and the "New Purchase" are included in the text.

Martin settles in Buffalo Valley, Union Co. PA: In 1773, the 56 year old Martin sold his farm located in an area of Berks Co. that was fast becoming a hub of commercial activity. Why did he sell and move to the frontier? Probably so his sons could have farms of their own. Land in Berks County had become expensive. On the frontier land was cheaper and there was a lot more of it. The frontier was not, however, a peaceful place. Martin arrived in Buffalo Valley in the midst of disputes among settlers, Indian attacks and even a 'war' with settlers from Connecticut!

Settlers versus Indians: The period between 1750 and 1780 was the peak of settler pressure on Indian land in Pennsylvania. Immigrants wanted land of their own and saw the uninhabited forests as land for the taking. For the Indians this meant loss of hunting grounds, hunger and eventual displacement. To retain their way of life, the Indians had to stop the encroaching settlements and the French seemed to promise a way to facilitate this.



Fig. 1 - A 'period view' of settlers versus Indians. "Spirit of the Frontier" by John Gast, 1872. Settlers move west, aided by technology (railroads, telegraphs) and guided by the goddess, Columbia - driving Indians and bison into obscurity. Columbia brings "light" as she travels toward the "darkened" west. www.wikipedia.org {{PD-Art|PD-old-100}}

French and Indian War: The French and Indian War took place between the fall of 1755 and 1763. The war was the combined result of settler incursions on Indian land and the desire for Britain and France to take ownership of vast

territories. Colonists, with knowledge of total warfare from European experience, attacked Indian villages and destroyed food sources. Racially motivated attacks and killings were the norm. The Indians retaliated in kind - raiding homes, killing settlers and livestock¹. Patterns of violence, of action and reaction, permeated the frontier.

During the war years, 1755-1763, Martin lived in Cocalico Twp., close to, but not on the frontier. However even there he must have known the worry of possible Indian attacks as alarms were raised as far south as Lancaster. The threat of attack was far worse in frontier regions like Buffalo Valley.



Fig. 2 - Conference between the French and Indian Leaders Around a Ceremonial Fire. Painting by Emile Louis Vernier (1829-1887) www.wikipedia.org {{PD-Art|PD-old-100}}

Buffalo Valley - Penn's Creek Massacre: In 1753, two years before the French and Indian War, about 25 settlers were living on Penn's Creek, (part of the Buffalo Valley frontier) on land belonging to the Indians. There were rumors that the French were persuading the Indians to attack British settlers and settlements. On 16 October 1755, the rumors proved true - all of the first Buffalo Valley settlers, except for one man, were killed or taken prisoner.² This may have been the first act of the French and Indian war in which brutal and "racially motivated savagery" occurred on both sides.³ There were on-going talks with the Indians throughout the French and Indian war, but peace was not negotiated until 1763. When it finally came, the peace treaty allowed the Penn Proprietary Government to negotiate more land purchases from the Indians.

"New Purchase" - where Martin bought land: The largest of the newly negotiated acquisitions was called the "New Purchase". Bought from the Iroquois in 1768 for \$10,000, the purchase comprised one third of present day Pennsylvania⁴ and included Buffalo Valley where Martin Dreisbach settled in 1773. Like all the previous (and future) purchases, it was made in reaction to settlement that had already occurred and like all the previous purchases, it was intended to delineate the extent of settlement and to be a buffer zone between settlers and Indians.⁵



Fig. 3 - Map of present day Pennsylvania showing when land was purchased from the Indians. Yellowish section shows 1768 "New Purchase" Penn Proprietary Government bought from the Iroquois. Red arrow is location of Buffalo Valley. For better image go to: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pennsylvania_land_purchases.png

To its credit, the Penn Proprietary Government allowed settlement only on land formally negotiated with the Indians. However it did not grasp that settlers could not be prevented from encroaching on Indian lands and that the pressure on Indian lands would be unending

Applications for Land in the 'New Purchase':

Since the Penns wanted the lands of the "New Purchase" to act as a buffer and as a firm line of settlement, they encouraged a group of 26 officers, who had served in the French and Indian War, to claim back pay owed to them in the form of land grants in the "New Purchase". Knowing they would help create the desired buffer zone, the Penn Government quickly approved the soldiers' *applications* for 24,000 acres of land, given in three groups of 8000 acres, a full two months before anyone else could even apply.⁶



Fig. 4 - Officers' Tracts in Buffalo Valley. Outlines show tracts awarded to 16 officers in Buffalo Valley. The white quadrangle contains the 619 acres of Capt. Plunkett which he called "Isabella" and which was bought by Martin Dreisbach. Red arrow points to Capt. Hendrick's tract later bought by John Aurand. Lewisburg is beyond the upper right hand corner of picture. Aerial view from Google Earth.

Officers' Tracts: The lands awarded to these soldiers were called the 'Officers' Tracts'. The 8000 acre tract in Buffalo Valley is the one we are concerned with. It was shared among 16 officers and contained some of the best lands in the "New Purchase".⁷ One of the officers, who received land here, Capt. Plunkett, was important to Martin Dreisbach.

Gentlemen's Tracts: A second group of French and Indian War officers also received land in the New Purchase. To

differentiate those from the first Officers' Tracts, they were called Gentlemen's Tracts.⁸

Settlers' Tracts: The last group of people allowed to make *application* for land in the "New Purchase" were the ordinary people who had already settled on the land or who wanted to settle there! All applicants agreed to settle a family on every 300 acre tract that they were granted and to pay five pounds sterling per 100 acres - within two years after receiving their tracts.⁹ Some people had built houses and were farming land that had been granted to the Officers or Gentlemen. Many *applications* were made with only the vaguest idea of where the boundaries were and claims overlapped.

Application chaos for settlers: "*Applications* for settlers' land in the New Purchase began to arrive at the Land Office well before the date set for acceptance of applications."¹⁰ When the day came for settlers to make *applications* for land, there was a mad rush at the Land Office in Philadelphia in an attempt to get priority for claims. On the first day alone 2,802 applications were filed!¹¹ There were so many *applications* that a lottery system was developed. All *applications* received on a given day were put into a trunk, mixed and numbered as they were removed.¹² The order of this number was used when questions of priority arose.

The Application procedure: The procedure to gain formal ownership of the land was the same for everyone. The first step was to file an *application* with the Land Office to get a 'warrant to survey'. The next step was to have the claim surveyed. A warrant 'to accept' the survey was issued by the Surveyor General after the survey was done, had been sent to the Surveyor General and had been returned to the Land Office. The next step was to pay the purchase price after which a patent was issued, indicating ownership.

However, many, perhaps most of the people making application for land in the "New Purchase" did not get a survey done. This halted the procedure to get formal ownership and meant that much of the land in Buffalo Valley was settled, and farmed, but was without formal title (patent).¹³ This was the situation that greeted Martin when he arrived in Buffalo Valley in 1773 and wanted to buy land!

The Hendricks/Aurand Land: Martin was preceded in the move to Buffalo Valley by the father-in-law of his daughter, John Aurand, and Aurand may be the person who persuaded Martin to move to Buffalo Valley. John and Martin must have known that getting title to lands that had not been surveyed was going to be difficult. However the Officers' Tracts had accurate surveys and clear right of ownership, leading both men to pursue purchasing Officers' Tracts.

The most desirable land in this group of Officers' Tracts was located along Turtle Creek. Capt. Hendricks, who had first choice, claimed the land shown by a red arrow in Fig.4. He never lived there and it appears John Aurand was negotiating to purchase this property when Hendricks died and title was taken by Col. Francis. Aurand then negotiated with Col. Francis and bought the "Hendrick's Tract" for 639 pounds sterling on 27 April 1774.¹⁴

At about the same time, Martin Dreisbach was negotiating with Capt. William Plunkett who owned the tract immediately beside the "Hendrick's Tract". (Figs. 4 and 5.) Plunkett called this tract "Isabella" (most tracts had names) and the survey for it is found online at the Pennsylvania Archives.¹⁵

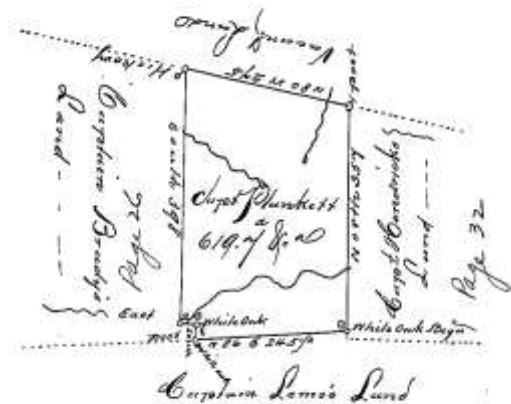


Fig. 5 – Capt. William Plunkett’s Survey: “Isabella” consisted of 619 acres and 130 perches.

Who was Capt. William Plunkett? Who was the officer who owned the tract that Martin Dreisbach later purchased? William Plunkett was born about 1720, in Ireland, where he studied medicine. During the French and Indian war he served as a physician where he was called upon to dress scalped heads and other wounds of settlers.¹⁶ He was a surgeon in the 2nd Battalion and served in Bouquet’s campaign of 1764 which entitled him to land in the Officers’ Tracts in Buffalo Valley. After the Penn Proprietaries had the lands surveyed, the officers drew lots to choose a tract.¹⁷ Plunkett must have had a low number because he could choose a favorable piece of land (Fig. 4). He did not, however, live on this land but on another tract which was farther west in Buffalo Valley. Plunkett also served in the Pennamite war. After the war he moved to Sunbury, in Northumberland County, PA where he died in 1791.

Information about Martin Dreisbach’s land:

There are five documents from Capt. William Plunkett to Martin “Treasbough” recorded in the Northumberland Co, PA., courthouse. There is an additional document from William Patterson who is acting as surety for Plunkett, guaranteeing that Plunkett will keep his agreement to sell to Martin.

- Vol D, p. 41 – Plunkett to Treasbough, 30 April 1773- Agmt*
 - Vol D, p. 42 – Patterson to Treasbough 30 April 1773 - bond
 - Vol D, p. 42 – Plunkett to Treasbough, 19 Nov 1773 – Agmt*
 - Vol D, p. 54 – Plunkett to Treasbach, 19 Nov 1773 – Agmt*
 - Vol B, p. 491 – Plunkett to Treisbach, 14 July 1775 - deed
 - Vol M, p. 61 – Plunkett to Driesbach, 14 July 1791 – Shff**
- The last sale is a Sherriff’s Deed. More research needs to be done on these purchases and those of Martin Jr.

*Agreement
** Sheriff

Martin buys the entire Isabella tract! In the March 2013 issue of the DFA Newsletter, we said that the evidence suggested Martin did not purchase the entire Isabella Tract. That is wrong! The deed of sale found in Deed Book B, p. 491 in the Northumberland Co. Courthouse in Sunbury, PA. clearly says that Plunkett is selling *all 619 acres and 134 perches to Martin Treisbach.*

Trying to find the location of Martin’s land: The goal was to locate Martin’s farm as it is today. We know Martin bought his land from Plunkett and we know he gave seven acres of his land to build a church. Since we know where the Dreisbach Church is located (yellow arrow in Fig. 6), we can be certain this land once belonged to Martin Dreisbach. Using field outlines and roads, in particular the Dreisbach Church Road, we can draw a reasonable estimate of precisely where Martin’s land is located it and then visit it!



Fig. 6 – Martin Dreisbach’s land: Aerial view - land that belonged to Martin Dreisbach. Blue arrows point to present day “Dreisbach Church Road”, the western boundary of Martin’s farmland. Red arrow points to location of Martin Dreisbach’s homestead. Google Earth.

Finding the location of Martin Dreisbach’s house: During the Dreisbach Family Association reunion in 2007 the reunion organizers were told that they could tour a house which was said to be the house of Martin Dreisbach. It was owned at that time by Dr. and Mrs. Fasano. It’s a beautiful, old stone house – but it is not the house of Martin Dreisbach. We do not know what made the owners believe that it had been Martin’s house, but it is located on land Martin Dreisbach never owned. Therefore to try to find Martin Dreisbach’s house, we looked at the aerial view shown above. There are several present day houses which might be on the site of Martin’s original house, but one site in particular looked promising. The house just above the Dreisbach church.



Fig. 7 – This is NOT Martin Dreisbach’s House – It is the house owned by Dr. and Mrs. Fasano which was graciously opened to the Dreisbachs for a visit during the 2007 DFA reunion. Unfortunately, this house is, in no way, associated with Martin Dreisbach Sr or Martin Dreisbach Jr.

Site of Martin Dreisbach Sr’s house is identified: A visit to Lewisburg, PA in June 2014 produced a great deal of information including positive identification of the site of Martin Dreisbach Sr’s house (see red arrow in Fig. 6). The original house will have been built of logs. Subsequently a stone house was erected. It, too, was demolished and the current clapboard house was built in 1895. (See Sept. 2014 issue of the DFA Newsletter for details and more information.)



Fig. 8 – Present day house, built in 1885, which replaced the first houses that were built as Dreisbach homesteads, on the land of Martin Dreisbach Sr. Photo by Marcia Falconer, June 2014.

Revolutionary War begins: The Revolutionary War on the Pennsylvania frontier, in places like the Wyoming Valley and Buffalo Valley, involved an unusual cast of characters: American soldiers and militia, British soldiers, French soldiers, friendly Indians, hostile Indians and – hostile settlers from Connecticut!

Although the author has no documentation it is reasonable to assume that Martin and his sons were part of the American militia. The story of Martin’s son, Jacob, bringing salt from Philadelphia for the militia is recorded in the Penna. Archives and will be covered in another newsletter.

On January 1st, 1778, well into the Revolutionary War but before the major Indian attacks occurred, Martin Dreisbach is named an “overseer” for Buffalo and was also appointed to “divide Buffalo Valley”. How or why this should be done was not stated.¹⁸ And then disaster struck.

Connecticut claims a vast area of Pennsylvania: In 1662 King Charles II granted the top 1/3 of Pennsylvania to Connecticut and then granted the same land to William Penn in 1681, which set the scene for fierce land battles. By 1769 the Penn Government was allowing settlement in the “New Purchase” while at the same time, and in nearly the same place, Connecticut established settlements and built a fort.

Pennamite Wars: A complex situation arose where settler was pitted against settler depending upon whether they purchased their land from the Penn Proprietary Government or from Connecticut companies. This complex and bitter feud, called the Pennamite Wars, raged during the Revolutionary War and was not settled until 1799. Both Indian attacks and Connecticut company attacks occurred¹⁹ and a major battle sent Martin Dreisbach and everyone else fleeing to the south!

British and Indian attacks: By 1778 the British were using Indian allies to attack settlers on the frontier. On the 31st of May thirty five settlers were killed in a series of Indian attacks. One man escaped and reported “... the Indians are determined to clear the two branches of the Susquehanna this moon.”²⁰ Since Martin’s land was within a mile or so of the Susquehanna River, this would have been very worrisome news. It was followed within a month by even worse news.

Battle of Wyoming: June 1778, British Col. John Butler led a Loyalist (Americans loyal to Britain) and Indian force to attack Wyoming Valley, about 50 miles up the east branch of the Susquehanna River. They killed three men working at a grist mill and continued on. On 3 July the British force attacked the American militia and set up an Indian ambush. As the Americans engaged the British, the Indians attacked from the side and engaged the Americans in close combat. A bloody battle followed. Only 60 Americans escaped. The victorious Loyalists and Iroquois tortured and killed fleeing soldiers. Butler reported “227 American scalps were taken”.²¹ Non-combatants were spared but more than 200 chose not to surrender to Butler and fled into a swamp where women, children and old people died of exposure.



Fig. 9 – Battle of Wyoming, painted by Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887) Oil on canvas painting depicting the Wyoming Massacre, July 3, 1778. www.wikipedia.org {{PD-Art|PD-old-100}}

The Great Runaway: On July 5th, news of the Wyoming massacre reached Buffalo Valley. People from the back country had already gathered at defensible mills or houses. Now they fled *en masse*. Within four days both branches of the Susquehanna River were nearly evacuated. Panic reigned. The river and roads leading to it were covered with men, women and children fleeing for their lives. More than 200 wagons were reported to be on the way to Hummelstown (near Harrisburg, PA). One man reported “...just arrived at Harris’ Ferry (Harrisburg, PA), and beheld the greatest scenes of distress I ever saw. It was crowded with people who had come down the river, leaving everything.”²²

Martin Dreisbach and his family fled too. His grandson, Rev. John Dreisbach wrote “...about three years from the time of grandparents’ settling there (in Buffalo Valley), they had to flee from the place in order to escape from the Indian’s tomahawk and scalping knife, back to their former neighborhood; but returned to their new residence when the danger was over.”

After the war: We don’t know when Martin Dreisbach and his family returned to Buffalo Valley. John and Jacob Dreisbach were there in 1780 and 1783 although Indian attacks were occurring in the countryside all around them.²³ One attack was quite close. In April 1789 the Indians attacked a farm two roads south of Dreisbach church. They killed a man, Baltzer Klimesmith, and took his two daughters captive although both managed to escape. The Indians were about to attack another farm when the owner cleverly called for help from people in the nearby woods. The Indians left never knowing that there was nobody there except the one man²⁴! By 1787 Martin and others had returned. The threat of Indian attack was diminished and settlers could turn their thoughts to building a community.

The Dreisbach Church: A church was needed. Martin generously gave 7.5 acres of his land for a “house of worship and a graveyard” for members of the “union” church.²⁵ In this cause, the 42 members of the German Reformed and Lutheran congregations bound themselves together for “as long as the sun and moon shall shine, or until we ourselves shall dissolve the union between us.”

A log church was built in 1788 and replaced by a brick building in 1839. The church was rebuilt twice more, in 1869 and in 1964. The Lutheran congregation established its own church in 1963 at which time the union church changed its name to Dreisbach United Church of Christ. The church celebrated its 225th anniversary in 2013 and invited the greater Dreisbach Family to attend the celebration.



Fig. 10 – Present day Dreisbach United Church of Christ, Lewisburg, PA. <http://www.dreisbachucc.org/>

The log church was dedicated in 1789. Martin Dreisbach Sr was an Elder and his son, Henry, was made a Deacon. Jacob and John were members of the congregation.²⁶ That same year Martin’s wife, Anna Eva died. She lived long enough to see all her children married and died just before her 67th birthday. She is buried in the old section of the graveyard of the Dreisbach church.



Fig. 11 – Anna Eva Dreisbach tombstone in the old cemetery of the Dreisbach United Church of Christ, Lewisburg, PA. Written in German, it reads: “Here lies Anna Eva Wife of Martin Dreisbach Born April 1722 Died the 10th March 1789. She was almost 67 years old. I lie here and sleep in Peace because God takes care of me”.

Martin Dreisbach died 18 Feb 1799 at age 81. Like his wife, Martin is buried in the old graveyard on land he gave to the Dreisbach Church in 1788.

From the records of the County of Northumberland, PA: “Be it remembered that Martin Treisbach Sr. – deceased: That on the 24th day of April in the Year of our Lord 1804 Letters of Administration in free and common form of law were granted to Henry Treisbach, of all and singular the Goods, Chattels, Rights, Credits which were of Martin Treisbach Snr. – dec’d, Who hath put in sureties – Jacob Dresbach and Da’l Dresbach”.



Fig. 12 – Tombstone of Martin Dreisbach Sr. in the old graveyard of the Dreisbach United Church of Christ, Lewisburg, PA.

Martin may have moved to Buffalo Valley so that his sons could have their own farms there, but in the end only two sons continued to live in Buffalo Valley, Martin Jr. and John, a gunsmith in Mifflinburg. Jacob and Henry both moved to Pickaway County, Ohio. Nonetheless Martin did leave a definite legacy in Union County. There is the Dreisbach United Church of Christ, the Dreisbach homestead, and from 1874 to 1961, there was Dreisbach's Hardware Store in Lewisburg, PA.

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¹ Moyer, P.B., *Wild Yankees, the Struggle for Independence along Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Frontier.* Cornell Un. Press. 2007. p. 30.

² Linn, J.B., *Annals of Buffalo Valley, Union Co., Penna. 1755-1855.* Harrisburg, Pa., 1877. pp. 10, 11.

³ Op Cit. Moyer, pp. 10, 11, 12.

⁴ Munger, D.B., *Pennsylvania Land Records, a History and Guide for Research.* Penna. Hist. and Museum Commission. 1991, p. 79.

⁵ Op Cit. Munger, p. 60.

⁶ Op Cit. Linn, p. 27.

⁷ McCrea, K.D., *Pennsylvania Land Applications, Volume 2: New Purchase Applications, 1769-1773.* Genealogical Soc. of Penna. 2003. p. xxiii.

⁸ Op Cit. Munger, p. 80.

⁹ Op Cit. Munger, pp. 79-82.

¹⁰ Op Cit. McCrea, p. xiv.

¹¹ Op Cit. Munger, p. 81.

¹² Op cit. Linn, p. 32.

¹³ Ibid. pp. 81, 82.

¹⁴ Harbaugh, M.A., *The Aurandt Panorama, 1550-1982,* Aurand(t) Family Association. 1983. p. 76.

¹⁵ Pennsylvania Archives, Land Records, Copied Survey Books, Book A70, p.27. <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us>

¹⁶ from the website:

<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/pa/county/lycoming/history/Chapter-42.html>

¹⁷ Snyder, C.M., *Union County Pennsylvania, A Celebration of History,* Penn State Press, 2000. p.12

¹⁸ Ibid. Linn, pp. 148, 151.

¹⁹ Frantz, J.B. and Pencak, W., *Beyond Philadelphia, the American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland.* Penn State Un. Press 1998. pp. xxi – xxv.

²⁰ Op Cit. Linn, p. 153.

²¹ Cruikshank, E., *The Story of Butler's Rangers and the Settlement of Niagara.* Tribune Printer, 1893. p. 47.

²² Op Cit. Linn, p. 155.

²³ Ibid. Linn, pp 180, 216.

²⁴ Ibid. Linn, pp 189, 190.

²⁵ Op Cit. Harbaugh, p. 134.

²⁶ Op Cit. Linn, p 253.