

The Lightfoot Family History Update

Many of us have long believed that when Samuel Lightfoot married Mary Head in 1725, they settled in Pikeland, and there raised their family. This is stated in Estelle Cremers' book, "30,000 Acres". Yesterday, while reviewing the birth dates of their children, I came upon the curious fact that Thomas, one of the four children, was born in the town of Chester. This is substantiated by two independent references, the Southeastern Pennsylvania 1680-1800 Birth Index, and the Quaker records of Chester Monthly Meeting. The birth places of the other three children are simply listed as Chester County. Why would one of the four children be born in Chester? Further, I found the following in the Lightfoot Family Papers:

"Samuel Lightfoot was born in 1701. Although the exact date of his arrival in America is unknown, it is believed that he arrived with his father sometime in 1716. He began a family nine years later through his union with Mary Head, daughter of Benjamin and Sarah (Abbott) Head, in 1725. They settled in the uplands district of Chester County and produced four children, Benjamin, Thomas, Samuel Abbott, and William....."

Where is the uplands district of Chester County? I appealed to a longtime resident for help (thanks Morris!). Later, I found out that Upland was the original name of Chester Township, in what is now Delaware County. At that time, however, and up until 1869, Delaware County was part of Chester County. There are references to Upland today, the Upland School District, for example. Given all this, I am quite convinced that Samuel and wife Mary lived and raised their family in Chester, not Pikeland.

What about the land Samuel purchased in Pikeland? Apparently, though he lived in Chester, Samuel acquired land in Pikeland in 1725. It is curious that a young man, twenty-four years of age, would have the wherewithal to purchase land, but that's what the records indicate.

So, when did Samuel come to Pikeland? A document in the Hagley collection states "came to Pikeland about 1748". After the mill was built? Needless to say,

I'm confused. Further, where did he live when he got here? The fact that the springhouse was probably built soon before, or soon after the mill was built indicates that there must have been a dwelling nearby at that time.

As we know, Samuel became a very wealthy land owner. In 1767, he divided his 500 acres between his two sons Thomas and William. Samuel was a surveyor and a Justice of the Peace. He returned to Chester where he died in 1777.

The 1790 census lists Thomas and William as heads of households in Pikeland. In Thomas' household there were two males, ages sixteen or older, and five females. In William's household there were one male under sixteen, two males sixteen or older, and four females.

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