

Samuel Lightfoot

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## Samuel Lightfoot

Samuel Lightfoot and his three siblings must have been very excited as they set foot in this country for the first time in 1716. They may also have been somewhat relieved after a long voyage which probably lasted two or three months.<sup>1</sup> The reasons for leaving Ireland must have been very compelling for their father Thomas to uproot his family and relocate to the colonies. At that time, the reasons were more economic than religious. The crown had put an embargo on all goods to the colonies and on all cattle being exported to England. When the farmers in Ireland turned to raising sheep for wool, instead of raising cattle, the crown put an embargo on wool as well. Economically, these embargos were devastating to Ireland, and much of the population was without employment. In addition, given the high tithes forced on the Friends of the Society (Quakers) by the Anglican church, and the high rents being levied on them for land, it is not difficult to understand their motivation to leave Ireland.<sup>2</sup> On the positive side, people in Ireland were receiving glowing reports about life in the colonies from earlier settlers. Michael Lightfoot, Samuel's older half-brother, came to this country with his family in 1712. He was the first Lightfoot settler, and it is likely that he provided encouragement as well.

Samuel was 15 years old, and his siblings ranged in age from 10 to 21. Thomas himself was 71 at the time. His daughter from a previous marriage, Abigail, and her new husband Joseph Wiley also came with the family. In all, seven Lightfoot family members immigrated in 1716.<sup>3,4</sup> The family must have been somewhat affluent just to afford the cost of the voyage which, at £9 per person,<sup>5</sup> totaled £63. Compare this to the value of land at that time which was typically £20 per hundred acres.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas' family settled in New Garden, probably with Michael's family and neighboring Friends. They were all devout Quakers. Thomas, his son Michael and daughter Catherine from his first marriage were ministers of the Society of Friends. They were all held in high esteem. As Samuel came of age, it is likely

that he was encouraged to enter the ministry as well. Instead, he became a surveyor.

Little is known about his education, but Samuel probably received his formal education in Ireland. In the first half of the eighteenth century, training to become a surveyor was almost always by apprenticeship. In addition, there were at least two good surveying texts available that were written in England in the mid seventeenth century. The combination of the apprenticeship and the texts would have been sufficient to learn the trade.<sup>7</sup>

Surveying was not always a full time occupation. In fact, farmers and others learned surveying which they then practiced on a part time basis. An example which is particularly relevant to this study is that of George Churchman who was apprenticed to his brother not only for surveying, but also for his occupation as a miller. The agreement specified that he was to be instructed in “the Business of Surveying, Trigonometry, and the Method of Plotting and casting up of land; as well as to allow him time and Opportunity of getting insight in the Business of Millering.”<sup>8</sup>

In Samuel Lightfoot’s case, surveying was undoubtedly a full time occupation. The early eighteenth century was the peak of a second wave of Irish immigration to this country, and the quest for good land was at an all-time high.<sup>9</sup> Surveyors, therefore, were in great demand. Samuel probably apprenticed to a surveyor and became a surveyor’s assistant or deputy, and then he probably pursued surveying on his own. Samuel’s earliest known surveyor’s field book is dated 1734 which may indicate when this transition occurred, unless earlier field books were lost.

At a monthly meeting of New Garden Friends, held at New Garden in 1725, Samuel and Mary Head announce their intention to marry: “Samuel Lightfoot and Mary Head appeared at this meeting & signified their intentions of taking each other in marriage it being the first time therefore this meeting appoints Margaret Johnson & Ann Jackson to make Inquiry into her Conversation & Clearness from all others on the account of Marriage & to make report to the next monthly

Meeting.” At the next New Garden monthly meeting in 1725 “Samuel Lightfoot and Mary Head appeared at this meeting & Signified that they Continue their Intentions of marriage with each other it being the second time & the Inquirers gives an account that they find nothing but that She is cleare from all others on the account of Marriage & her conversation orderly therefore this meeting leaves them to their liberty to accomplish their said marriage according to good order Established amongst friends and appoints Margaret Johnson and Rachel Starr to attend the said marriage & to give an account to the next monthly Meeting.” Samuel and Mary were married on September 30, 1725 in New Garden.

The year 1725 must have been bitter sweet for Samuel. He was married in September, and during that same month his father died in Darby. He was appointed executor in his father’s will: “. . . All the rest of my Estate both real and personal I give and bequeath to my son Samuel Lightfoot, his heirs and assigns forever, whom also I constitute and appoint my whole and sole executor of this my last Will and Testament and I do hereby appoint my loving son Michael Lightfoot of New Garden and my loving son Thomas Jackson of Marlborough to be my Overseers to see this my will duly and truly executed according to the true intent and meaning of the same, . . .”<sup>10</sup>

Samuel and Mary relocated to Chester in 1726, and their first son Benjamin was born in the same year. Son Thomas was born in 1728, Samuel Abbott in 1729, and William in 1732. Mary died three months after William was born. She was 28 years old.<sup>11</sup>

Samuel was faced with the problem of raising four young boys without their mother. Fortunately, Samuel’s niece Mary, daughter of his half-brother Michael, was able to move to Chester to care for the children. She obtained a certificate of transfer from New Garden Monthly Meeting to the Chester Monthly Meeting: “From our Monthly Meeting of Newgarden held at Newgarden the 26<sup>th</sup> day of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month 1733\_\_To the Monthly Meeting of Chester Greeting. Dear Friends and well beloved sisters\_\_These with the Salutation of our love to you we acquaint you that application was made to us for a Certificate for Mary Lightfoot Daughter

of our friend Michal Lightfoot to be Joined to your Meeting she now Living with her uncle Samuel Lightfoot within the verge of your Meeting These therefore may Certify you that inquiry hath been made Concerning her and we find Nothing but that She is of a Sober Life Orderly Conversation and Clear from any Marriage engagement as far as we know and also she was a member of our Meeting and in unity with us so we Recommend her to you desiring your Care over her and her Prosperity and welfare in the best of things we Conclude your friends and Sisters in the truth Signed in and on behalf of our above said Meeting by Benjamin Fred Clerk of the mens meeting and by Mary Lightfoot. . .”

Samuel pursued a very active career in the surveying business, and evidently became well known for his ability. In 1737 he was appointed deputy surveyor to the surveyor general of the Land Office for Lancaster County. In this capacity he would receive orders to survey a tract of land from the surveyor general, and he and his team would perform the survey. His axe man would clear the path, his chain man would measure the distances, and Samuel would work the transit and compass and record the angles and distances between land features. He would then draw up the survey map and perform the necessary area calculations. One third of the fee went to Samuel, and two thirds went to the surveyor general. In 1741 he was appointed deputy surveyor for both Lancaster and Chester Counties.<sup>12,13</sup>

The business of land surveying provided ample opportunities for land speculation, and Samuel took advantage of these opportunities. In May of 1737 he obtained a warrant for 498 acres in Philadelphia County, and in June of 1738 he obtained a warrant for 212 acres in Berks County. Also in June of 1738 he obtained a warrant for 318 acres in Metler’s Point, Berks County. This totaled 1028 acres of new land for which he obtained title. Later in his career he purchased land in Chester County, all in the town of Chester.<sup>14</sup>

1738 must have been an exceedingly busy year for Samuel Lightfoot. In addition to his regular surveying duties and his land acquisition ventures, he was called upon by the Penn family to participate in a survey of the boundary line separating

Maryland and Pennsylvania. This line had been disputed for years, and the Penns wanted to settle the dispute. They hired two surveyors from New Jersey, and they hired Samuel to record the field notes:

*Some Account of the Temporary Line\_\_\_\_*

*In the fall of the year 1738 the Marylanders were to meet the Pennsylvanians in order to run a line between the provinces as a temporary means for performing the King's peace. But the Marylanders not attending at the time appointed, Penn being resolved to have something to answer the order of the King, hired two surveyors from the Jerseys to have the bearings forwarded.....*

The original field book can be seen at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This line was accepted as the boundary between Maryland and Pennsylvania until 1763 when the boundary was resurveyed by Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon.<sup>15</sup>

In the late 1740's, Samuel and three of his four sons Thomas, Samuel Abbott and William left Chester and relocated to Pikeland. Benjamin, also a surveyor, was working elsewhere in northern Chester County. The family move is confirmed by the certificate of transfer from Chester Monthly Meeting to Goshen Monthly Meeting for Samuel and his three sons in 1750. His sons would have ranged in age from eighteen to twenty two years of age at that time. Samuel engaged a house keeper by the name of Margaret Smith. The location of his house has not yet been determined.

The first available tax records for Pikeland indicate that Samuel owned land in Pikeland in 1747 and was among fifty-three of the early settlers there.<sup>16</sup> Michael, his half-brother, had been commissioned as Richard Pike's agent in this country to

lease lands in Pikeland, and it is likely that Samuel leased his tract of land directly from Michael.<sup>17</sup>

Samuel paid 3 shillings in taxes in 1747-1748. In 1749-1750 he paid one pound in taxes, which was a considerable increase (one pound sterling equals 20 shillings) over the prior year.<sup>18</sup> It is possible that this tax increase reflected the construction of his grist mill, which was the first grist mill to be built in Pikeland. (Itemization of the taxes did not begin until 1765.)

Samuel Lightfoot must have established a reputation for his integrity and his business skills by the early 1750's. In addition to having been appointed County Commissioner in 1736, he was appointed Justice of the Peace in 1751: "Some more Justices being wanted for the County of Chester, Joshua Pusey and Samuel Lightfoot were recommended to the Governor as Persons well qualified for that Office and two Separate Commissions of the Peace were ordered to be made for them accordingly."<sup>19</sup>

In early 1752, Samuel acknowledged to the monthly meeting that Margaret Smith was "with child by him":

"The friend appointed to read Samuel Lightfoot's acknowledgment reports that he hath answered the service according to the last meeting direction and returned the Testimony which is as follows:

-To friends of Goshen monthly meeting held the 20<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> month 1752.

Whereas there hath been a report raised that Margaret Smith who was my housekeeper last year is with Child by me. I acknowledge that my conversation hath been so far blamable that I cannot certainly contradict or deny it. My transgression herein hath been the cause of unspeakable sorrow to me in behalf of myself my relations and friends, having with the aggravating circumstances of age & experience considered the same. Under this exercise I look towards him that can restore purity of Life and peace of Conscience. And also desire that my friends may yet continue me under their Christian care, finding hearty desires in my mind to condemn this disorder I have unhappily fallen into. S. Lightfoot".

The child's name was Jephtha Lightfoot, and Jephtha was the beginning of a large

Lightfoot family of descendents. No records have been found to indicate that Samuel ever married Margaret Smith.<sup>20</sup>

The Lightfoot family and their Quaker Friends were sympathetic to the plight of the Indians during the French and Indian war. In 1759, Israel Pemberton, a well-known Quaker merchant in Philadelphia, wished to transport four or more wagon loads of supplies to Pittsburgh for distribution to the Indians in the western part of the state. He engaged James Kenny from Kennett Square and Samuel Lightfoot Jr (Samuel Abbott) to lead, guide and escort these wagons to Pittsburgh. They were successful in this mission, although they experienced many problems along the way such as a wagon breaking through the ice when crossing a frozen river. Samuel became ill while in Pittsburgh, and he was cared for by his friend James Kenny. On July 30, 1759, James writes in his journal “. . . Samuel is so weak I think he will not recover. This evening about 5 o'clock, Samuel Lightfoot departed this life, being somewhat light headed towards y<sup>e</sup> last.”<sup>21</sup>

In a letter to his son Thomas, dated March 24, 1764, Samuel Senior expresses concern over the massacre of the Conestoga Indians in Lancaster in 1763 by the Paxtang volunteers: “But not yet satisfied with Blood, they assembled about the beginning of last month, and came down to destroy about 140 Indians who had taken refuge in the barracks at Phil<sup>a</sup>, among whom were Papoonhang & Comp<sup>a</sup>, with a Number of Moravian Indians from about Bethlehem. These y<sup>e</sup> s<sup>d</sup> volunteers intended to kill, as they told in their way down: a number of ‘em marched by the Red Lion on the first day of the week after meeting. Some of ‘em in Indian dress, as I was told, & all armed with guns, Tomahawks, &c.”<sup>22</sup>

Occasionally, Samuel Lightfoot experienced domestic problems. His servant John O. Neal apparently ran away in late 1760 and Samuel placed an ad in the Pennsylvania Gazette for his return:

Phila. Nov. 29, 1760

Ad for Servant



Run away on the 11<sup>th</sup> of this instant from Samuel LIGHTFOOT of the Township of Pikeland near Yellow Springs in Chester County, a servant lad named John O. Neal, about 18 years of age, of a midling stature, well set, full face of a sandy complexion and had cut off his hair which was of a lightish red colour. Took with him a Felt Hat not much worn, two caps, one of Linen and the other of worsted white and blue; a new coat of thick homespun cloth of a Kind of Lead colour, with broad, white metal buttons, a dark striped Linen Jacket, cotton and Linen Breeches and old stockings and Shoes. Whoever takes up the said Servant and brings him to his said master or secures him in any Gaol so that he may have him again, shall be entitled to a reward of Three Pounds.

Samuel Lightfoot

A servant running away was not an unusual occurrence. John O. Neal was probably an indentured servant who was required to spend four years in servitude in payment for his passage to this country. Margaret Smith, Samuel's housekeeper, may have been indentured as well. Many such individuals chose to run away prematurely because of the demands of servitude.<sup>23</sup>

Another domestic problem involved an altercation with a man by the name of James Claxton. James was charged with forcible entry by Samuel in February of 1767. For some reason the problem escalated, because in August of that year Samuel himself was charged with assault and battery by Claxton. But there was yet another round to the dispute. In November, Claxton was charged with assault and battery by Samuel. The court records have not been researched for further details of these charges.<sup>24</sup>

Beginning in 1765, taxes were itemized, and it is useful to look at these records for further insight into Samuel Lightfoot's later life. His taxes for 1765 in Pikeland were (pounds/shillings/pence):<sup>25</sup>

225 acres with buildings	1/11/06
175 acres of uncultivated land	1/00/09
a grist mill and saw mill	1/07/00
5 horses 10 cattle 5 sheep	<u>0/10/04</u>
	4/09/06

In 1766 his taxes were:<sup>26</sup>

170 acres with buildings	0/18/00
230 acres of woodland	1/07/07
a grist and saw mill	0/13/06
7 horses 10 cattle 5 sheep 1 servant	<u>0/14/06</u>
	3/13/06

It is likely that the tax collector inadvertently switched the improved land with the unimproved land from 1765 to 1766. It is evident from these records that Samuel owned or leased a total of 400 acres, of which 56 per cent was cleared for farming and buildings (assuming that the 1765 land allocation is the correct allocation), and that he owned both a grist mill and a saw mill. It is interesting to note that in 1766 he once again had a servant. For these two years Samuel also paid taxes for land holdings in Chester.<sup>27</sup>

In 1767 the tax records indicate that Samuel divided his Pikeland property between his two sons, William and Thomas. William was given 250 acres and the grist mill, and Thomas was given 250 acres and the saw mill. William's taxes for 1767 were:<sup>28</sup>

250 acres and dwellings	1/02/06
3 horses 7 cattle 7 sheep	0/07/00
grist mill	<u>0/15/03</u>
	2/04/09

Thomas' taxes for 1767 were:<sup>29</sup>

250 acres and dwellings	1/02/06
4 horses 8 cows 5 sheep	0/08/04
saw mill	0/06/03
deputy surveyor	<u>0/05/00</u>
	2/02/00

It is not clear where the additional 100 acres came from. Also, we note that Thomas now employs a deputy surveyor. In the following year, William employs a miller.

During this time Samuel relocated to Chester, probably with the intention of retiring there. In May of 1765 He purchased 35.5 acres in Chester for £124 and 5 shillings.<sup>30</sup> In June of 1772, Samuel and his two sons took out a mortgage in the amount of £1200 to purchase 234 acres in Chester.<sup>31</sup> In both cases this land must have been prime real estate near the center of town, because it amounted to approximately £350 to £500 per hundred acres. Typically, improved farm land was selling for £15 to £30 per hundred acres.<sup>32</sup>

Samuel continued surveying until 1771 while living in Chester. The tax records for 1775 indicate that he owned 200 acres, and once again had a servant.<sup>33</sup> Samuel died on April 26, 1777. He was 76 years old.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

Samuel was, first and foremost, an excellent surveyor. From his field books we know that he engaged in surveying from 1734 to 1771,<sup>35,36</sup> if not earlier. But his survey skills alone cannot account for his successful career which included deputy

to the surveyor general for Lancaster and Chester Counties and being requested by the Penn family to assist in surveying the temporary line between Maryland and Pennsylvania. In addition, he held civic positions as county commissioner and justice of the peace. He must have achieved prominence by his business successes and his integrity, and ultimately his reputation.

Samuel was not a flamboyant character, nor did he possess the wit and sense of humor that his son Benjamin had. Instead of humorous and at times bawdy comments sprinkled throughout Benjamin's field record books, Samuel's record book for 1738-1739 included Alexander Pope's Universal Prayer and verses on change and trouble, discipline and despair.<sup>37</sup>

Samuel was a devout Quaker with a remarkable work ethic. It is impressive that he was successful at so many endeavors in the late 1730's, especially after having lost his wife and having four young sons to provide for. Moreover, his surveying activities probably kept him away from home for extended periods.

We cannot overlook Samuel's benevolence toward his family which reflects his own upbringing. At age 71, his father Thomas brought almost his entire family to this country to give them a new life, a move which held little benefit for him. Similarly, Samuel gave his sons a new start in life, particularly sons Benjamin and Thomas to whom he taught his surveying skills. Later on, Samuel set his sons William and Thomas up in business, one with 250 acres and a grist mill, and one with 250 acres and a saw mill. We will be forever grateful for his legacy.

## Foot Notes

1. Albert Cook Myers, Immigration of the Irish Quakers into Pennsylvania 1682-1750, page 92.
2. Myers, pages 41-49.
3. J. Smith futhey and Gilbert Cope, History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, page 37.
4. The Lightfoot-Wilson Line – From England to Indiana, page 1.
5. Myers, pages 98-99.
6. Myers, page 131.
7. John Barry Love, The Colonial Surveyor in Pennsylvania, pages 15-36.
8. Love, page 35.
9. Myers, page 83.
10. Lightfoot-Wilson Line, page 2.
11. Ancestry.com, Your Heritage Person Page 5558, page 1.
12. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Lightfoot Family Papers, page 3.
13. HSP, page 33.
14. PHMC PA State Archives, Land Office Records, Patent Index 1684-1781, pages 180-183.
15. Historical Prelude to the Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon Survey, pages 6-7.
16. Chester County Historical Society Archives, County Tax Book C-17, page 66.
17. CCHS Archives, Deed Book E, page 273.
18. CCHS Archives, County Tax Book C-18, page 1.
19. Cope, page 365.
20. Lightfoot-Wilson Line, page 5.
21. John W. Jordan, Journal of James Kenny, 1758-1759.
22. Cope, page 59.
23. Myers, pages 99-102.
24. CCHS Archives, Quarter Sessions Indictments, 1681-1870.
25. CCHS Archives, Provincial Tax Book P-8, page 325.
26. CCHS Archives, Provincial Tax Book P-9, page 242.

- 27.CCHS Archives, Tax Index 1765-1766.
- 28.CCHS Archives, Provincial Tax Records for Pikeland for 1767, page 291.
- 29.CCHS Archives, Provincial Tax records for Pikeland for 1767, page 290.
- 30.CCHS Archives, Deed Book O, page 25.
- 31.CCHS Archives, Deed Book T, volume 19, pages 96-98.
- 32.Myers, page 150.
- 33.CCHS Archives, Tax Index, 1770-1775.
- 34.Ancestry.com, Your Heritage Person Page 1558, page 1.
- 35.Lightfoot Family Papers, page 33.
- 36.University of Michigan, William L. Clements Library, Samuel Lightfoot's Surveyor's Journal 1739-1788.
- 37.Love, page 212.