

# Allison-Antrim Museum

Greencastle, PA

Back

Allison

Antrim

Scotch-Irish

Train Stations

Brown's Mill

Crowell

Geiser

Enoch Brown

Water System

Baseball

Property History

Fletcher

Peter Kuhn

Dolly Harris

G-castle Elevator Co

Hostetter's Store

Early Industry

Old Home Week

Scout Building

Pawling's Tavern

Walck

Physicians

Trolley System

Corporal Rihl

Iron Works

Town Hall

**Who were the Scot-Irish?** *Rev 10-26-2001, 11-11-2003, 10-12-2010*

The Scot-Irish settled Greencastle-Antrim, as well as the rest of the Cumberland Valley. Who were the Scot-Irish? They were protestant Presbyterian, Lowland Scots. The Scot-Irish were **not** Irish and were not Catholics. The term Scot-Irish is strictly an American nomenclature. In England and Ireland the same people are called Ulster Scots, which is much less confusing.

In the early seventeenth century when James I ascended to the English throne in 1603, one of his main objectives was to civilize the uncontrollable, autonomous Irish - the majority of whom were Catholic.

James I's chosen action plan to accomplish this objective was to begin an extensive colonization plan which emigrated English protestants, Presbyterian Scots, and even French and German protestants from their homelands into Ireland during the early 1600's. He especially concentrated on the Ulster region which, at that time, included the nine present-day counties of Donegal, Fermanagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Armagh, Down, Tyrone, Coleraine (later Londonderry), and Antrim. The Ulster region is located in the northeastern part of the island of Ireland and lies closest, geographically, to England and Scotland compared to the rest of Ireland. Archie Reid, president of the Ballyclare Historical Society in County Antrim, Northern Ireland wrote the following about County Donegal. "When partition was set up, Donegal was not included in the new Northern Ireland. We still feel an affinity and my Historical Society has close links with the Donegal one and we exchange visits."

The lands that were confiscated had belonged to Irish Earls who had left Ireland seeking help from Spain and Rome to fight the English crown. The Irish Earls never again returned to their homeland. The land was first given to the new immigrants and then to servitors of the King. The native Irish were the last to receive any leftover land. In the process of settling the Ulster Plantation, the English displaced masses of Irish peasants, often refusing them the right to settle on certain lands.

During this time of colonization, the Scot-Irish built towns and villages, commerce and industry increased, and new farming methods were introduced. More importantly, the Presbyterian Church was established in a country very strongly rooted in the Catholic faith which caused great religious turmoil and conflict. This conflict was exacerbated when, through the years, the English monarchs wavered back and forth on their religious policies.

The Presbyterian Scots lived in Northern Ireland for a little over a century before immigrating to the American colonies. The English landlords found the Scot settlers too similar to the Irish natives and resented them. The immigration was precipitated by the English Monarchy who tried to exert its own political and religious authority over the citizens of Ireland, including the Presbyterian Scots, causing constant struggles for religious tolerance, civil liberties, and political rights such as holding office or having representation in government. Economic factors also affected their decisions to immigrate to the colonies. Anglican ministers made the majority of their income by imposing tithes on the Irish - Catholic and Presbyterian alike. The Irish tenants were charged high rents for their land adding additional economic burdens on their families. Consecutive potato crop failures in 1724 1725, and 1726 compounded all the preceding problems and forced many Ulster Scots to seek a new life in America.

The mass immigration of the Scot-Irish took place over a 58-year span between 1717 and 1775. This time period is known as the "Great Migration" and occurred in five "waves". The immigrants from the first three waves established the major settlements of the Scot-Irish in the colonies.

The immigrants from the first and second waves landed in Philadelphia and the Delaware River in Pennsylvania. The third wave of immigrants moved beyond Pennsylvania into Virginia and beyond.

From Historical Sketch of Franklin County, "They brought with them a hatred of oppression, and love of freedom in its fullest measure... The Scotch-Irish, in the struggle for national independence, were ever to be found on the side of the colonies."

The Scot-Irish did not, unfortunately, avoid political strife in Pennsylvania with the Quakers and the German settlers in the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Quakers did not appreciate their interference in politics and were especially unhappy with them when the Scot-Irish gained control of the Pennsylvania Assembly in 1756. It is to the credit of the many Scot-Irish who settled within its borders early on that Pennsylvania is what it is today. The Scot-Irish were military leaders and prominent lawmakers from the beginning of the colony's history through all dangers (including Indians) and especially during our fight for freedom and human rights. They helped write the constitutions and frame our fundamental laws. Fourteen United States presidents were descendents from the small northern corner of the island of Ireland. More than seven Pennsylvania governors were descendents of the Scot-Irish as well as many U.S. senators, congressmen, judges, and other prominent people from all walks of life. Davy Crockett, Mark Twain, Andy Jackson, and Sam Houston were all of Scot-Irish descent. Some familiar local Scot-Irish surnames are Allison, Irwin, Craig, McLaughlin, McLanahan, McDonald, McDowell, McCrae, Alexander, Chambers, and Davison.

The Germans considered themselves to be orderly, industrious, and frugal and thought the Scot-Irish were impetuous, reckless, and quick-tempered. Because of this, the Germans and the Scot-Irish often maintained settlements away from each other and avoided social contact in much the same manner as the Scots did with the Irish people while living in Northern Ireland.

The Scot-Irish who settled in America were descendants of the Lowland Scots who were robust, adventurous, and rebellious. There is no architectural style or type of furniture attributed to them so, in turn, there are no known artifacts surviving that are specific to the Scot-Irish. But the legacy they did leave behind for future generations is their religion. In each settlement they built a church in which to practice their Presbyterian faith. In the early 1700's, the Greencastle settlement was known as the East Conococheague Settlement. The first church, known as the Red Church, was built at Moss Spring.

The Scot-Irish were nomadic. Those who settled Greencastle had made their way westward from Philadelphia

## Allison-Ebbert Home

and then south into Antrim Township and then again continued west and over the Tuscarora Mountains. Along their route they left settlements about eight to ten miles apart. These settlements were quite often near springs or waterways.

## Moller Organs

They adopted the Scandinavian housing of log cabins. They didn't have many culinary skills and ate mostly mutton, lamb, and oats. Their music, unlike the Highlanders with their bagpipes, was played on fiddles and dulcimers.

## Capt. Ulric Dahlgren

Originally in 1682, there were only three counties - Chester, Philadelphia, and Bucks - that were established by William Penn. Chester included all of the land southwest of the Skuykill River to the extreme western and northern limits of the state.

- On May 10, 1729, Lancaster County was established from Chester County land.
- At the May 1741 quarter sessions court of Lancaster County, Antrim Township was established. At that time Antrim Township included all of present day Franklin County except Warren, Fannett and Metal Townships.
- Lurgan Township was established from the northern part of Antrim Township in 1743.
- On August 9, 1749, York County was established west of Lancaster from Lancaster County land.
- On January 27, 1750, Cumberland County was established from Lancaster County land.
- Greencastle was founded in 1782 by John Allison and was situated in the southern portion of Cumberland County.
- On September 9, 1784, Franklin County was established from the southwest part of Cumberland County. Any local research for tax records, deeds, or genealogy dating before September 9, 1784 must be done in Carlisle, the County seat of Cumberland County. All surviving records after that date can be researched in the Franklin County administrative offices in Chambersburg, Pa.

The first white man to settle in what we know today as Franklin County was Benjamin Chambers, a Scot-Irishman. He was from County Antrim in Northern Ireland and along with his brothers James, Robert, and Joseph immigrated to the Province of Pennsylvania some time between 1726 and 1730. With permission from the Indians, Chambers was allowed to settle on the land of his choice. This was about 1730. On March 30, 1734, the agent for the proprietors gave him a license "to take and settle and improve four hundred acres of land at the Falling Spring's mouth, and on both sides of the Conococheague Creek, for the convenience of a grist mill and plantation." This place became Chambersburg.

Antrim Township, established in 1741, is named after County Antrim in the very northeast corner of Northern Ireland from where many of this area's first settlers came. There is also a town by the name of Antrim located in County Antrim

The land that Greencastle now sits upon was first deeded to Samuel Smith by a land warrant in 1750. It was then transferred to John Smith, then John Davison, and finally to William Allison, Sr. in 1763. In 1769, William, Sr. transferred a portion of the land - 300 acres - to his son, John. If Greencastle was named for a place in the north of Ireland, there is no doubt the gently rolling landscape of this area reminded them of their homes in Ireland.

John Allison was a colonel in the Revolutionary War and served three terms in the Pennsylvania Assembly. In 1787 he was a delegate from Franklin County to the Pennsylvania Convention called to ratify the new Federal Constitution.

Allison founded Greencastle in 1782. Allison, along with the help of James Crawford, laid out the town in 246 numbered lots of equal size (30' x 250') and sold them through a lottery at \$8 each. Allison owned and ran a tavern in town. In 1785 he contracted with William Rankin who owned Moss Spring to provide a fresh supply of water via a wooden trunk line into town for daily uses and fire protection.

Allison-Antrim Museum is continuing its research into how Greencastle got its name. There are conflicting references in William P. Conrad's books and news articles and other history book references. Some indicate that the immigrants left from the Greencastle on the border of County Antrim and the city of Belfast. Other references are made to the Greencastle in County Donegal. A third twist is the fact that there were two large houses in Elizabethan times in County Antrim - one was called The White House and the other 'Greencastle'. Although the house Greencastle was not actually a castle it was quite large in comparison to the cottages dotted about it, and according to Archie Reid, to the people who lived in its proximity it probably seemed like a castle. Or, could our town have been named after General Green of the Revolutionary War? The museum will continue investigating the Allison family's heritage through connections in Northern Ireland and will keep this information updated as facts are received.

Compiled by Bonnie A. Shockey

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- Various newspaper articles

More information on Greencastle-Antrim and John Allison can be found under History on the Web site.

More information click on [Greencastle-Antrim](#) and [John Allison](#)

[top](#)