

## Historical Resources

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### Section i.

#### Chester County Archives General Holdings

### Section ii.

#### Atlases and Maps Available at Chester County Archives

##### Atlases

1873 – **Atlas of Chester Co., Pennsylvania.** Safe Harbor, Lancaster Co., PA: A. R. Witmer.

1883 – **Breou's Official Series of Farm Maps, Chester County, Pennsylvania.** Philadelphia: W. H. Kirk & Co. (CCA has the reprint titled **Historical Atlas of Chester County, Pennsylvania** and original Breou's maps for most townships)

1897 – **Atlas of Properties on Line of Pennsylvania R. R. from Rosemont to West Chester.** Philadelphia: A. H. Mueller & Co.

*Boroughs of Downingtown, Malvern, and West Chester. Townships of Easttown, East and West Goshen, Tredyffrin, East and West Whiteland, Willistown. Also Edgmont, Haverford, Newtown, and Radnor Townships, Delaware Co.*

1912 – **Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad from Devon to Downingtown and West Chester.** Philadelphia: A. H. Mueller.

*Boroughs of Downingtown, Malvern, and West Chester. Townships of East Bradford, East Caln, Easttown, East and West Goshen, Thornbury, Tredyffrin, Westtown, East and West Whiteland, Willistown. Also Newtown Township, Delaware Co. and Upper Merion Township, Montgomery Co.*

1926 – **Atlas of Properties on Main Line Pennsylvania Railroad from Overbrook to Paoli.** Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley & Co.

*Townships of Easttown and Tredyffrin. Also Haverford and Radnor Townships, Delaware Co. and Lower and Upper Merion Townships and Narberth Borough, Montgomery Co.*

**1928 – Coatesville, Chester County, Pennsylvania, Including Rock Run, Boro of South Coatesville, Boro of Modena, Westwood, Valley, and West Fallowfield Twps.** Revised in 1961. New York: Sanborn Map Co. Bound with 1931 West Chester Sanborn.

**1929 – Phoenixville, Chester County, Pennsylvania, Including parts of Schuylkill Twp.** Revised in 1961. New York: Sanborn Map Co.

**1931 – West Chester, Chester County, Pennsylvania.** Revised in 1961. New York: Sanborn Map Co.

**1933 – Property Atlas of Chester County, Penna.** (vol. 1). Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Co.

*Boroughs of Downingtown, Malvern, and West Chester. Townships of Birmingham, East Bradford, East Caln, Charlestown, Easttown, East and West Goshen, Schuylkill, Thornbury, Tredyffrin, Westtown, East and West Whiteland, and Willistown. Also Newtown Township, Delaware Co.*

**1934 – Property Atlas of Chester County, Penna.** (vol. 2). Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Co.

*Townships of East and West Brandywine; Caln; East, North and South Coventry; East and West Nantmeal; East and West Pikeland; Uwchlan; Upper Uwchlan; Valley; East and West Vincent; and Warwick.*

**1950 – Property Atlas of the Main Line, Pennsylvania** (vol. 2). Philadelphia: Franklin Survey Co.

*Boroughs of Malvern and Phoenixville. Townships of Charlestown, Easttown, East and West Goshen, East and West Whiteland, Schuylkill, Tredyffrin, Willistown, and also Newtown Township, Delaware Co.*

**1989 – The Atlas of Pennsylvania.** Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

## **Top**

## **Maps**

**1744-46 – Callowhill Manor - leases to the Penn Heirs.** Drawn by Estelle Cremers, 1984.

**1765 – Township Map of Chester County.** Shows churches and creeks. From published Pennsylvania Archives. Includes present-day Delaware County.

1780 – **Township Map of Chester County.** Includes present-day Delaware County.

1785 – **Township Map of Chester County.** Shows churches and creeks. From published Pennsylvania Archives. Includes present-day Delaware County.

1790 – **Pikeland.** From Chew Papers, The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

1790s – **East Vincent Township as deeded in the 1790s by Thomas Willing and the West New Jersey Society.** Drawn by Estelle Cremers, 1984.

1790s – **West Vincent Township as deeded in the 1790s by Thomas Willing and the West New Jersey Society.** Drawn by Estelle Cremers, 1984.

18th c. – **Northern Chester County.** Prepared by Estelle Cremers.

1816 – **Hindman Map of Chester County.** Printed 1822.

1856 – **Kennedy Map of Chester County**

1860 – **Kennedy Map of Chester County**

[1980s] – **County Bridges** (County Engineering Dept.)

### **Current Township Map**

Section iii.

## **Chester County Archives – A Select Bibliography**

Records in the Chester County Archives have been used by numerous historians and students in their research. The following bibliography, while not complete, includes the most recent and/or significant works. The list does not include theses and dissertations.

Bussel, Robert. "The Most Indispensable Man in His Community': African-American Entrepreneurs in West Chester, Pennsylvania, 1865-1925." *Pennsylvania History*. 65 (Summer 1998): 324-349.

Falk, Cynthia G. "Symbols of Assimilation or Status? The Meanings of Eighteenth-Century Houses in Coventry Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania." *Winterthur Portfolio*. 33 (1998): 107-134.

Hood, Adrienne D. "The Gender Division of Labor in the Production of Textiles in Eighteenth-Century, Rural Pennsylvania (Rethinking the New England Model)." *Journal of Social History*. 27 (1994): 537-561.

Hood, Adrienne D. "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 53 (January 1996): 43-66.

Hood, Adrienne D. *The Weaver's Craft; Cloth, Commerce, and Industry in Early Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

Horle, Craig W. and Wokeck, Marianne S., editors. *Lawmaking and Legislators in*

*Pennsylvania; A Biographical Dictionary*. Vol. 1: 1682-1709. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

Horle, Craig W.; Foster, Joseph S.; and Scheib, Jeffrey L., editors. *Lawmaking and Legislators in Pennsylvania; A Biographical Dictionary*. Vol. 2: 1710-1756. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Jensen, Joan M. *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

Kashatus, William C. *Just Over the Line: Chester County and the Underground Railroad*. West Chester, Pennsylvania: Chester County Historical Society, 2002.

Lemon, James T. *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

Levy, Barry. *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Marietta, Jack D. "The Distribution of Wealth in Eighteenth-Century America: Nine Chester County Tax Lists, 1693-1799." *Pennsylvania History*. 62 (1995): 532-545.

Marietta, Jack D. and Rowe, G. S. "Violent Crime, Victims, and Society in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800." *Explorations in Early American Culture; A Supplemental Issue of Pennsylvania History*. 66 (1999): 24-54.

Marietta, Jack D. and Rowe, G. S. "Personal Violence in a 'Peaceable Kingdom,' Pennsylvania, 1682-1801." In *Over the Threshold: Intimate Violence in Early America*. Edited by Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Merrell, James H. *Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Nash, Gary B. and Soderlund, Jean R. *Freedom by Degrees; Emancipation in Pennsylvania and its Aftermath*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Offutt, William M., Jr. *Of "Good Laws" and "Good Men": Law and Society in the Delaware Valley, 1680-1710*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Scheffler, Judith. "' . . . there was difficulty and danger on every side' : The Family and Business Leadership of Rebecca Lukens". *Pennsylvania History*. 66 (Summer 1999): 276-310.

Schweitzer, Mary M. *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Simler, Lucy. "The Landless Worker: An Index of Economic and Social Change in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1750-1820." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography*. 114 (April 1990): 163-199.

Simler, Lucy. "Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania: The Case of Chester County." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 43 (October 1986): 542-569.

Simler, Lucy. "The Township: The Community of the Rural Pennsylvanian." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*. 106 (January 1982): 41-68.

Simler, Lucy and Clemens, Paul G. E. "The 'Best Poor Man's Country' in 1783: The Population Structure of Rural Society in Late-Eighteenth-Century Southeastern Pennsylvania." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*. 133 (1989): 234-261.

Simler, Lucy and Clemens, Paul G. E. "Rural Labor and the Farm Household in Chester County, Pennsylvania, 1750-1820." In *Work and Labor in Early America*. Edited by Stephen Innes. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.

Smith, Merrill D. *Breaking the Bonds; Marital Discord in Pennsylvania, 1730-1830*. New York: New York University Press, 1991.

Smith, Merrill D. "'Unnatural Mothers': Infanticide, Motherhood, and Class in the Mid-Atlantic, 1730-1830." In *Over the Threshold: Intimate Violence in Early America*. Edited by Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Waciega, Lisa Wilson. "A 'Man of Business': The Widow of Means in Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1750-1850." *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 44 (January 1987): 40-64.

Wilson, Lisa. *Life After Death; Widows in Pennsylvania, 1750-1850*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Section iv.

## **1821 John Reed Murder Trials**

### **Introduction**

In 1821 a young African American man named John Reed stood for trial in Chester County for murdering two men who tried to kidnap him and return him to slavery. Reed was tried for the murders separately. The first trial, for the murder of Samuel G. Griffith, resulted in Reed's acquittal. The jury in the second trial, in which Reed was charged with the murder of Peter Shipley, found Reed guilty of manslaughter. The two trials form the basis for the dramatized trial included in the September 28, 2004 program "Meet Your Judges."

### **Case Overview**

John Reed was an African American living as a free man in Kennett Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. According to Reed's statement, he was freed from slavery by the will of his former master in Maryland. Reed came to Pennsylvania around 1817 believing that he was a free man.

Late in the evening of December 14, 1820 a group of men went to John Reed's house. When he refused to open the door, they broke in. Reed shot one of the men, Samuel G. Griffith. Griffith, who died that evening, was from Baltimore County, Maryland. Reed hit a second man, Peter Shipley, with a club. Reed then took his gun and ran to his neighbors, telling them that kidnappers had attacked him and that he thought they might pursue him. Shipley, who was Griffith's overseer, died on December 21st. As handcuffs and rope were found in Shipley's pockets, it was apparent that the men did not intend to

follow the legal procedures in place at the time for the recovering of escaped slaves.

John Reed was arraigned Feb. 1, 1821, before the Chester County Court of Oyer and Terminer for the murder of Samuel G. Griffith. He entered a plea of "not guilty." The court assigned attorneys to defend Reed, and the case was continued until the next court term. The two primary witnesses against Reed were William Miner and Richard Pearson. Both men were from Delaware and had accompanied Griffith and Shipley to Reed's house the night of the attempted kidnapping.

According to a newspaper account of the trial, the judge's charge to the jury took 17 hours, and it was apparent "that he had no doubt of the prisoner's guilt" (*Village Record*, May 16, 1821). On May 4, 1821, the jury found John Reed "not guilty."

The second trial, for the murder of Peter Shipley, occurred in November 1821. As in the Griffith case, Reed pleaded "not guilty." According to the indictment, John Reed beat Shipley over the head with a large stick on Dec. 14, 1820, with Shipley dying of his wounds on Dec. 21. The coroner's inquest on Shipley's body stated that Reed had struck one blow in self-defense, although one of the trial witnesses claimed that Reed had told him that he (Reed) had hit Shipley several times until he thought that Shipley was dead. In his instructions to the jury, the judge indicated that he thought that this witness was mistaken. Reed was found "guilty" of the lesser charge of manslaughter.

John Reed was sentenced to imprisonment in the jail "and Penitentiary house of Philadelphia for nine years from this day, and be confined kept to hard labor, fed, clothed... that he give security for his good behaviour for six months after the said term of Imprisonment shall have expired, himself in one hundred dollars and one sufficient surety in the like sum, that he pay the costs of Prosecution, and remain committed until the whole of this sentence be complied with."

After the conviction in the second trial, Luke Griffith, the administrator of Samuel Griffith's estate, unsuccessfully tried to claim John Reed as the property of Samuel Griffith. In these proceedings, Luke Griffith supplied a certified copy of the will of Frances Garrettson of Harford County, Maryland. In her will, Garrettson left her plantation and slaves to Samuel Griffith. A corroborating statement by Dr. Elijah Davis of Harford County stated that Reed had absconded from Samuel G. Griffith in October 1817. Davis also said that he knew Reed's mother, Nan, who was a slave, and that "Negro Tom alias John Reed was born in the said County of Harford and lived and remained therein until the time of absconding from the service of his master and that the said Negro Tom is at the time twenty seven years of age and upwards ... he was born in the month of April 1794 and this deponent says that the said Negro Tom is about five feet eight inches high as near as he can judge is stout made."

The information in this summary is taken from records in the Chester County Archives and from the newspaper clippings file at Chester County Historical Society

## **Case Record Images**

### **Newspaper Clippings Images, May 1821**

### **Newspaper Clippings Images, November 1821**

**Section v.**

**Genealogical Resources**

- Birth Records
- Marriage Records
- Death Records
- Church and Cemetery Records
- Probate (Wills & Administration) Records
- Orphans' Court
- 18th Century Tax Records
- 19th Century Tax Records
  
- General Holdings List
- Online Indexes
- Newspapers
- Links

**Section vi.**

**Researching Your Chester County Home**

Barbara L. Weir, Assistant Archivist

(An earlier version of this article appeared in the Chester County Historical Society *Newsletter*, Fall 1987)

There are many resources available to help you research your house. Begin your search by examining the physical evidence presented by the house. Ideally you should consult an architectural historian but some basic information and a little common sense will help you fit your house into a design period. Books on architecture are available at your local library. The Chester County Historical Society Library houses the Pennsylvania Historic Site Survey, which was conducted in 1980. Examine the Chester County Architectural Inventory forms in that collection.

Visit the Chester County Department of Assessment and check both the property card for your tax parcel, as well as the tax parcel map. If your land is a subdivision the property map will give you some indication of how your property was carved out of a larger tract.

Now you are ready to begin your search. The most important document in that search is the deed. There is positively no substitute for tracing the chain of ownership through the deeds. Deed Books A-15 to the present are located in the Recorder of Deeds office. The earlier deeds are at the Chester County Archives. The information you need to abstract from each deed in the chain includes: the name of the seller (grantor), the name of the buyer (grantee), the location and acreage of the property, the consideration (price), the names of the bounding neighbors, the date the deed was executed, the date recorded and the deed of referral. Look for the word "messuage" in the section immediately preceding the metes and bounds (the legal description of the boundaries). This is the legal term for dwelling house. More recent deeds may use the phrase "tract of land with buildings and improvements thereon." To determine if the messuage cited in a particular deed is the same house presently on the site requires additional research. The referral

clause in each deed provides the book and page number of the recorded deed by which the grantor obtained the property. By examining this deed you move backward through the chain of ownership. Tracing a chain of title can be frustrating and often calls for some creative thinking. If there is a break in the title consider the possibility of an unrecorded deed, descent by inheritance or a sheriff's sale.

For an unrecorded deed try to find the seller in your deed as the buyer. Check the Grantee Index for the last known Grantor to get back into the chain. If the property is passed by inheritance examine the Wills and Administrations in the Chester County Archives (for records after 1923 go to the Register of Wills in the courthouse) and the Decedents' records of Orphans' Court. Sheriff's deeds are available at the Archives.

If you "get stuck" but you can identify the property on the 1883 Breou Farm Atlas check the Arthur Reid Title Abstract Collection at the Chester County Historical Society Library. These abstracts, keyed to the 1883 atlas, often provide a chain of title back to the original grant of William Penn as well as drafts of the property.

When you have completed the chain of title be sure to search the other resources available at the Chester County Archives. The inventories in probate files sometimes list possessions room by room enabling you to determine the floor plan of the house and the accounts may list repairs made to the buildings while the estate is being settled or name the purchaser of the property.

The Orphans' Court records can provide an abundance of information. The real estate papers in these files generally contain a description of the property, how it was divided and to whom it was sold. Drafts showing the division of the property may be included.

In the Original Road Papers a legal description of the road often names the surrounding landholders. Occasionally a draft of the road shows the location of the buildings. Perhaps there was a Mechanics' Lien filed against your house. When a debt was contracted in the erection of a building the Mechanics' Lien secured a priority payment for the mechanic (carpenter, mason etc.) These records establish the date of construction, provide the names of the workmen and a list of supplies used in the construction of the building.

Tax records are a valuable source of information about your house. Before 1765, however, the tax records provide only the name of the property holder and amount of tax paid. The 1765 tax contains the earliest assessment, that is, a record that details the property being taxed. Beginning in 1799 the assessments are triennial. The most important tax in a property search is the 1798 Federal Direct Tax (Glass Tax), which is on microfilm at both the Archives and the Historical Society Library. This tax gives the outside dimensions of the building, the construction material, number of stories, number of windows and panes of glass (the tax was on the glass). Unfortunately this tax list has not survived for all townships. For some townships the 1796 and 1799 County tax lists (at the Archives) provide as much information as the 1798 Federal tax. Searching tax records can produce severe eyestrain (records are on microfilm) so narrow the probable construction date before beginning a tax search.

Finally consult the innumerable sources at the Historical Society Library to learn more about the house and the people who lived in it. The newspaper clippings file, dating back to 1815, is a treasure for the property searcher. Armed with your brief of title, search for a description of the property at the time of each sale. Additional primary sources include census records, letters, account books, diaries, surveys, handbills and insurance



policies. Be sure to check the map collection. The 1883 Breou, 1874 Witmer, 1860 Kennedy, 1822 Hindman and the Sanborn Insurance maps are especially valuable. Secondary sources, such as, Futhey and Cope's *History of Chester County, Pennsylvania* (1881), township histories, genealogies and family files provide additional data for your search.

Every search is different and every problem is solved by a different set of records. Sometimes the answer is simple and clear-cut. If, as you move backward through the chain of title the word "message" disappears and is replaced by "lot or piece of ground" and at the same time the price is reduced from \$3000 to \$50, you know that the house was built between the two transaction dates. Generally it is more complex than that and a combination of records is needed to build a body of circumstantial evidence to establish a building date.

**Section vii.**

## **Online Indexes**

<http://dsf.chesco.org/archives/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=609990>

- Marriage License Applications, 1885-1900
- Delayed Birth Records, 1857-1906
- Coroner's Inquisition Papers, 1720-1940
- Naturalization Records, 1798-1906
- Indentured Servants & Apprentice Records, 1700-1855
- Fugitive Slave Records, 1820-1839
- Negro Servant Returns, 1788-1821
- Feme Covert Records, 1832-1848
- Insolvent Debtor's Petitions & Bonds, 1724-1850
- Petitions for Sheriff's Deeds, 1728-1835
- Registry of Automobiles, 1903-1905
- World War I Servicemen Records (County War Aid Association), 1917-1921
- Chester County Commissioners, 1711-2004

**Section viii.**

### **Links**

<http://dsf.chesco.org/archives/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=610760>

## **Other Chester County Resources**

### **Historical Societies**

- Charlestown Township Historical Society
- Chester County Historical Society
- Downingtown Area Historical Society
- Phoenixville Historical Society
- Tri-County Heritage Society
- Valley Forge Historical Society

### **Current Public Records**

- Register of Wills/Orphans' Court
- Recorder of Deeds

### **Genealogical Resources**

- PA GenWeb - Chester County
- Chester County Genealogy Message Forum

## Delaware County Resources

### Public Records

- Delaware County Government

### Historical Societies

- Chadds Ford Historical Society
- Delaware County Historical Society

## Lancaster County Resources

### Public Records

- Lancaster County Government
- Office of Records and Archives Services

### Historical Societies

- Lancaster County Historical Society
- Mennonite Historical Society

## Montgomery County Resources

### Public Records

- Montgomery County Government
- Montgomery County Records Department

### Historical Societies

- Historical Society of Montgomery County

## Pennsylvania Resources

### Public Records

- National Archives, Mid-Atlantic Region
- Pennsylvania State Archives

### Historical/Genealogical Societies

- Historical Society of Pennsylvania
- Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
- Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania

### Genealogical Resources

- Cyndi's List of Pennsylvania Resources
- Online Pennsylvania Death Records & Indexes

## Delaware Resources

- Delaware Public Archives
- Genealogical Society of Delaware
- Historical Society of Delaware

## Maryland Resources

- Cecil County Historical Society
- Maryland State Archives
- Maryland Historical Society