

Lackawanna  
Historical Society  
*of*  
Scranton, Pennsylvania

A Connecticut Town  
and  
County in Pennsylvania  
1774-1782

By Oscar Jewell Harvey of Wilkes-Barre  
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## Lackawanna Historical Society

Scranton, Pennsylvania

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## A Connecticut Town and County in Pennsylvania }

1774 - 1782

The story which I am to give you at this time is one of early Wyoming, and deals with the one-time town of Westmoreland, later the county of Westmoreland.

What I shall set forth for your consideration is based upon authentic, well-verified, original records and documents, and not upon traditions or the narratives of grandfathers and grandmothers. Traditions are usually untrustworthy, and the recollections of individuals concerning past occurrences grow dimmer and less reliable with the passage of time.

To many of the inhabitants of rocky and unfertile Eastern Connecticut, about the year 1750, the marvelous richness and beauty of the valley of the north branch of the Susquehanna river had become known through the enthusiastic reports carried to Connecticut and elsewhere, from time to time, by a few adventurous explorers, traders and missionaries. On the rocky hillsides of Connecticut, where farming was the chief occupation, the population, which had doubled in less than a generation, was beginning to seem super-abundant.

Connecticut, it was thought, had about reached the limit of its self-supporting capacity; and the time had evidently arrived to begin the settlement of that vast tract of land beyond the Delaware river which, in the judgment of many Connecticut men learned in the law, belonged to the colony of Connecticut under and by virtue of its royal charter. This territory beyond the Delaware was "a land flowing with milk and honey, waiting to be occupied by the chosen people."

### Inhabited by Indians.

True, this land was inhabited by Indians, who, under French influence, in case of war might be objectionable neighbors. Then, too, there were suspicions that the heirs of William Penn, the indisputable proprietaries of the territory on the southern border of the tract claimed by Connecticut, might be unfavorable to its occupancy as a part of Connecticut.

But these considerations were easily disposed of. As to the Indians, the land would be purchased from them in a fair trade. Still less was serious trouble to be expected from the peace-loving, non-resident inhabitants of the "City of Brotherly Love." Were they not mild and harmless Quakers—too fair-minded to question the unde-

niable title of Connecticut, and too peaceable to make trouble for inoffensive neighbors who minded their own business and kept within their rights?

And so, in the year 1753, a considerable number of Eastern Connecticut men, together with a few from Rhode Island and Massachusetts, organized The Susquehanna company; and in July, 1754, at Albany, N. Y., at a great Indian council then and there held, representatives of this company purchased from certain influential chiefs of the Six Nations, for the sum of 2,000 pounds, their aboriginal rights in and to a large body of lands lying alongside the north branch of the Susquehanna river, and received a deed for the same—which deed is still in existence in the city of Philadelphia.

These New Englanders composing The Susquehanna company held that, under the charter granted to Connecticut by King Charles II of England in 1662, the claim of Connecticut covered a strip of territory stretching across the North American continent from ocean to ocean. The northern boundary-line of this grant was nearly coincident with the forty-second parallel of North latitude, while the southern boundary was the forty-first parallel; and thus the charter took in, as it extended westward, not only what is now the state of Connecticut, but parts of the present states of New York and New Jersey, and the northern half of what is now Pennsylvania.

### The Connecticut View.

Connecticut construed her charter as authorizing her to pass over New York and New Jersey—which were then in possession of Christian princes, and not dominated by Indians, as was Northern Pennsylvania. But, in the year 1681, the same King Charles II, who, nineteen years previously, had granted to Connecticut its charter, granted a charter to William Penn for the territory now known as Pennsylvania; and the limits of this charter-grant coincided very nearly on the north with the forty-second parallel of latitude.

What, under the deed of conveyance from the Six Nation Indians to The Susquehanna company, became commonly known as the "Wyoming region," or as "the Susquehanna Purchase," was the stretch of country lying alongside the north branch of the Susquehanna river from the mouth of Nescopeck creek some twenty-two

miles southwest of Wilkes-Barre) to the Pennsylvania-New York boundary line, and extending a distance of about fifteen miles from the river, east and west.

In 1775 (the year following the purchase of the Wyoming region by The Susquehanna company) another land company came into existence. It was composed of some 500 Connecticut citizens, and was denominated "The Connecticut-Delaware company." It purchased from certain clans of the Delaware, or Lenni-Lenape, Indians a large tract of land lying between the forty-first and forty-second parallels of latitude, and extending from the western bank of the Delaware river to the eastern boundary of The Susquehanna company's lands.

The first permanent settlements by white men in the Wyoming region were begun under the auspices of The Susquehanna company in May, 1769, at what is now Wilkes-Barre. The company had previously voted that five "gratuity," or "settling," towns, or townships, of land should be laid out in the Susquehanna purchase. Each town was to be five miles square; three of the towns to be located on one side of the Susquehanna and two on the other side—"adjoining and opposite to each other, only the river parting." These towns were to be appropriated and belong to the first 240 settlers who, being approved by certain officials of the Susquehanna company, should take actual possession of the towns in question and hold and improve them "by themselves, their heirs or assigns, for the space of five years after their entry."

The five towns thus provided for were located and named in the Summer and early Autumn of 1760, and were duly surveyed and allotted in 1770. They were: "Wilkes-Barre," "Nanticoke" (renamed "Hanover" later), "Pittstown" (later changed to Pittston), "Plymouth," and "the Forty Township," renamed "Kingstown" later, and still later "Kingston."

From the original records of The Susquehanna company we learn that on April 1, 1772, the company granted to certain shareholders of the company a "six-mile township," and directed that it be laid out to them "at Capouse Meadows"—which locality was at or near the site of a one-time village of Monsey, or Minsi, Delaware Indians, whose chief was named Capouse. This township was of unusual size, and was known to the company as a "suffering" township—"wherein rights lost or improperly forfeited

were relaid and commuted." For some years the township was indiscriminately called "Six Mile," "Capouse Meadows" and "Capouse" township, and then it received the name of "New Providence," which later was altered to "Providence." The territory now embraced within the bounds of Scranton lay in that township.

The particular features of the Wyoming region that attracted the New Englanders were: (1) the several thousand acres of stoneless and treeless plains, or flat lands (early denominated "the flats"), more arable and fertile than the richest fields in New England; (2) the hills and mountains covered with great trees of many valuable varieties, e. g., oak, hemlock, pine, elm, locust, beech, button-wood, sugar-maple, chestnut, black walnut, hickory and butternut—the four last mentioned producing bountiful crops of edible nuts of great excellence; (3) the numerous large and small streams—suitable for saw and grist-mill sites—flowing down from the hills and mountains into the river.

#### Plenty of Fish and Game.

Speckled, or brook, trout and other small fish abounded in the brooks and creeks, while the river contained many varieties of fish. In the Spring-time shad came up the river by thousands, and it is recorded that upon one occasion 9,299 shad were taken in one draught of a seine at Plymouth. From 1,500 to 4,000 shad were often taken at a single draught.

I have recently seen an original record of the sale at Wilkes-Barre in May, 1801, of 200 freshly-caught shad at four cents each. Two or three miles above Wilkes-Barre 2,500 eels were caught in baskets and weirs in one night.

Here and there on "the flats"—even as recently as fifty or sixty years ago—delicious pink and yellow wild plums and richly-flavored wild grapes grew in profusion; while in all sections of the lowlands, red, grey and black squirrels, rabbits, quail and pheasants abounded. In the dense woods deer and bear were found in large numbers, and there and elsewhere in the region wolves, red foxes and panthers prowled and lurked in large numbers, even as late as the year 1808—in which year the county of Luzerne paid bounties for forty-five wolves and sixty-one panthers, which had been killed by hunters in the county in that year.

At certain seasons of the year wild turkeys in large numbers were found in and near the edges of the woods, while wild ducks of various kinds re-

sorted to the river and neighboring lakes. Passenger pigeons (commonly referred to as wild pigeons) darkened the sky like locusts at certain times of the year, and were trapped and slaughtered by thousands. Today not a single passenger pigeon is known to exist anywhere in North America.

Truly the Wyoming region might well have been called by its early settlers "The Valley of Heart's Delight!"

From the very beginning of the permanent Yankee settlements in the Wyoming region the settlers were opposed with force and arms by the provincial authorities of Pennsylvania, as well as by a considerable number of individuals claiming large tracts of Wyoming land under grants or leases from the Penn family; and, at a very early day in this land-grabbing game, the Yankees denominated their opponents "Pennamites," and the name stuck.

#### Petitioned the General Assembly.

Upon several occasions during the first three or four years in the life of the settlements, the settlers petitioned the General Assembly of Connecticut either to incorporate the Wyoming territory into a county of the colony of Connecticut, or to annex it to some one of the counties of the colony then in existence—thereby bringing about (in the language of the petitioners) "the establishment of civil government and authority among the settlers in the Susquehanna country within the limits of the charter of this colony."

The assembly failed to take any favorable action upon these various appeals, and so, in June, 1773, a code of laws was adopted and promulgated by The Susquehanna company for the government of the Wyoming settlers, which they were required to assent to in manner and form as follows:

"We do solemnly profess and declare true and sincere allegiance to His Majesty, King George III.; and that no foreign prince, person, prelate, potentate or state hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power or authority—ecclesiastical or spiritual—within the realm of England.

"We do solemnly promise and engage that we will, so far as be it in our power, behave ourselves peaceably, soberly and orderly toward each other in particular and the world in general. Carefully observing and obeying the laws of this colony (of Connecticut) as binding and of force with us, equally and in all respects as though we actually resided within any of the counties of this colony.

"And we do solemnly declare these, and such other regulations as we shall hereafter come into, to be of force and binding on us and each of us, our heirs and assigns, until the colony of Connecticut shall annex us to one of the counties of this colony, or make us a distinct county."

#### Town Formally Created.

At length, hearkening to the appeals of the Wyoming settlers, the General Assembly of Connecticut, in session at Hartford in January, 1774, enacted: "That the inhabitants dwelling within the bounds of this colony, on the west side of the River Delaware, be and they are hereby made and constituted a distinct town, with like powers and privileges as other towns in this colony by law have, within the following bounds and limits, viz.: Bounded east by said Delaware river, north by the north line of this colony, west by a north and south line across the colony at fifteen miles distance west from a place on Susquehanna river called Wyoming, and south by the south line of this colony; which town is hereby annexed to the county of Litchfield, and shall be called by the name of Westmoreland."

It will be noted that the whole body of lands of The Connecticut-Delaware company, together with a large area of The Susquehanna company's lands, composed this extensive unique town, by all odds the biggest town, territorially, ever possessed by any province, colony or state on the North American continent. Its eastern boundary was the Delaware river; its western boundary was a line running north and south fifteen miles west of Wilkes-Barre, and its northern and southern boundaries were the forty-second and forty-first parallels of latitude, respectively.

Described by present-day conditions, the town of Westmoreland included what are now the counties of Susquehanna, Wayne, Lackawanna, Wyoming and Pike; the greater part of Luzerne, a large part of Monroe, one-half of Sullivan, one-half of Bradford and one-half of Columbia.

#### Named Westmoreland.

What person or persons suggested the name "Westmoreland" for the new town, or what was the moving reason for selecting this name, I have not been able to learn. Neither am I able to explain why Westmoreland was annexed to Litchfield instead of to some other county—Fairfield, for instance, which was situated nearer to Westmoreland and was easier of access than was Litchfield county.

This latter county, situated in the northwestern corner of Connecticut, was, in 1774, the fifth of the six counties of the colony in respect of population—having 26,845 white and 440 blacks, or a total of 27,285 souls. Including Westmoreland, Litchfield comprised eighteen towns, or townships; and in respect of population Westmoreland stood seventh, with 1,922 whites and no blacks—736 of whom, however, were children under ten years of age.

Within a few days after the erection of the town of Westmoreland, Governor Trumbull, of Connecticut, wrote to Governor Penn. of Pennsylvania, giving him official information concerning the steps which had been taken by Connecticut with relation to "the inhabitants dwelling within the bounds of the colony (of Connecticut) on the west side of the River Delaware," and making this further statement: "These acts are made and passed by our assembly for the protection and government of the inhabitants on the lands mentioned to preserve peace and good order among them, to prevent hostilities, animosities and contentions among the people there, to promote public justice, to discourage vice and iniquity, and to put a stop to intruders entering on those lands."

#### Equivalent to Township.

The word "town" used in Connecticut in those early days, as well as now, was and is equivalent in meaning to the word "township" as used in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. In a Connecticut "town" there may be several villages, religious societies, quarters of parishes, or districts, as well as various postoffices. For example, today in the old town of Lyme, in New London county (the area of the town being seven or eight miles square), the following-named villages or localities exist: Lyme street, North Lyme, Old Lyme, Bill Hill and Hamburg. The inhabitants of these various localities come together in town-meetings to elect town officers and attend to other local affairs. Each town is entitled to representation in the general assembly of Connecticut.

At the period with which we are now dealing, as well as at an earlier period, the inhabitants of Connecticut who possessed the elective franchise were called freemen. Not all inhabitants were freemen, but all freemen were inhabitants.

In 1774 the statute laws in force in Connecticut relative to inhabitants and freemen, and the election of town officers, were (in part) as follows:

"That no person shall be received or admitted an inhabitant in any town in this colony but such as are known to be of an honest conversation, and shall be accepted by the major part of the town; or by the authority in, and selectmen of, the town. That no stranger or transient person shall be allowed to reside and make his or her abode in any town in this colony (apprentices under age and servants bought for time excepted) upon pretense of hiring or being hired, without approbation of the authority in, and the selectmen of, such town.

"If any person shall, contrary to the intent of this act, entertain or hire any stranger or transient person, or let any house or land to such stranger or transient person, except he or they shall first give security to the acceptance of the said Authority that such town shall not be burdened and charged by him or them, he or they so entertaining or hiring, or letting any house, etc., shall forfeit and pay to the treasurer of the town ten shillings per week for every week he or they shall harbor, entertain, hire, etc.

#### No Transients Allowed.

"No transient person or inhabitant of any other colony, who may come to reside in any town in this colony, shall gain a legal settlement in such town by dwelling there, unless admitted by a major vote of the inhabitants of the town, or by the consent of the Civil Authority in, and the Selectmen of, said town; or unless said person shall be appointed to execute some public office, or have been possessed in his own right, in fee, of real estate of the value of £100 in such town.

"Any inhabitant of any town in the colony may, for the better support of himself or family, have liberty to remove with his family into any other town in the colony and continue there without being liable to be removed—provided such person procure a certificate in writing, under the hands of the Civil Authority of the town whence he removes, that he is a legal inhabitant in that town.

"Whatsoever negro, mulatto or Indian servant shall be found wandering out of the bounds of the town or place to which they belong, without a ticket or pass in writing, under the hand of some assistant, or justice of the peace, or under the hand of the master or owner of such, shall be deemed to be a runaway, and may be treated as such. And any person finding or meeting such, is hereby empowered to seize and secure him or

them, and bring before the next Authority to be examined and returned to his or their master or owner. And all vagrants or suspected persons may be used in like manner when found wandering from town to town, and having no certificate or pass.

"If any negro, mulatto, or Indian servant or slave, shall be found abroad from home in the night season after nine o'clock, without special order from his master, it shall be lawful for any person to apprehend and secure such negro, mulatto or Indian and bring him before the next Assistant or Justice of the Peace, which Authority shall have power to order said servant or slave to be publicly whipped on the naked body—not exceeding ten stripes—and to pay the costs of the court."

The law required that the town clerks should enroll the names of all freemen in their respective towns. "No person," declared the law, "shall be admitted freeman but in the open freemen's meeting of the town whereto he belongs, regularly assembled. All such inhabitants of this colony as have reached the age of 21 years, and have the possession of freehold estate to the value of 40 shillings per annum, or £40 personal estate; and also are persons of a quiet and peaceable behavior, and civil conversation, may be admitted and made free of this corporation [i. e., the colony of Connecticut], in case they take the oath provided by law for freemen. If any freeman of this corporation shall walk scandalously, or commit any scandalous offense, it shall be in the power of the Superior Court to disfranchise such freeman."

From 1769 till 1776 the oath of a freeman was in the following form: "You, —, being by the Providence of God an inhabitant within this His Majesty's colony of Connecticut, and now to be made free of the same, do swear by the ever-living God that you will be true and faithful to His Majesty, King George III., and to his lawful successors; and to the Government of His Majesty's said colony, as established by charter. And whenever you shall give your vote or suffrage touching any matter which concerns this colony—being called thereunto—you will give it as in your conscience you shall judge may conduce to the best good of the same, without respect of persons or favor of any man. So help you God!"

In May, 1776, this form was changed by the elimination of all words relating to the king and his government. Having taken the oath, the name of the newly-admitted freeman was duly enrolled in the list of freemen.

#### Law Dealing With Elections.

At the period with which we are dealing the law of Connecticut relative to the election of town-officers was in part as follows: "The settled and approved inhabitants shall, some time in December, annually, meet upon notice given by the Selectmen, and shall choose a convenient number—able, discreet and of good conversation—to be Select- or Towns-men, to take care of and order the prudential affairs of their town; also, one Town Clerk, one Town Treasurer, Constables, Surveyors of Highways, Fence Viewers, Listers, Collectors of Rates, Leather Scalers, Grand Jurors, Tything-men, Haywards, Chimney Viewers, Gaugers, Packers, Branders of Hoses, Sealers of Weights and Measures, Key Keepers, and other ordinary town officers." (What others there could possibly have been, it would be hard to imagine!)

The officers mentioned having been duly chosen, the Selectmen were required to "forthwith see that those of whom an oath" was by law required, should be summoned and sworn. Any person chosen to fill an office, and refusing to take the oath and serve, was required to pay the sum of 26 shillings to the town treasurer.

In pursuance of due notice the settlers under The Susquehanna company living within the bounds of the newly-erected town of Westmoreland, who possessed the elective franchise, assembled at Wilkes-Barre on March 2, 1774, to formally organize the town, according to law. Zebulon Butler served as moderator of the meeting, and Maj. Ezekiel Peirce served as clerk.

The most important matters of business transacted were the dividing of the town into eight districts, and the election of ninety-nine officials to fill the various offices which I have heretofore mentioned. Some men were elected to two or three of these offices.

The settlements at Exeter and Providence, "and all the lands west and north to ye [Westmoreland] town line," were declared at this town-meeting to compose the "North District" of the town.

#### Took Freemen's Oath.

At a Westmoreland town-meeting held at Wilkes-Barre April 11, 1774, 206 of the inhabitants took the freemen's oath; and at a town-meeting held June 27, 1774, was voted that the inhabitants should proceed to "form themselves into companies in ye military way, for ye defence of this country, agreeable to ye laws of ye colony"—one company to be formed in each district of Westmoreland.

At Wilkes-Barre on September 30, 1774. Zebulon Butler and Joseph Shuman were chosen as representatives to the General Assembly of the colony; and at the meeting of the Assembly in the following month at New Haven, these gentlemen were in attendance as Westmoreland's first representatives.

At the session of the General Assembly in October, 1775, (Zebulon Butler and Ezekiel Peirce being present as representatives from Westmoreland), it was voted to complete the organization of the twenty-fourth, or Westmoreland, regiment of Connecticut militia—the creation or establishing of which had been decided upon at a previous meeting of the Assembly. The regiment as completed consisted of nine companies, the officers of which, together with the field officers, were duly "appointed and established" by the Assembly and commissioned by Governor Trumbull.

On October 10, 1776, the General Assembly convened at New Haven, and early in the session passed an Act assuming the functions of a state. A few days later the Assembly enacted "that the town of Westmoreland shall be a distinct county, and be called the county of Westmoreland, and shall have and exercise the same powers, privileges and authorities, and be subject to the same regulations, as the other counties in this state [of Connecticut] by law and have and are subject unto." The necessary county courts were provided for and among other matters it was enacted that no criminals should be sent for punishment from the county of Westmoreland to Newgate Prison in the county of Hartford, but that another prison should be erected in Westmoreland. However, no such prison was erected.

#### Continued to Exist.

Although, by the terms of the Act of Assembly, the town of Westmoreland was erected into a county, yet the town—its bounds coincident with those of the county—continued to exist, at least in a legal sense, and the freemen thereof proceeded annually to elect their town-officers, and to send their representatives to the General Assembly of Connecticut. It was a unique commixture of conditions.

Wilkes-Barre, possessing among other advantages the largest population of all the villages in Westmoreland county, because the shire-town, or county-seat.

I have previously referred to the violent and persistent opposition of the Pennsylvanians, or Pennamites, to the Yankees in Westmoreland. This culminated in December, 1775, in a battle

at West Nanticoke, at the lower end of Wyoming Valley, which is recorded in our local history as the "Battle of Ramaport Rocks." Some 600 or 700 Pennamites were engaged on one side, and about 400 men of the 24th Connecticut militia, under the command of Col. Zebulon Butler, on the other side. The Pennamites were defeated, and retired down the river to Sunbury and Northumberland, whence they had come. This battle ended what has been denominated the First Pennamite-Yankee war, and it left the Yankees in peaceful control of Wyoming, or Westmoreland.

During the progress of the Revolutionary war, from the beginning of the years 1776 till the close of 1781, both parties to the Pennamite-Yankee controversy refrained as well from a discussion of their difficulties as from inimical activities; but, promptly on the appearance of the Angel of Peace above the horizon, the Yankees in Westmoreland began to experience gloom and darkness instead of clearing skies, and disquietude instead of tranquillity.

Fifteen days after the surrender of Cornwallis (which occurred on October 19, 1781, and was virtually the end of the Revolutionary war), a petition was presented to congress from the supreme executive council of Pennsylvania, praying for a hearing with respect to the "Wyoming claims." The state of Connecticut, through its representatives in congress, concurred in the application, and some time later congress appointed and commissioned five commissioners, to whom were to be submitted the facts and arguments relative to the Wyoming imbroglio.

This board of commissioners met at Trenton, New Jersey, and after a full hearing, made, on December 30, 1782, an award to this effect: That Connecticut had no right to the lands in controversy, and that the jurisdiction and pre-emption of all the territory lying within the charter limits of Pennsylvania, and then claimed by Connecticut, belonged of right to the commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

By this "Decree of Trenton" (as it is known in history), Westmoreland, or the Wyoming region, for the first time since the first permanent settlements therein had been made by the New Englanders—more than thirteen years before—was formally declared by unbiased, competent authority to be actually and legally within the jurisdiction of Pennsylvania.

This "decree" brought to rather an abrupt end the existence of the Connecticut county and town of Westmoreland, although it did not terminate

the existence of the various settlements in Westmoreland—composed almost wholly of people originally from New England. The "decree," in fact, disposed of only the right of Connecticut's jurisdiction. The matter of the title to the soil of the Wyoming region—which, to the actual participants in the controversy, was an issue of vastly greater importance—remained practically undecided. Therefore, for almost six years following the "Decree of Trenton," Wyoming was the scene of a series of struggles, controversies and conflicts between the Yankees and Pennamites, the character and intensity of which it is almost impossible now to realize or describe.

#### Governor of Connecticut.

During the entire period of the existence of the town and county of Westmoreland the Hon. Jonathan "Brother Jonathan" Trumbull was governor of Connecticut, and in that capacity signed the commissions of the various civil and militia officers of Westmoreland who held office by virtue of being appointed thereto and "established" by the general assembly, as for example: The judge of the county court; the judge of the county court; the "Justices of the quorum of the county court"; the county sheriff; justices of the peace; the surveyor of lands; the field and line officers of the 24th regiment—which was a component part of the 6th Brigade of Connecticut militia commanded by Brig. Gen. Oliver Wolcott, of Litchfield.

Like many other Connecticut citizens of prominence and influence at that period who did not venture to become Wyoming settlers Governor Trumbull was very much interested in the success of the Wyoming movement, and in the Summer of 1773 sent two of his sons to Wilkes-Barre to attend to the locating of certain tracts of land to which he was entitled as a shareholder of the Susquehanna company.

Living conditions and conveniences in Westmoreland were largely primitive, and the people led simple lives.

"Steam had then no other mission than to sing by the kitchen fire; electricity had but just revealed its mysterious spark on the bald knuckle of Franklin's no piano tinkled in the parlor; no sewing-machine relieved the housewife's busy fingers; agricultural tools and processes were rude; hasty-pudding was good fare; the old timepiece in the corner ticked with a lazy beat as loud as the tap of a drum; the Thanksgiving turkey wasted not its fragrance in the oven of a cooking-stove, but turned on the spit over great, generous fires of beech and maple; wooden

chairs—with, possibly, leather bottoms—were a greater luxury than sofas of plush today; no loom wove cotton cloth, but men wore homespun, the product of the spinning-wheel tread by aristocratic mothers and daughters; women were elegant in gowns that now would hardly make the puffs on the overskirt of a chambermaid.

"Everybody—even the parson—drank toddy, and a flush at the end of the nose, if not an ornament, was not a reproach. People ate from wooden bowls and pewter platters, and not with silver forks.

They locked their doors, if at all, with bars of wood in sockets. They slept in unwarmed rooms. The newspaper, despot of modern civilization, was in its infancy, a rare and meager slip; and the interviewer—who today gleams the very crumbs from your table, and details your mildest domestic infelicity in the public prints—was all unconscious of his destiny as the great liar and bore of the coming century."

The first newspaper published in Northeastern Pennsylvania was The Herald of the Times, which came into existence at Wilkes-Barre in the latter part of 1795.

For news from the outside world, up to that time, the people of Wyoming were largely dependent upon newspapers and private letters from Connecticut, which came to hand infrequently and with little regularity.

We hear and read a good deal about the "Blue Laws of Connecticut," the term "blue" being applied to certain laws—some of them very severe, and aiming to secure an impracticable or fictitious morality—which were enacted during the 17th century in the Colonies of New Haven and Connecticut. No code was ever enacted in Connecticut under the name "Blue Laws," but the Rev. Samuel A. Peters—a Tory minister of the Episcopal church, compelled by the American revolution to flee to England—published in 1781 a "General History of Connecticut," in which, by a mixture of misquoted statutes and downright lies, he misrepresented the actual laws of the state for the sake of making non-conformists obnoxious.

In the time of King Charles II of England the term "blue" was applied reproachfully to those persons who were professedly virtuous and conscientious. At that time severe and cruel penalties for even many non-criminal acts were common in all countries, and not at all peculiar to New England. In England, during the

reign of King James I. there were defined thirty-one offenses with death penalties, which in the year 1819 had increased to 223.

The first code of Massachusetts, adopted in 1641, and that of Connecticut, adopted in 1642, named only twelve capital offenses. The New England colonists, in general, took the Mosaic "code" for their model. There were laws, punishing by fine and imprisonment, idleness, lying, gaming, contempt of God's word, etc. Though indefensible in some cases, in general the laws were beneficial.

The first general letter of the New England com. inq. sent from London in 1639, enjoined on the inhabitants of the Massachusetts Bay Colony "a surcease of their labor every Saturday throughout the year at three of the clock in the afternoon, and that they spend the rest of that day in catechizing and preparation for the Sabbath, as the ministers shall direct."

The colonists, however, proving deaf to moral suasion, the general court proceeded to prescribe penalties. Absence from church was made a misdemeanor punishable by fine or imprisonment. But the law was a failure, and it was stiffened by an amendment providing that, for a second offense, the offender should spend two hours in a pillory, with a paper pinned on his breast proclaiming, in capital letters, that he was "A WANTON GOSPEL-LER."

In 1653 it was again deemed necessary to enlarge the scope of the law. Children were included, and it was ordered that if they played on the streets their parents should be fined; and if the offenders were more than fourteen years of age, they should be whipped by the constable. But the very next year another enactment was made. Two monitors were created for each congregation, to see that none left the church until services were over.

#### Whipped for Drinking.

In New Haven Colony, in 1640, Thomas Franckland, for drinking strong liquors to excess, and entertaining disorderly persons in his cellar at drinking meetings, was whipped, fined 20 shillings, and was deprived of his cellar and lot. In the same colony, in 1648, the court adjudged Peter Busaker, for his filthy and profane expressions (to wit: that he hoped to meet some of the members of the church in hell, ere long, and did not question but he should), to be committed to prison, there "to be kept in custody till the sermon, and then to stand in the time thereof in the pillory,

and after the sermon to be severely whipped."

In the same colony, in 1657, it was ordered that no Quaker, Ranter, or other heretic of that nature, be suffered to come into or abide in the colony.

In the colony of Connecticut, in 1642, it was declared that if any man, "after legal conviction, shall have or worship any God but the Lord God, he shall be put to death." In the same colony, in 1647, the following law was enacted: "Forasmuch as it is observed that many abuses are crept in and committed by the frequent taking of tobacco, it is ordered that no person under the age of twenty years, \* \* \* and those who, by their former taking it, have, to their own apprehensions, made it necessary to them, or upon due advice persuaded to the use thereof—in short, no man within the colony, after the publication hereof, shall take any tobacco publicly in the streets, highways or any barnyards, or upon training-days in any open places, under penalty of six pence for each offense."

The statute laws of Connecticut were enforced with more or less stringency in Westmoreland during its existence. Some of the statutes in force at that period (and which I have extracted from an official publication of the state entitled "Acts and Laws of Connecticut") were as follows:

#### For the Blasphemer.

"If any person within the colony shall blaspheme the name of God the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost with direct, express, presumptuous and high-handed blasphemy, or shall curse in the like manner, such person shall be put to death. If any person shall swear rashly, vainly or profanely, either by the holy name of God, or by any other oath; or shall sinfully and wickedly curse any person or persons, he shall, upon conviction, pay six shillings; and if not able to pay, shall be set in the stocks for not less than one hour nor more than three hours."

"Near the center of every town there shall be a sign-post set up at the town's charge, and maintained in sufficient repair—on the pantity of ten shillings per month for neglect. At which sign-posts proclamations sent forth to be set up and published, notices of strays, sales of houses and lands, and advertisements of such like occasions shall be set up. Every town shall make and maintain a good pair of stocks, with a lock and key, sufficient to hold and secure such offenders as shall be sentenced to set therein."

"Whosoever shall steal or purloin any money, goods or chattels, and be convicted, every such person shall forfeit and pay treble the value of the money, etc. unto the owner, and be further punished by a fine not exceeding forty shillings. And if the value of the article stolen amount to twenty shillings the offender shall, besides, be further punished by whipping—not exceeding ten stripes for the first offense. And if the offender be unable to make restitution as aforesaid, such offender shall make satisfaction by service. And the prosecutor is empowered to dispose of such offender in service to any of His Majesty's subjects for such term as he shall be assigned by the court to such prosecutor."

**Mayhem.** "If any person, on purpose or with malice, shall cut out or disable the tongue; or put out an eye or eyes, so that the person is thereby made blind; or shall be aiding or assisting therein, such offender shall be put to death."

#### Whipped for Horse Stealing.

**Horse Stealing.** (Enacted in 1772.) "Whoever shall steal any horse in this colony, and be convicted, shall pay to the owner of the horse three times the value thereof, and a fine to the colony of £10, and be further punished by being publicly whipped on the naked body not exceeding fifteen stripes, and be confined in the Work House, or House of Correction, not exceeding three months: there to be kept at hard labor, and be further whipped on the first Monday of each month, not exceeding ten stripes each time."

**Adultery.** "Whosoever shall commit adultery with a married woman, or with one betrothed to another man, both of them shall be severely punished by whipping on the naked body, and stigmatized, or burnt on the forehead, with the letter A on a hot iron. And each of them shall wear a halter about their necks, on the outside of their garments, during their abode in this colony, so as it may be visible. And as often as either of them shall be found without their halters, worn as aforesaid, they shall, upon information and proof of the same before an Assistant or a Justice of the Peace, be by them ordered to be whipped—not exceeding twenty stripes."

**Burglary and Robbery.** "Whosoever shall commit burglary by breaking up any dwelling-house, or shop wherein goods, wares and merchandize are kept; or shall rob any person in the field or highway, such person so offending shall, for the first offense, be branded on the forehead with the capi-

tal letter B on a hot iron, and have one of his ears nailed to a post and cut off, and also be whipped on the naked body fifteen stripes. And for the second offense shall be branded as aforesaid, and have his other ear nailed and cut off, and be whipped as aforesaid twenty-five stripes. And if such person shall commit the like offense a third time, he shall be put to death as being incorrigible." (In the Connecticut Courant of December 18, 1770, the following news item was printed: "New Haven, December 14, 1770. Last Monday one Richard Steele was punished in this town for the second offense, by being whipped and branded and having his left ear cropped. He has since escaped from gaol, but yesterday was taken and recommitted.")

#### Oath Attorneys Took

Preliminary to permission to practice his profession in any of the courts of Connecticut, each attorney-at-law was required to take the following oath: "You swear you will do no falsehood, nor consent to any to be done, in the court; and if you know of any to be done, you shall give knowledge thereof to the Judges, or Justices, of the court, or some of them, that it may be reformed. You shall not wittingly and willingly promote, sue, or procure to be sued, any false or unlawful suit, nor give aid or consent to the same. You shall delay no man for lucre or malice; but you shall use yourself in the office of an attorney within the court according to the best of your learning and discretion, and with all good fidelity as well to the court as to the client."

**Marriage.** "No person shall be joined in marriage before the purpose, or intentions, of the parties proceeding therein hath been sufficiently published in some public meeting or congregation on the Lord's Day, or on some public Fast, Thanksgiving or Lecture Day in the town, parish or society where the parties or either of them, do ordinarily reside; or such purpose or intention be set up in fair writing upon some door or post of the meeting-house, or near the same, in public view, there to stand so as it may be read eight days before such marriage. That no person whatsoever in this colony, other than a Magistrate or Justice of the Peace—and that within his own county—or ordained minister—and that only in the town and society wherein he dwells—shall join any persons together in marriage."

#### Ferry Privilege.

**Ferries.** "Every person or town that hath or shall have a Ferry, or the

privilege of a Ferry: or right of carrying passengers, teams, etc., over any river, creek, etc., shall at all times be provided with a good, tight boat, sufficient both for largeness, strength and steadiness for the safe transportation of passengers and their horses, etc., well furnished with suitable masts and other implements necessary for that service; and men sufficient to manage the same. And none shall be employed as ferrymen but such as are of approved discretion, strong and able-bodied, and well-skilled in rowing and managing said service. And the Selectmen in each town where such passage is, or such privilege is granted, are required and empowered to take effectual care that this order, in all parts, be only attended to.

"Every keeper of a ferry shall have the sole liberty of the transportation of passengers, etc., from the place where such ferry is granted, to any other ferry-place or usual place of landing. Every ferry-man shall give constant and diligent attendance on that business from sunrise until nine o'clock p. m. from April 1 to October 1; and until eight p. m. from October 1 to April 1; and shall not deny or delay the speedy carrying over of any passenger according to the true intent and meaning hereof—under a penalty of ten shillings on conviction of neglect of duty. Provided, that no ferrymen shall be obliged to put off from their respective shores or wharves, and pass the said ferries, when it manifestly appears to be hazardous for them to do so, by reason of any storm, tempest or ice.

"That all owners of ferries shall keep and maintain good wharves or places of landing where they are wanted. Overcrowding of boats is forbidden. All persons shall be received into such ferryboats according to their coming first or last to such ferry—only all public officers and such as go upon public and urgent occasions, as Posts, Physicians, Chyrurgeons and Midwives shall be transported first, or with the first. All the fares of all the ferries in this colony shall be stated only by the General Assembly. The Governor, Deputy Governor, Assistants, Representatives for the time being, Judges and Justices of the Supreme and County Courts in this colony, all Posts, and other persons on public service, shall pass and repass ferry-free."

#### A Brand Required.

Brands and Ear-marks. Each team was required to have a brand for horses, and all horses owned in the town were required to be branded on

"their near or left shoulder." Town branders were chosen to do this work, and they were required to keep records of their work. All owners of cattle, sheep and swine above one-half year old, were required to ear-mark or brand the same and register the same in "the town book of marks."

**Quack Doctors and Mountebanks.** (Enacted in 1773.) "Whereas the practice of mountebanks in dealing out and administering physick and medicine of unknown composition, indiscriminately to any persons whom they can by fair words induce to purchase and receive them, without duly consulting and considering the nature and symptoms of the disorder for which, and the constitution and circumstances of the patient or receiver, to whom they administer, has a tendency to injure and destroy the health, constitutions and lives of those who receive and use such medicines.

"And whereas the practice of mountebanks in publicly advertising and giving notice of their skill and ability to cure diseases, and the erecting of public stages and places from whence to declaim and harangue the people on the virtue and efficacy of their medicines; or to exhibit by themselves or their dependents any plays, tricks, juggling, or unprofitable feats of uncommon dexterity and agility of body, tends to draw together great numbers of people, to the corruption of manners, promoting of idleness, and the detriment of good order and religion, as well as to tempt and ensnare them to purchase such unwholesome and oftentimes dangerous drugs—

"Be It Enacted, That no mountebank, or persons whatsoever under him, shall exhibit, or cause to be exhibited, on any public stage or place whatsoever within this colony, any games, tricks, plays, juggling or feats of uncommon dexterity and agility of body, tending to no good and useful purposes, but tending to collect together numbers of spectators and gratify vain and useless curiosity. Nor shall any mountebank, or person whatsoever under him, at or on any such stage or place, offer, vend, or otherwise dispose of, or invite any persons so collected, to purchase or receive any physick, drugs or medicines recommended to be efficacious and useful in various disorders." Penalty, on conviction, £20 for each offense.

#### Licenses for Taverns.

Inns and Taverns. "The Civil Authority, Selectmen, Constables and Grand Jurymen in the respective towns shall, sometime in January, annually,

nominate the person or persons whom they, or the major part of them, think fit and suitable to keep an house, or houses, of public entertainment in the said town for the ensuing year; which nomination shall be sent by them to the next county court in that county; which court shall grant licenses to be in force for one year.

"Taverners are not to permit men's sons under age, or apprentices, servants or negroes to sit drinking in his or her house, or to have any manner of strong drink there, without special order or allowance of their respective parents or masters. That if any inhabitant, or person belonging to any town, shall be found in any tavern in any such town at any time, either in the night next before, or the night next after, the Lord's Day, or after nine o'clock in any other night, he shall receive a penalty of three shillings—unless he satisfy the Authority that there was a proper reason or an extraordinary occasion for being there at such a time.

"Nor shall any tavern-keeper suffer any inhabitant of such town where he dwells, or coming there from any other town, to sit drinking or tipping in his or her house or any of the dependencies thereof; or to continue there above the space of one hour at one time (travelers, persons upon business, or on extraordinary occasions there, excepted). A penalty of six shillings for each offense.

"Whenever the Selectmen or Authority shall understand that any person in said tavern is a tavern-haunter, or spends his time idly at any such house of entertainment, they shall cause the names of such tavern-haunters to be posted at the doors of every tavern in said town, by setting up a certificate under their hands, forbidding every tavern-keeper to entertain such person, or to have or drink any strong liquor in or about their house.

#### Fine for Drunkenness.

"If any person shall be found drunken, so that he be thereby bereaved and disabled in the use of his reason and understanding—appearing either in his speech, gesture or behavior—he shall, on conviction, pay eight shillings to the Treasury of the town. For inability to pay, and want of goods whereon to levy, he shall be set in the stocks, there to remain not exceeding three hours nor less than one hour.

"No taverner or inn-keeper shall have or keep in or about their premises any dice, cards, tables, bowls, shuffleboards, billiards, quoits, kells, logg s, or any other implements used in gam-

ing; nor shall suffer any person or persons resorting unto their houses to use or exercise any of the said games, or any other unlawful game or sport within their said houses or premises. For each offense he shall pay a penalty of forty shillings.

"If any person or persons in this colony, of what rank or quality soever, shall play at cards, dice or tables, every such person shall pay a fine of twenty shillings. And the head of that family where any such game is used, with his privity or consent, shall pay a fine of twenty shillings for each time any such game is used in his house."

**Schools and Education.** "Forasmuch as the education and well-governing of children is of singular benefit to a people; and whereas many parents and masters are too negligent of their duty in the matter, be it enacted: That all parents and masters of children shall, by themselves or others, teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed, all such children as are under their care and government, according to their ability to read the English tongue well; and to know the law against capital offenders.

"And if unable to do so much, then at least to learn some short orthodox catechism by their parents, masters or ministers when they shall call them to an account of what they have learned of that kind. And if any parent or master shall neglect to do these things, upon conviction he shall pay twenty shillings to and for the use of the poor of the town.

#### Keep a Vigilant Eye.

"And the Selectmen of every town shall have a vigilant eye and inspection over their brethren and neighbors, and see that none of them suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as to want such learning and instruction; and to take care that due prosecutions be made for a breach of this Act.

"All parents and masters shall employ and bring up their children and apprentices in some honest and lawful calling, labor or employment, profitable for themselves and the colony. And if the Selectmen find that, by negligence, etc., of the parent or master, such children grow rude, stubborn and unruly, such Selectmen, with the advice of the next Assistant or Justice of the Peace, shall take such children or apprentices from their parents or masters and place them with and bind them to some master or masters—males till they are twenty-one years of age, and females till they are eighteen—to the end that they may be suit-

ably instructed, employed and governed.

Every town wherein there is but one ecclesiastical society, and wherein there are seventy householders or families, or upwards, shall be at least eleven months in each year constantly provided with, and shall keep and maintain, one good and sufficient school for the teaching and instructing of youth and children to read and write; which school shall be steadily supplied with and kept by a master sufficiently and suitably qualified for that service. Where there are not seventy householders a school is to be maintained for at least half of the year annually.

"And also, there shall be a grammar-school set up and constantly maintained in every county-town of the several counties, which shall be steadily kept by some discreet person of good conversation and well-skilled in and acquainted with the learned languages—especially Greek and Latin. The Civil Authority, together with the Selectmen, or the major part of them, in every town, shall visit and inspect all such schools at least once each quarter."

#### Support of Minister

**Ministers of the Gospel.** "The inhabitants of any town or society or parish, constituted by this Assembly, who shall be present at a town or society meeting, legally warned, shall have power, by the major vote of those met, to call and settle a minister among them, and provide for his support. And all such towns and societies shall annually grant a tax for the purpose of paying the salary of the minister."

(Strictly speaking, the Congregational church was at that period the "Established," or "State," church of Connecticut; and to a large extent the story of the church is the story of the town in Connecticut, until the disestablishment of Congregationalism in the year 1835.

**The Observance of Sunday.** "All persons shall, and are hereby required, on the Lord's Day carefully to apply themselves to duties of religion and piety, publicly and privately. And whatsoever person shall not duly attend the public worship of God on the Lord's Day, in some congregation by law allowed—unless hindered by sickness, or otherwise necessarily detained—shall incur the penalty of three shillings for each offense."

"No tradesman, artificer, laborer or other person whatsoever, shall, upon the land or water, do or exercise any

labor, business or work of their ordinary callings, or of any other kind whatsoever (works of necessity and mercy only excepted, nor use any game, sport, play or recreation on the Lord's Day, or Day of Public Fasting or Thanksgiving, under a penalty of ten shillings." For being guilty of rude and profane behavior on the Lord's Day, a penalty of forty shillings was to be imposed, and for any person who should travel on Sunday—"except by some adversity they should be belated and forced to lodge in the woods, wilderness or highways the night before"—a penalty of twenty shillings was to be imposed.

"Unnecessary traveling on the Lord's Day being a growing evil, which, more effectually to prevent, it is enacted that every Assistant and every Justice of the Peace be empowered and directed, when they shall have plain view or personal knowledge thereof, either with or without a written warrant, to cause all persons unnecessarily traveling on the Sabbath, to be apprehended.

"No person shall go from his place of abode on the Lord's Day, unless to or from the public worship of God; or unless it be on some work or business of necessity or mercy then to be done. Penalty, five shillings.

"Nor shall any person keep or stay at the outside of the meeting-house during the time of public worship (there being convenient room in the house), nor unnecessarily withdraw themselves from the public worship to go without doors. Penalty, three shillings. The people shall not convene in companies in the street on the evening before or after the Lord's Day; or on the evening next following any public Day of Fast. Penalty, three shillings."

"In the meeting-house in winter time the vapor of the breath of the congregation, condensed by the frigid air, helped waft their prayers to heaven. From Saturday eve to Sunday night a great hush and soberness were over the community, and on the Sabbath they rivaled the torture of the penitent's flagellation by subjecting adult and child to the affliction of two-if not three, sermons, each longer than a President's message."

#### First Meeting House

The first meeting-house (the name "church" was not applied to it) erected in Westmoreland was located in Wilkes-Barre within the bounds of the public graveyard, at the northeast corner of what are now Market and Washington streets, the site of the present City Hall. The building, which was small

in size and of simple and rude construction, was erected in 1774. It was partly destroyed by the enemy, following the battle of Wyoming, July 3, 1778, but the next year it was repaired by order of General Sullivan and used as a hospital for the Continental soldiers at the Wyoming post. The building was never again used as a meeting-house, and some years later it was demolished. It was the only meeting-house that stood in Westmoreland during the existence of the town and county of Westmoreland.

In December, 1775, the General Assembly of Connecticut convened in special session, passed an Act providing for raising and equipping a body of "minute-men," to be held "in readiness for the better defense of the colony." A few months later a Vigilance Committee, or "Committee of Inspection" as it was called was established in Westmoreland, in pursuance of a recommendation made by the Continental Congress that such a committee should be appointed in every town, and that persons "hostile" to the cause of liberty should be arrested. These "hostiles," who were, in fact, Loyalists, soon came to be generally known and spoken of as Tories.

On March 6, 1776, a large number of men from the different districts of Westmoreland assembled at Forty Fort, when and where a document was drawn up and signed by sixty-six of these Westmorelanders. The opening paragraph of this document (which subsequently was forwarded to the President of the Congress) read as follows: "Whereas the inhabitants of this town have of late been invaded by a large number of Tories, which, by the blessing of God, we have repulsed; but, notwithstanding, are threatened with another invasion. And, as we are also a frontier town, and liable to be attacked by the Indians if a war should be commenced between them and us, we do think that it is our duty to be in readiness at an hour's warning, if an invasion should happen, to engage our enemies, invaders or intruders; and we, the undersigned, do freely and with cheerfulness engage in the common cause as soldiers in the defense of liberty, under the direction of the honorable Continental Congress, or colony to which we belong."

#### Losses Sustained.

In the summer of 1777 the population of Westmoreland numbered about 3,276—this estimate being based on the official tax-lists prepared at that time, and now in existence. According to an official report made to the General As-

sembly of Connecticut in 1781, by the Selectmen of Westmoreland, the losses sustained by the inhabitants of Westmoreland, at the hands of the British and Indians, from July 3, 1778, to May 1, 1780, amounted to £38,308, 13 sh.—"estimated in lawful money equal to money in 1774."

According to the tax-list of 1781 there were in Westmoreland, at that time, only 161 males between the ages of sixteen and seventy years. The total amount of the 1781 assessment, for purposes of taxation, was £4,531, 17 sh.

At the beginning of 1777 the two Westmoreland Independent companies, which had been enlisted and organized in 1776 by resolution of Congress, and which numbered 172 men, marched from Wilkes-Barre to New Jersey and became a part of Washington's army. By the summer, or early autumn, of 1777, there were in the neighborhood of 275 Westmorelanders (including thirteen commissioned officers) in the Continental service.

The two most important events which took place in Westmoreland during its existence were the Battle of Wyoming, and the organizing and setting forth of the Sullivan expedition. The Battle of Wyoming, fought July 3, 1778, was one of the important battles of the Revolutionary War, but it has never been justly nor fully dealt with by writers of American history. It has been usually referred to as the "massacre of Wyoming." The massacre was simply incidental, or, rather, supplementary, to the battle.

#### Six Nations War.

One of the most important results of this battle was the action taken by Washington and the Continental Congress early in 1779, to break the power of the Six Nation Indians and the Loyalists in Northwestern New York. What is known as the Sullivan expedition was organized. Maj. Gen. John Sullivan commanded the expedition, and the majority of the troops which composed it rendezvoused at Wilkes-Barre in the spring and summer of 1779. On July 31, the expedition set out for New York, and, having accomplished its mission and broken the backbone of the Iroquois Confederacy, returned to Wilkes-Barre October 7, 1779.

Following the Sullivan expedition, up to and including the year 1781, small bands of Indians from Northwestern New York made frequent forays into Westmoreland—murdering, pillaging, and carrying away captives.





