

History of the Chain of Title

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Bradford Township was first mentioned as a township about 1701 when a constable was named for the lands beyond the Welsh Line, west of Westtown Township and north of Birmingham Township. James Buffington was then constable for Westtown and the first constable for the new area. He was followed by Robert Jefferis. The third constable for Bradford was Abiah Taylor. Each man served for one year. Westtown Township is mentioned in records as early as 1685 with undefined north and west limits. Birmingham Township was organized in 1686 with its northern boundary the Street Road. About 1700, Goshen Township is identified in those regions north and west of Westtown Township. The northern boundary of Birmingham Township was raised in 1856 when a portion of East Bradford Township was added to Birmingham above the Street Road.

The lands of Bradford Township lay generally south of Caln Township and Boot Road, and from the Whiteland and Goshen western lines to the West Branch of The Brandywine Creek. The township was later divided in part by the East Branch of Brandywine Creek in 1731 with the southern end of East Bradford Township including both sides of that branch. Parcels had been laid out in early Bradford Township (before division into two townships) in large tracts of 1000 to 1500 acres, but few were settled. What became Bradford Townships was an unbroken wilderness. Arthur Cook, of Philadelphia, had the largest tract (1500 acres), The Langhorn Company with 1000 acres following the pattern. Other purchasers appeared. There were a few purchasers of 150 to 250 acres who inched into the perimeters. In afteryears, the large tracts were sold off in smaller parcels to bonafide residents. Buffington, who was living in Chester before Penn received his Charter, was one of the first actual settlers of Bradford and Jefferis was close second. Both were on the Birmingham or south end, East Bradford contains 15.37 square miles, West Bradford 18.7 square miles.

In 1739/40, a petition was circulated for better road maintenance, saying: "A strip of land lying between the townships of Caln, Bradford, Goshen and Whiteland suffers for want of the opening and repair of roads in our vicinity which the neighboring

supervisors refuse to attend to.” It was signed George Jefferis, Charles Wollerton, and other. George Jefferis and James Wollerton are names in the area of this Chain of Title. George Jefferis was a son of Robert Jefferis, and James Wollerton, a son of Charles Wollerton.

Robert Jefferis had moved from Chichester Township in 1701 when he bought 169 acres from a man named William Vestal on the Birmingham line near the Westtown corner. In 1712, he purchased a tract of 256 acres, and in 1721 added 189 acres from Buffington that connected the first and second tracts. Twelve children were born to Robert and Jane Jefferis, George being the fourth son. The homestead farm in southern East Bradford Township had been left to a younger son, Benjamin, and all those first Jefferis lands were divided among other sons. George, however, was not one who inherited land. It is thought that he married his cousin, Lydia Chandler, whose family lived in the Downing’s town area. By the above petition, he was living on land near his history in upper Bradford Township, but for which he did not claim a patent (first deed) until 1751. George died about 1763 naming his wife, Lydia, and Samuel Cope executors. (The name Cope is spelled Coope in early deeds, but probably was pronounced as later spelled.) As seen in the Chain of Title, the executors of George Jefferis sold in 1771 the 176 acre Jefferis farm to Enoch Gray. Enoch was a son of John and Susanna Gray and a sister to Mary Wollerton, wife of John Wollerton. Through study of the Wollerton Homestead deeds, it becomes clear that John Gray was on the Jefferis lands, probably as a renter, for many years prior to the Jefferis sale to son, Enoch Gray.

Little was found of the Gray family in Bradford prior to Enoch other than noting a John Gray listed as a taxable in East Bradford in 1753, and that in Susannah Gray’s Will, a daughter, Mary, is named a beneficiary as the wife of John Wollerton, son of Charles Wollerton. The Jefferis/Gray farm lay adjacent to the Wollerton farm. Charles Wollerton had taken out two Warrants which were surveyed in 1734 and 1748. The earlier survey was for 181 acres in West Whiteland Township, and the second for 52 acres adjacent in Bradford Township. After the second survey in 1748, Charles Wollerton purchased his patent which combined the two tracts into one document. In 1766, his son, John, purchased a third Patent adjacent holding 68 acres and called Wollerton’s Garden. Although Charles’ first patent reads all 181 acres “in Whiteland Township”, later deeds show it to be 3/4ths in Bradford and only 1/4th in Whiteland. Western and northwestern

township lines were undetermined and fluid at 1734.

According to Futhey & Cope's History and Biography of Chester County, page 770, Charles Wollerton had come from Hicklin, County of Nottingham, England, to Pennsylvania about 1725/6 as a singleman. He married Jan Chilcot at Concord Meeting (although neither were Quakers) on 3/18/1726 and settled in the northern part of Bradford Township on the Whiteland border. Charles was a weaver by trade, and, as most men of the day, also farmed. the Chester County history (F&C) say he died 5/13/1781, although deeds say 1783, and he and Jane are buried at Goshen Friends Meeting. In his Will, he leaves "part of my land in East Bradford Township that lies west side of a certain line I have now fixed and next to John Gray" to his son, John Wollerton, and "the remainder of my plantation and all the residue of my estate" to his son, James, whom he also named his executor. There were three daughters mentioned in Charles' Will - Sarah Finley, deceased, 5 shillings to her children, Mary Lilley, 5 shillings, and Jane Spackman, 5 shillings. An annotation to the Abstract reads that Sarah had married Samuel Finley in October, 1746 at Old Swede's Church in Wilmington. The fact that Charles left a considerably smaller part of his estate to his eldest son, John, probably indicates that John was well situated on some part of his wife's family farm, or stands to inherit from her line.

The above recounting of the Wollertons first and second generation statistics is fine until one reads two deeds - P2-vol.39-page 640 and Y2-vol.47-page 538. Both deeds are to Charles Wollerton who appears to be a son of James Wollerton. The P2 deed is dated 1794, the Y2 deed dated 1806. Both deeds transfer only a small portion of the original Wollerton farm to this second Charles Wollerton. The earlier deed - P2 (1794)- is stated from James and Dorcas Wollerton to their son, Charles. The second deed - Y2 - is from John and Sarah Wollerton (unidentified among at least two John's of the same generation) at 1806. Upon search, this John turns out to be a brother of Charles, and therefore also son of James. The Y2 deed, however, relates that the James Wollerton who inherited the eastern end of the Wollerton farm died in 1785 which would preclude the correctness of the dating of the P2 (1794) deed. Somewhere in these two deeds some family history has been confused, for the father Charles' two sons - the only sons mentioned in his Will - each lived beyond 1785. John, the older, died intestate in 1794, his wife, Mary Gray Wollerton, dying in 1795 testate. James, married to Dorcas Few

who is mentioned by name in Mary Wollerton's Will as "my sister-in-law" and in which Mary appoints "my brother-in-law, James Wollerton", executor, did not die until 1805. Dorcas lived until 1815. The answer is found in James' Will of 1805, in which he leaves a bequest to "my grandson, son of James." Had James been living in 1805, it is not likely that his father would have omitted him from the Will, and the family notation on the deed P2 is simply confusing the father James with the son James.

The only reason for genealogical accuracy in this instance is to be certain of the identities of the James and John Wollertons who figure in the deed descent of the Guthrie Farm. Since both John and James, sons of Charles (1), each had sons named James and John, and deeds are not found for the property between the 1748 Patent and 1836, it is imperative to be certain of the family lines for every John and James. At 1803 and Enoch Gray is found selling 50 acres to a James Wollerton...no identification of which "James" given. Both father and son and cousin James were living. Enoch Gray was Mary(Gray) Wollerton's brother. All we have proved at this point is that the Grays and Wollertons lived beside each other, intermarried, and traded a few acres from time to time. It becomes necessary to lay out the survey plats for not only the Wollertons and the Grays, but also for the surrounding landowners. When this was done, it became clear the Enoch Gray's sale to James Wollerton in 1803 was near, but not adjacent to the Wollerton Homestead.

The above misty records are compounded by the fact that the next deed of record for the Guthrie Farm is dated 1836 when three Wollerton siblings Release by deed to their brother Mifflin Wollerton. Now there is a new set of Wollerton names. No land transactions were recorded between 1803 and 1836. But there was a Will at 1805 and Orphans Court proceedings at 1820 and 1834 which shed some light. James (1) died in 1805, testate, leaving, inter alia, "the farm on which I live" to his youngest son, John. Later we find reference that identifies this John with a wife, Sarah. No record was found of their marriage. However, Orphans Court papers reveal the estate of another James Wollerton who died in 1820. Since we know that James' son, James, had died many years earlier, - at 1820, this is certainly James, the son of John and Mary (Gray) Wollerton. When this James died in 1820, there were minor children left as heirs, but no widow. Through newspaper clippings, it is thought that James had married Hannah Good, who died one month before James, leaving the children orphans. Their children,

all minors in 1820, were Mary, Moses, John, Ziba, and Sarah. Now a legal disposition had to be made. Administrators and guardians were appointed in the persons of William Newlin, Charles Wollerton and Eli Shugart under \$2000 bond in 1821. They provided an Inventory of the estate. The estate was settled in April of 1823, but how settled was left unclear. Newlin and Charles Wollerton, whose relationship is not spelled out, although the only Charles of record at this date would have been the son of James (1) or a cousin to James who died in 1820 and an Uncle (once removed) to John's children. The administrators appear to have taken charge until the children come of age. No deeds are of record. Arrangements were probably made by family agreement. The farm is said to have contained 58 acres, which is tantalizingly close to the present size of the Guthrie farm.

Not until 1834, fourteen years later, when John Wollerton estate appears in Orphans Court papers, is there any record of further events. Once again, we are plunged into wondering which John, lined from which brother, is the decedent. Apparently, this John was the father of four children - Mifflin, James, Drucilla, and Albina - and now widow's name to guide us. There is a farm of 150 acres. It seems that Mifflin as the eldest son took charge, to the concern of his three siblings. His brother, James, rose to protect himself and their sisters by filing a Inquisition in 1834 or '35. Mifflin conceded their rightful position and, in his response to James' complaint, they all signed a Deed of Covenant on January 8, 1836, (Deed Book #04-86-64) requesting a Jury of View be set to partition the property. Mifflin also asked that James' Inquisition be set aside. The Jury of View said partition was harmful, and Mifflin Wollerton, as eldest son, was given legal possession of 106 acres, which was "already in his possession...Being part of the aforementioned Tract (150 acres) of which the said John Wollerton died seized and possessed." Mifflin acknowledged the rights of his siblings, paying each a stated sum as their shares of the farm. From this point - 1836 - the Chain of Title becomes secure with regular recordings of deeds falling in line.

Of concern, however, is still the lineage of Mifflin, James, Drucilla, and Albina compounded by the death notice in 1836 of another John Wollerton.

INTERPERTATION OF TAX ASSESSMENTS: Taxes tell us a little more about the Wollertons, but they too, are non-conclusive. Taxes were itemized every year up to 1800, although only sporadically giving more than rates, when a schedule of triennial-based assessments (every three years instead of each year) was effectively introduced. Property valuation would only be changed if a sale occurred between the three years. Tax assessments never exactly record acreage. They are usually a shade under, and never over, the precise acreage. They could be ascribed either to the owner or to a tenant/occupant by mutual agreement.

East Bradford Township:

1767 - James Wollerton was assessed for 100 acres & buildings: 2 horses, 3 cattle, 6 sheep.

John Wollerton was assessed for 80 acres and buildings: 1 horse, 2 cattle, 4 sheep.

(Remember that their father, Charles, was still living and seized of about 300 acres from which both John's and James' acreage probably came, the family apportioning the taxes.)

1780 James Wollerton - 28 acres These may be sons of either James (1) or John (1)

John Wollerton - 28 acres

Joseph Wollerton - a Freeman (unmarried) 20 acres (This is James eldest son - just come of age.)

1783 - James Wollerton - 70 acres; 2 horses, 3 cattle, 6 sheep. It would seem this to be the

James of 1767 after having given 28-30 acres to son, James (who died in 1785).

(this raises a question of legal age for holding land, unless

James was the eldest son -not Joseph.) No John Wollerton was

listed in 1783. And why did not James; assessment reduce another 20

acres from Joseph's assessment? Of course, this was the year in which

Charles Wollerton died. Divisions and partitions may have been undecided at the time.

Joseph Wollerton - still a Freeman with 20 acres.

1796 - James Wollerton - "Pretty good log house", 70 acres, 3 horses, 4 cows "Pretty good log barn"

William Wollerton - "Poor old log house & barn." 185 acres

Zia Wollerton - singleman = a Taylor (William and Ziba were brother and sons of John)

1798 - The most definitive 18th Century tax

(Pennsylvania Direct Tax on Glass imposed one year only) is missing for East Bradford Township.

1799 - (Almost as good as the 1798 Glass Tax)

William Wollerton - 93 acres and buildings.

Ziba Wollerton - 68 acres & buildings

For a total of ----181 acres

Apparently Wm. & Ziba, brothers and sons of John & Mary, divided the 185 acres between them.

James Wollerton - 70 acres; Buildings ass'd @ \$175; 2 horses, 3 cattle

John Wollerton - a Freeman. This could be a son, John of either brother - John or James.

1802 - James Wollerton - 50 acres; Dwelling - \$125; Barn - \$150.

William Wollerton - 70 acres; Dwelling \$50; Barn \$50

Ziba Wollerton - 40 acres; Dwelling - \$275

John Wollerton - Inmate (married but not owning land & living in another household.)

I did not go further into taxes since they grow less definitive. The above would suggest that John and James (sons of Charles Wollerton) paid taxes split between them on 180 acres of land all in Bradford Township - unless Bradford taxed for land over the township boundary in Whiteland if the dwelling was in Bradford Township. Otherwise, a tax would have been due in Whiteland also. I did not check this.

The two deeds to Charles Wollerton (2) -(1794 & 1806) - do not show up on 1794 or 1806 assessments, nor does Charles show up at these dates on any Bradford taxes for the

simple reason that he was situated on the Wollerton lands in West Whiteland. The 1796 and 1799 assessment positively puts James in a good log house and log barn with 70 acres. The 1796,'99 & 1802 tax put William and Ziba Wollerton, sons of the deceased John and Mary, as owners of two sets of “poor” log buildings.

Further clarification is shown in 1802 when James’ dwelling is assessed at \$125 and William’s at \$50. Both of these assessments are typical of values afforded log dwellings, \$125 of a good log house, and \$50 for a poor log house. But Ziba at 1802 is assessed \$275, which by all judgment is a stone house. This would be, however, a small stone house. Larger or finer stone houses would rise from \$300 to \$900 or \$1000 dollars at that date. Therefore, it can reasonably be suggested that the log house standing today on the Guthrie farm is the “pretty good log house” that James (1) - second son of Charles (1) - was assessed for the certainly lived in prior to that date, probably before the Revolution. (James was born 1731.) Ziba’s stone house is probably the house standing today on the west side of Gurthrie Road just west of the GuthrieFarm.

RECORDS AFTER 1834

A deed search is worked backwards from the current ownership. The title breaks with D.B. #04-86-64 in 1836, making it hazardous to draw a connection without matching deed descriptions. However, it becomes clear when the original patents are plotted that the Guthrie Farm is in dead center of Charles Wollerton’s three patent holdings. It may reasonably be presumed that Charles built his dwelling towards the center of his lands. It is also reasonable to presume that when Charles devised his remaining lands - after giving 100 acres to son, John, that he would leave his dwelling with those ‘remaining’ lands. This assumption would place a probable date on the standing log house at ca. 1730 if it was Charles Wollerton’s log house - or roughly 1760 if it was built by James.

Returning to the line of descent questions posed by the several Johns’ and James’, a new problem is seen in the size of the farm left by John Wollerton at 1834. Orphans Court papers size the farm at 150 acres but Mifflin Wollerton takes title to only 106 acres, “part of” John’s farm. What happened to the dangling 44 acres can be visualized by setting the original patent lines against farm tracts on the 1883 map, or by running deed searches on all the surrounding parcels of land.

Having determined the placement of the original Wollerton patents, and having

accepted that the first John was given about 100 acres off the western side of those patents, we can superimpose 100 acres on the 1883 map and get a general idea of boundaries for the 100 acres. They would have included the following:

George Irwin28 acres..... 28 acres
p/o Lewis Shields.....73 acres..... 45 acres
p/o W. Bowen Mercer.....87 acres..... 30 acres.....103 acres

Except for the Irwin tract, the acreage's are approximated out of the 1883 map farms. John Wollerton added a 68 acre tract by Patent in 1766 - bought before his father died - that lay along the Valley Creek and was known as Wollerton's Garden. This piece may have been the deciding factor in Charles' mind to bequeath John the western end of his plantation. At any rate, John's acreage was bought up to something over 150 acres, and extended Wollerton land to the creek bank.

It now becomes clear that the first John did not live on the present Guthrie Farm, leaving a much more comfortable assumption that James Wollerton was, indeed, the occupant of the "pretty good log house and log barn" that stands today on the Guthrie farm. It further becomes clear that James was owner/occupant of the eastern end of the plantation lapping into West Whiteland. Orphans Court records and Wills further substantiate this premise.

This first James wrote a Will dated February 27, 1805, and died in July of that year. In it, he bequeaths to his wife, Dorcas, "the room Down Stairs, it being the west End of the house and privilege of Any other part if she should want it." He continues: "Likewise (she is) to have her firewood Cut and drawed to the door and Shall have fifteen bushels of rye and ten bushels of Wheat and one hundred and fifty pounds of pork and Fifty pounds of beef Each and Every year During her Naturel life and likewise my best Feather Bed and Beding and all my houshold firneture and to have a horse Saddle and Bridle and a Cow to be kept winter And Summer and provided for and to have Sixteen Dollars Each and Every year during her Natuarel life." (Spelling and punctuation as read in the original document.)

James further bequeaths 25 pounds to his son Joseph, eleven acres of land with metes and bounds and to include two acres of woodland to son Charles, Charles to pay his brother, Joseph, 25 pounds for the eleven acres. He further leaves 20 pounds to each of

his living daughters, Hannah Wollerton, Dorcas Pierson, and Jane Pierson, and two pounds five shillings to the children of daughter, Mary Spackman, apparently deceased. He then bequeaths fifteen shillings “to my son James Wollerton’s Child.” To Dorcas and her husband, William, he sets out a four foot wide right-of-way to a certain spring “through my land” and to build a Springhouse “for their use.” Everything remaining in real or personal property, he leaves to his son, John, who is to pay all but Hannah’s legacy. (Charles is to pay her legacy.) He names his wife, Dorcas, and son, Charles, executors. Now we know who inherits to log house and farm - James’ son, John Wollerton.

This John Wollerton died, intestate, in November of 1834, a widower with four grown children - Mifflin, James, Drucilla, and Albina. A newspaper notice says he was about 50 years old, which would put his birth date at about 1784. Mifflin’s obituary (1889) says he (Mifflin) was born on the old Wollerton homestead. A John and Sarah are mentioned somewhere along the way. Sarah apparently predeceased John, but no obituary was found. However, Mifflin died in 1889 with a newspaper notice saying he was 82 years old. This would make his birth date 1807, and as the oldest child, if there was no still-born before him, but John and Sarah’s marriage at about 1806 when John was 22 years old. The parents are probably buried at Goshen Meeting with other Wollertons.

At the death of John, Orphans Court awarded the farm to Mifflin as the oldest son with the stipulation that interests in the farm be equally divided between the four heirs. To do this, Mifflin sold off eastern portions of the farm, reducing the acreage to 106 acres on which he lived until 1856. Parts of this eastern end had years ago been sold to Mifflin’s Uncle Charles, second son of James and Dorcas and older brother to Mifflin;s father. Uncle Charles Wollerton died in 1833, a year before John. This Charles is consistently taxed in West Whiteland Township. He was a shoemaker by trade, and died a widower, leaving six adult children: Eli, Isaac, of course a James, and Albina(Strode), Elizabeth (Few), and Tabitha (Shields). His son Isaac died in July of the same year, unexpectedly, for his father’s Will devises one third of the farm to Isaac as “being that part where he has commenced building a new house on.”

In 1841 at age 34, Mifflin begins to advertise the 106 acres for sale, stating “on which he resides.”

Mifflin had married Rebecca Scott and their family was growing. Reasons for selling the farm do not come through records. His first advertisement reads “The improvements consist of a one story LOG HOUSE, cellared under; Log BARN, stone stable high; spring House near the dwelling, and other out buildings. This farm is well fenced; has a good proportion of Woodland, and an Orchard of selected fruit...It is also well watered.” Apparently it did not sell, for in 1846, he advertised again, this time rounding out the acreage at “about 100 acres, a large proportion of which is Woodland...The arable land is in a good state of cultivation, divided into convenient enclosures, well watered and is well calculated for a dairy farm. The improvements are a comfortable Log Dwelling house and Barn, stone spring house over a never failing spring of water, with other out-buildings.” He, ‘the subscriber’ living on the premises. Both of the above sales notices were private sales under no apparent duress.

By 1855, Mifflin had sold 82 acres with the buildings to Balser Swymler, settlement occurring on March 31, 1856. Mifflin immediately advertised the remaining 20 acres - the northern end of the 106 acres. He held a public sale on the 3rd of November, 1855, saying the sale would be “altogether or divided to suit purchasers.” Almost fifteen acres was sold to Nelson F. Evans and Barton F. Blake, gentlemen’ of Philadelphia for \$1850 by deed#G10-229-168. Mifflin and Rebecca had moved to Marshallton after sale of the 82 acres. Symler may have been a straw purchaser for one year later, he transferred the 82 acres to Newlin and Sarah Ann Dolby. Dolby was a relative to the Wollertons.

Dolby is name first found in Upper Uwchland Township. Thomas immigrated in 1788 from Wales to the Uwchlans where he married Sarah Evans and operated The Black Horse Tavern. Newlin Dolby was his son. This points up a symbiotic relationship between East Bradford Wollertons, and Uwchlan Wollertons. A branch of the first John Wollerton;s family transplanted to the Upper Uwchlan region in the 1800s, Ziba being the first, followed in later life by John’s oldest son, William. They moved to farms north and east of Rout 100, Ziba north of the Eagle Hotel and William east of Lionville. William had been a saddler in West Chester where he purchased the farm of David Haines and established his own farmstead before the town was laid out as the county seat. It was just south of the present Court House complex where the Mansion House later stood. (F&C, page 212 fn.) His eldest son, William became a well-known assistant Judge of the county courts and president of the bank of West Chester. William

sold his farm in 1827 to William Everhart and moved to Uwchlan. There were marriage connections between the Wollertons and Newlins and the Dolbys. Newlin Dolby kept the Wollerton farm only three years, which suggests an investment or holding operation. Newlin was inclined to deal in real estate. He developed in a small way the village of Font where his father lived and had managed The Black Horse.

In 1860, Newlin and Sarah Ann sold the 82 acres to John R Thompson (also spelled Thomson) a farmer of East Caln Township. Thompson remained owner of the farm until his death in 1893. He was 69 years old and was survived by his wife, Rebecca, and two daughters, one married to Eber J. Young. In 1887, John Thompson had sold 25 northern acres to Nelson Evans and Barton Blake, extending their earlier 15 acre purchase of the Wollerton farm. These deletions can be clearly seen on the 1934 map as the southernmost part of lands belonging to the Insurance Company of the State of Pennsylvania and which become the Bradford Hills development. Evans and Blake were probably agents for the development interests under the insurance company. Thompson's administrators sold the remaining 57 acres to Daniel Sheehy. No information was found about Daniel Sheehy. There was an Orphans Court-ordered sale in 1894 for the Thompson estate, but no information about the purchaser. Sheehy owned the property for twelve years. Whether or not he lived there (he was an East Bradford resident in 1895, so may have had two farms) is not known. He may have put the farm out on a Lease/Purchase sale, or on strict rental.

In 1907, the farm is recorded sold to Lydia E Guthrie. Lydia is the wife of Harry C. Guthrie, they being the grandparents of C. Leon Guthrie, present owner. Lydia died November 3, 1920 at the age of 69 years. Her obituary says she died after an illness of some length, and was well-known in West Chester as an industrious woman and kind wife and mother, leaving many friends. Her Will was written in February 1919 in which she devised the property to their daughter, Ruth J. Hartshorne et vir -(et vir simply meaning 'and Husband') - and their son, Edwin S. Guthrie, in fee. ('In fee' is a shortening of 'in fee simple', the use of 'fee' taking the meaning of 'estate'; therefore, 'in fee' meaning an absolute estate of inheritance clear of any conditions or restriction to particular heirs.) Her husband survived her, and under Pennsylvania law was entitled to the same one-third of their joint estate that a surviving wife would be entitled to should her husband die first. Harry C. Guthrie filed for his rightful third. No date was found for

the death of Harry C. Guthrie, but Ruth Hartshorne and her husband, Herbert B. Hartshorne, transferred the 57 acres to Edwin S. Guthrie on December 8, 1920.

On June 1, 1909, Edwin S. Guthrie married Agnes Russell, daughter of Gabriel and Mary Davis Russell. They moved into the log house on the Guthrie Farm where they raised five sons and two daughters-Willis, Raymond, Arthur, Lydia (Bennett), Marie (Turner), Curtis and C. Leon. Agnes died in 1969 at age 77; Edwin died January 10, 1971, in his 81st year. The farm remains in the C Leon Guthrie family and remarkably retains the “pretty good log house.” The original boundary lines of the Wollerton Patents have largely disappeared into parcels of new ownership, - as is true of most of the original surveys and patents. Part of the northern-most part of the Wollerton land went into Bradford Hill, which was one of the earlier developments of the region. As the expansion of the area surrounding West Chester into suburban tract housing proliferated, one farm after another succumbed to complete development. Although only roughly one-fourth the size of Charles Wollerton’s 233 acres and about one-third of James’ Wollerton’s inheritance, and surrounded on all sides by homes on small acreage’s, the Guthrie Farm still bears the appearance of a farm unit.

One wonders why Charles Wollerton (or James, as the case may be) chose to put his log house on a bank above a rather sharp declivity when he had other sites much more level. Obviously, the somewhat bowl-like area is a springhead for one of many tributaries to Valley Creek. Was it because as a weaver, he ran a larger-than-average flock of sheep to supply his trade? And sheep and goats do well on hillsides. Or did the terrain remind him of County Nottingham, England? Nottingham was the center of medieval England where a Goose Fair is held every October; and where the Norse Nottingham Castle was built in Norman times as the home of Robert Peveril, the hero of Scott’s “peveril of the Peak.” It was a favorite of King John, who liked to hunt in Sherwood Forest nearby...and, of course, the storied home of Robin Hood.

Among items enumerated in the several Inventories of various Wollertons, there are many indications that their men folk were indeed weavers. Weaving was a man’s occupation - spinning and quilting, a woman’s occupation. The term hackel and flax break are terms indigenous to the refining of flax culture. As described in a recent publication on Upper Uwchland Township, the following is of interest:

“Flax culture required much hard labor from both men and women. Broadcast in May the plants were ready to be pulled in late July. Pulled up by the roots, they were lashed into four-or-five inch bundles and laid out to dry several days, being turned often. When they were dry enough, the stalks were drawn through a coarse wooden or iron “ripple comb”

to break off the seed-bolls. Part of the seed was saved for planting, the remainder sold to the linseed oil mills. The stalks were then retied in bundles, wet and spread out on a grass to “ret” (rot) in order to soften the fiber. When retted, it was raked, tied in large bundles and was then ready to “break” or separate the fibers. Strong men were needed to operate the ponderous break. Usually flax was broken twice and the whole operation had to be done in sunny weather. When the broken flax was dry as tinder, word was sent out for an all-day “scutching frolic” to take out small particles of bark and separate the fibers. The next process was “hackling” or “hetcheling.” The fibers were drawn slowly through a hackle, long steel teeth fixed in a board to further separate the fibers. More than twenty manipulations were required. The first hetcheling gave oakum for caulking boats; the second gave tow for making rough clothing; the third gave fine linen for clothing, towels, tablecloths and sheets. Then came spinning and weaving.”

(Page 166, *The Upper Uwchlan*, Cremers & Shenk. 1999)

Both hemp and flax were crops that required soil of high fertility. Some over-rich new ground had to be cropped with flax or hemp for a few years before wheat could be produced on it. Nearly every settler had a patch of flax for home use. It was commonly estimated that one acre of flax was required to make summer clothes for the family of seven. Although much was expected from the product, the land was quickly of more value if planted in wheat. Fletcher’s book of *Pennsylvania Agriculture and County Life, 1640-1840* says the growing of flax ended in Pennsylvania about 1840. However, with the Wollerton Inventories listing many ‘wheels’ and the above mentioned hackel and break (which the average farming pioneer did not have), can easily be believed that they did, indeed, carry on a trade of weaving.

The later years of the farm under John R. Thompson and the Guthries, were marked by a turning to animal husbandry and dairying. Lying close to the borough of West Chester where there were milk processing companies, and the coming importance of

rail traffic at Oakland and through the Chester Valley that gave access to Philadelphia markets, there was ample incentive to build, enlarge, and keep the family farm. But with the ending of the 20th Century, the last Twenty-five years of growth population, new high-tech business firms in the Industrial corridor, and general urban expansion, few farms are surviving. The Guthrie Farm is one such exception.

Written by Estelle Cremers 12/31/1999

<http://renovation.guthrieland.com/history/cremers-history.html>

Estelle Cremers, 85, of Pottstown Estelle (Harrop) Cremers, 85, wife of the late William L. Cremers Jr., of Pottstown, died Sunday evening, November 28, 2010, at home. Born in Phoenixville, she was the daughter of the late David and Elsie (Robinson) Harrop. Mrs. Cremers was a very active in her community. She was the past chairperson for the Historical Commission of Warwick Township, as well as helping to develop the French and Pickering Creek Trust. Mrs. Cremers also wrote five books documenting local townships. Through her historical preservation work, she was given the Lifetime Achievement Award from Chester County, as many other awards. Mrs. Cremers was also an accomplished vocalist, graduating from the Curtis Institute of Music for voice. She won the Voice of Tomorrow competition, which lead her to sing with the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in 1949. Mrs. Cremers was also the soloist at Washington Memorial Chapel where she eventually met her husband. Mrs. Cremers is survived by one daughter, Elisa M. Cremers, of Pottstown; one son, Matthew R., husband of Hope Cremers, of Pottstown; three grandchildren, Eve, Tess, and Lily; and several nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by her son, William L. Cremers III, and two brothers. Relatives and friends are invited to attend her funeral service at the Washington Memorial Chapel on Friday, December 3, 2010 at 11 a.m. Officiating will be Rev. Deane E. Boyd. Burial will follow in the Washington Memorial Chapel Churchyard. Condolences may be offered online at www.PhoenixvilleFuneralHome.com.

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