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Volunteer!
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1790

*Renew
your
membership
today!*

New Munster and its Irishmen

By John F. Polk

New Munster is a well-known land tract straddling the Elk River in the northeast corner of Cecil County, and honored by a historic marker on Route 273 that reads:

**New Munster
A tract of 6000 acres laid out in 1683
by George Talbot
(then Surveyor-General of Maryland)
for Edwin O'Dwire
and 15 other Irishmen. Its northern
boundary extended
into what is now the State of
Pennsylvania.**

The actual history of New Munster is considerably more complicated than a few words on a historic marker can convey, but it is also more complex than what appears in the well-known accounts by George Johnston's "History of Cecil County Maryland," and in the 1940 article by C. R. McKenrick in the Maryland Historical Magazine. These accounts have become the commonly accepted histories for New Munster, but their authors did not seem to have been aware of some intriguing provincial and county records available at the

Maryland State Archives. A deeper look of these records reveals a new picture of this historic land tract.

The First Irishman

Around 1680 Lord Baltimore enlisted the services of his cousin George Talbot to help populate the northeast corner of the province. As an incentive, Baltimore granted Talbot the manor of Susquehanna, or New Connaught, nominally 32,000 acres, in the western Cecil County. This brought with it an obligation on Talbot to settle the lands with 640 new subjects. Such a commitment required the services of men who could locate and transport willing settlers into the colony, and Talbot soon latched onto Edmund O'Dwire as one of his principal agents for this enterprise. O'Dwire was an entrepreneur from County Tipperary, Ireland, hired by colonial investors as an agent to enlist and transport settlers from southern Ireland to the colonies. His 1682 warrant for transportation of 82 persons from Ireland to America no doubt gave George Talbot confidence in O'Dwire's ability to deliver the goods. As inducements, Talbot, by then the Surveyor General of

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President's Corner

The Historical Society is happy to introduce three new board members and would like to thank the retiring board members. Many organizations are lamenting the difficulty in recruiting volunteers and we are no different. There are obligations that come with being a Board member and we should all appreciate that there are still people in our community willing to sacrifice their time to preserve the history of Cecil County. With that being said, we are searching for a volunteer to take over the membership responsibilities. This is a critical task in many respects since so many of our functions are initiated from the membership database such as membership renewal notices, distribution of the Inkwell and program advertising. If there is anyone who would like to tackle this important task, please contact us.

We've had a busy and productive summer. Our log cabin garden really took shape this year and bloomed beautifully. Thanks to the County our building got new windows and a new roof. This caused a little disruption for several months, but we are now leak and draft free. Bridget, the University of Delaware intern who worked all summer, did a fantastic job of cataloguing and organizing the Society's entire art collection. She was a delight to work with and we hope that we gave her some valuable experience.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Family Heritage Day at the historic Big Elk Chapel. We had

advertised this program as happening rain or shine, however, we were thinking showers not monsoons. Keep an eye out for this program in the Spring.

Mark your calendars for December's First Friday on the 1st. We will be having our annual Silent Auction and picking the winner of the Fall Raffle. Please join us for some holiday merriment with drink and good food!

Have a wonderful holiday season,

*Paula Newton
President*

Officers

- ◆ PAULA NEWTON – PRESIDENT
- ◆ BETH MOORE—VICE PRESIDENT
- ◆ DEBBIE STORKE – TREASURER
- ◆ MIKE DIXON – HISTORIAN
- ◆ CAROL DONACHE – LIBRARIAN
- ◆ BETH MOORE – CORRESPONDING SECRETARY
- ◆ MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
- ◆ LISA DOLOR – CO-CURATOR

***HSCC wants to email the Inkwell
to as many
members as possible!***

Trustees

- ◆ GARY HOLMES
- ◆ DAVID HOLSTEN
- ◆ TRAVIS HUMISTON
- ◆ ERIC MEASE
- ◆ ALLYN NICKLE
- ◆ KAREN PETERSON
- ◆ RUSTY EDER
- ◆ TRACY JENTZSCH
- ◆ MARGIE BLYSTONE

***Do you want to get involved?
Contact us!
cecilhistory@gmail.com***

Welcome, New Members!

March

- Sarah Blystone
- John & Margie Blystone
- Courtney Lowe
- Bevy Moon
- Johnathan Younker
- Ostin Younker
- Leah Youse
- Rita J. Lerch
- Linda Potts
- Teresa Serales
- Ruth Anne Weisenauer

April

- John & Inge Bratton
- James Foster
- John Laird

May

- Reginald Hartman
- John Hickey
- Rising Sun Historic Preservation Commission
- Candice Myruski
- Laverne Singleton
- Diane Wilkins

June

- Donald Erb
- Wayne Schaumberg
- Betty Jane Andrew
- Jean Churchman
- Debra Foster

August

- Carolyn Patton
- Beth Crossley
- Ann Hillsman
- L. Harvey Kirk III
- Leslie Pilcher
- Elizabeth Youngblood

September

- Brian & Karen Hunsberger

Do you know someone who should become a member? Let us know! Send us an email or give a call.

Volunteer Spotlight: Travis Humiston



Name and where you are from:

My name is Travis Humiston I am from Waterbury Connecticut and moved to Maryland in 2004.

What do you do in your working life:

I am a mechanical engineer. I manage test projects for new and developing products.

What is your job at the Historical Society:

As a volunteer I help with ongoing projects in various ways from research to moving heavy boxes. I also appear in the Historical Societies Column in the Cecil Whig. I also serve as a trustee on the Historical Society Board.

What encouraged you to volunteer:

I use the society resources quite a bit to research my family's 150 year old farmhouse. As I spent more and more time there I wanted to get involved to help as much as possible.

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Maryland, arranged for O'Dwire to receive the land grants of New Munster, Kappagh, and Crossayle at the northeastern limits of Cecil in August 1683. In April 1684 the enterprise seemed to be well under way when Talbot reported the import of 60 persons since 1682 to the provincial Council. Unfortunately events took a dramatic turn at this point, with Talbot's confrontation and murder of the Royal tax collector Christopher Rousby in October, 1684, bringing a swift end to Talbot's career as provincial leader and entrepreneur. This drastic reversal of fortune also relieved O'Dwire of any residual obligations he had to Talbot, and left him in clear possession of New Munster and his other lands in Cecil.

The "Other Irishmen" of New Munster

The survey certificate for New Munster recorded in the Provincial Land Office dated 29 August 1683 begins as follows:

By virtue of a war't from your Lopp's to me directed bearing date the 6th instant for laying out seven thousand acres of land in Caecill county for Edmund Dwyre and other Irishmen ~ laid out for him and them a certain tract of land called New Munster lying in Caecill County on the main fresh of the Elk River and on both sides of the said fresh beginning at a markt poplar on a high bank over the West side of the said main fresh ...

The mention of "other Irishmen" with Edmund O'Dwire naturally raises the question of just who they were, and whether they actually settled in New Munster. In 1714, a deed conveying 1150 acres of New Munster to Matthew Wallace and five members of the Alexander family stated that the parcel had been "for some years last past improved and possessed by Matthew Wallace abovesd & company and by them divided among themselves each man according to his holden." This passage has led to the reasonable speculation that these families were the Irishmen cited in the 1683 warrant and survey certificate, or their successors. As it turns out, there is nothing found in Cecil County or Maryland provincial records to substantiate this, and considerable evidence pointing to a different conclusion.

For one thing, the known Irishmen associated with O'Dwire were from the south of Ireland and most likely Catholic, as befitted Baltimore and Talbot's intent to populate his colony with Catholics. More to the point, O'Dwire made sure the "other Irishmen," whoever they were, were excluded as co-owners when the patent for New Munster was actually issued in 1686. He submitted a petition to the Land Office for this explicit purpose, and it is cited within the patent document itself as follows:

*... whereupon the said Edmund O'Dwyer... prayed that pattent might goe forth **in his name alone notwithstanding those words other Irishmen** were inserted both in the aforementioned warrant & certificate, he giving our said Council to understand that he alone has borne at all the charges arising thereby hitherto and likewise oblinded himselfe by bond to severall of his*

countrymen to convey and make over severall parcels out of the aforesaid tract of six thousand acres to them ~~ Whereupon his prayer was granted and Wee ... give grant & confirm unto him the said Edmund O'Dwyer all that tract or parcel of land called New Munster..."

Although the statement in the patent is clear, no subsequent conveyance of any parcel of New Munster by Edmund O'Dwire is recorded in the Cecil County land records. On the other hand, the descriptive entry for New Munster in the Proprietary Rent Rolls for Cecil County indicates that 1500 acres of the tract were possessed by Thomas Pilgrum of Barbados, and 4500 acres by John Toas (of Kent County). Whether or not these were the countrymen to whom O'Dwire "obliged himselfe by bond," they were apparently the ones who somehow became the actual owners, even though the conveyances were not recorded. In any case O'Dwire's business activities in Maryland pretty much came to an end at this point, for no further mention of him can be found in Cecil County or Maryland provincial records.

The Legacy of Daniel Toas and the Entry of Robert Roberts

At most, O'Dwire held the property for five years after it was patented. Daniel Toas of Kent County had become the owner of 4500 acres by April 1691 when he bequeathed it to his three children. His will provided that New Munster be divided among his them at the discretion of his widow, but no actions seem to have been taken to implement the will, and this led to problems that plagued the property for decades. In 1711 a crisis developed when Daniel Toas's eldest son, John, got into legal difficulties in New Jersey and was required to post a bond of £231 to the Sheriff of Salem County, an exaction that he apparently could not meet. Toas turned to his wife Anne's brother, Robert Roberts, to pledge the required funds, and Roberts obligingly posted security. In return for this generosity it seems that John Toas promptly liquidated whatever assets he possessed and absconded, leaving his wife and children penniless and Roberts in forfeit. At least this is the way events are described in the account given by Roberts to the Maryland Assembly to which he turned for relief. Roberts was clearly a resourceful and well-connected individual. He petitioned the Assembly for passage of a special act granting him power him to

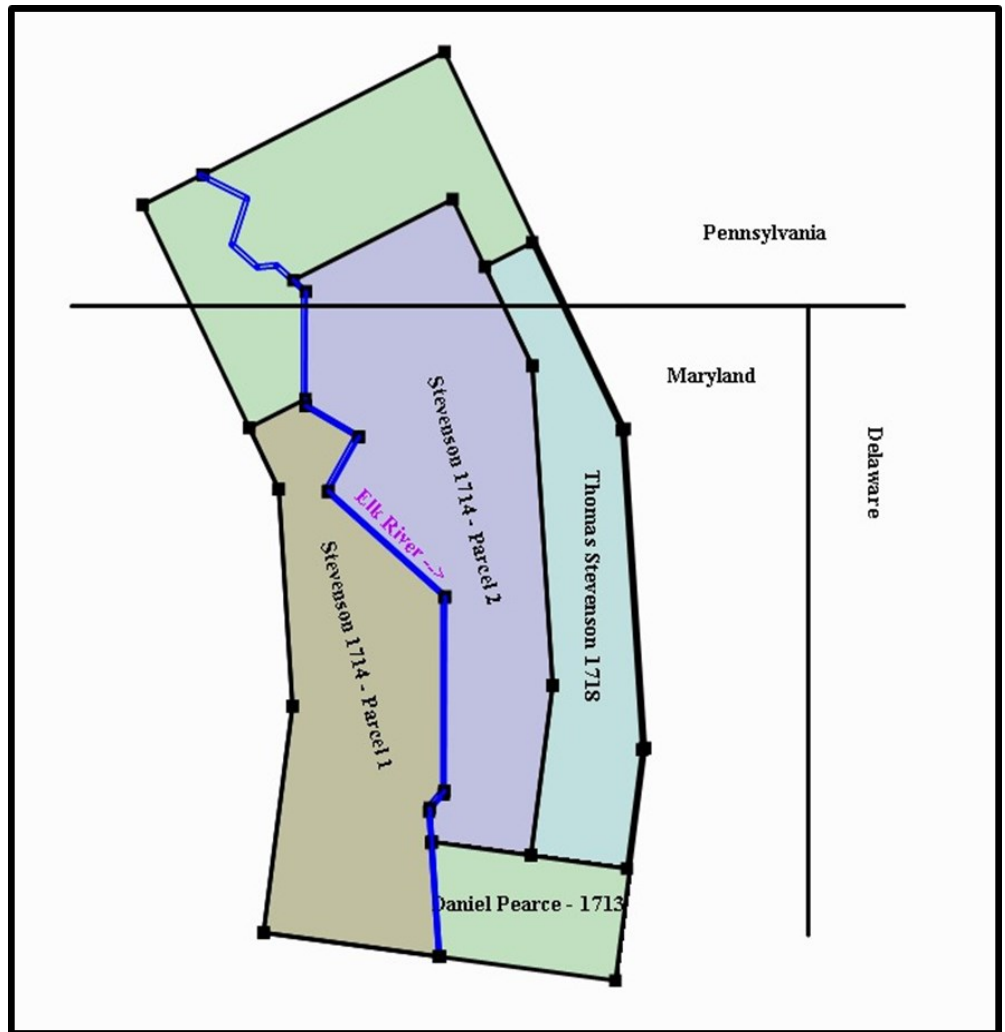


Figure 1. Parcels of New Munster sold by Robert Roberts.

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sell Toas's lands in New Munster as recompense, and the Assembly accommodated him forthwith, as recorded in the Assembly Proceedings. (Archives of MD, Volume 38, p.138-9.)

The account presented in the Assembly completely ignored the rights of the other Toas legatees, and left Roberts full discretion to sell as much of the unspecified 4500 acres of New Munster as he deemed necessary to recoup his loss and provide for the abandoned wife and children. This sowed the seeds of future conflict.

Sale of New Munster

Robert Roberts proceeded to dispose of the New Munster lands in two separate sales: 407 acres to Daniel Pearce of Kent County in September 1713, and a double parcel of 1150 + 1585 acres from the east and west sides of the Elk to Thomas Stevenson of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, in April 1714. This was followed four years later, in August 1718, by the sale of an additional 903 acres to Stevenson. The location of these parcels within New Munster is shown in Figure 1. Altogether these sales accounted for 4053 of the original 4500 acres and generated over £400 for Roberts, easily making up for his claimed earlier loss.

Thomas Stevenson did not have any personal interest in these lands, but simply appears to have been a land broker who was able to find buyers for Roberts, and turn a quick profit. His purchases from Roberts were strictly pass-through arrangements. He resold the entire 2735 acres of the double parcel lands within six weeks of purchasing them for a combined price of £360, netting £60 over his cost of £300. The 903 acre tract that he purchased in 1718 for £85 was subdivided and resold the very next day for an aggregate price of £154 plus some "swapped" lands, effectively doubling his investment.

The New Munster lands on the East side of the Elk were sold to Matthew Wallace and five members of the Alexander family in two installments, the first being the 1150 acre parcel in 1714, and the second the 903 acre parcel of 1718. As shown in Figure 2, the former parcel ran along the bank of the Elk and the latter took up the remaining land between the first parcel and the eastern boundary of New Munster. The description of the 1150 acre parcel on the east side of the Elk was not fully specified in terms of metes and bounds, but contained the following indefinite instruction for the final two courses "then West South West to Elk River, then down Elk River traversing the several courses of the same to the first boulder tree." The actual distance to the Elk along the WSW azimuth is in fact about a mile, and the omission of this detail effectively obscured the inclusion of over 700 more acres of land than stipulated in the deed.

Donations

Special thanks to our generous donors. We appreciate the community's support:

Town of Charlestown

\$200 for WW1 exhibit

Milburn Orchards

\$50 WW1 exhibit

Nancy Jodlbauer

\$1,500 General Fund



Recent Events



Dog Days of Summer event held in Elkton.



Wine tasting event with Broken Spoke Winery

Volunteer Spotlight

What are your interests or hobbies: I enjoy working on and learning about my home, gardening, and cycling on the weekends with my wife Shannon and daughter Charlotte.

What is your area of expertise, i.e. do you have knowledge of pottery or furniture; a specific area in the county; administrative abilities: My area of expertise as it relates to History would have to be the people places and events in the Zion area near Rising Sun.



The Head of Elk Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution held their monthly meeting at the historical society on Saturday. They learned about the history of the society and our many resources. Finally, they toured the Reverend Duke Log Cabin. It was an honor and a pleasure to have them!

March - September 2017 Accession Report

By Carol Donache

- **Pamela Howard:** Family papers and photographs pertaining to donor's family, paternal and maternal.
- **Les Upperco:** Original black and white photo postcards of Hack's Point, Maryland.
- **Jeff Powers:** Copy of an original black and white photograph of Charles Bryson's garage.
- **Wendy A. Cooper:** Book: Paint, Pattern & People: furniture of Southeastern Pennsylvania, 1725-1850.
- **Joseph Ray Whiteoak and Katie C. Whiteoak:** Four school photographs for Cecilton, Chesapeake City, and two for the Elkton Elementary School Band.
- **Edward Andrews:** A black and white photograph of Triumph Explosives security guards in uniform, an employment agreement for George W. Hopkins, a certificate of enrollment in the auxiliary military police and a certificate of meritorious conduct.
- **Rebecca Guerrero:** 2 boxes of glass plate negatives; 1 box of prints; 3 boxes of glass plate negatives 6 1/2 x 8 1/2; 7 boxes of glass plate negatives 5 x 7.
- **Phyllis Crothers:** 8 black and white photographs including images of bands, choirs and girl scouts.
- **Jean A. Patrick:** 24 black and white photographs of Port Deposit, MD showing flooding, heavy snow, and normal weather conditions from the early 20th century. Photographs are of the donor's Mother's family home and other locations.
- **Barbara Bressler:** Oil painting of the mill at Perry Point; Small framed hand-tinted photograph of the mill at Perry Point; Ray Keen carving; Conowingo Dam photos (58); Family photos (11); Family memorabilia (booklets, programs, etc.) (7)
- **Karlene Foster:** Digital image of Revolutionary War "Account-Clothing Collector, Cecil County [Maryland]." Photocopy of page from Maryland State Papers, the Brown Books, transcription of above document.
- **Ann Hillsman:** Twenty-seven color school photographs as follows: Mrs. Hillsman's classes from 1975-76 to 1993-94 (18 photos); photos of the faculty from 1981-82, 1984-85 to 1987-88, 1989-90 to 1992-93 (9 photos).
- **Miriam S. Irwin:** Family photographs from the 1920s-1970s (42); Small ledger from Cherry Hill area, 1837-1851; Postcards (17).
- **Mary Lea & Perry Shipp:** Photographs; Model school bus; Red Man ax.



Upcoming Events!

- **Friday, December 1 from 5 pm – 8 pm**
- First Friday AND our annual Silent Auction/ Raffle fundraiser
- **Saturday, December 2 from 10 am – 2 pm**
- Research Library open!
- **Saturday, January 6 from 10 am – 2 pm**
- Research Library open!

Programs are free for HSCC members , \$5 for non-members



On April 6, 2018 we will be premiering our new exhibit entitled Historic Threads: 150 years of clothing, accessories and the stories that bind them. The exhibit will feature clothing from the 1830s to the 1980s. If you have any photographs of relatives decked out in their finest, please send us the image or bring it to the Society and we will scan it.

On Friday December 1, 2018 during the Society's First Friday event (5:00pm – 8:00pm), we will host a Silent Auction. Auction items include a signed bat by former Phillies player Larry Bowa, signed baseball by Greg Luzinsky, donations of spirits from State Line Liquors and Sentman Distributors, framed maps from an original 1877 Atlas, Egret framed photograph by Carl Forsberg and many, many more items from local crafters and businesses. Check our Facebook where we will be posting pictures of items as they come in.



Look for this commemorative set at the silent auction!



18x30 & 9x11 Pennzoil signs in mint condition



1898 map of downtown Baltimore and Sagamore Spirit Rye Whiskey, made on Baltimore.



...Continued from page 6

The 1718 deeds for the additional lands along the eastern boundary of New Munster contain explicit metes and bounds descriptions, which can be used as a good indication of the likely limits of the earlier parcels. The North to South ownership sequence of the 1718 parcels followed the same order as those of 1714, so it is highly likely that the later parcels were formed simply by extending the understood, but unrecorded, “holden” boundaries further eastward to the limit of the New Munster tract. In the case of Matthew Wallace, whose 1714 tract was explicitly described, the 1718 tract was indeed formed in exactly this way. For the others, westward extension from the East-West courses described in the 1718 deeds will generate the North-South limits of the 1714 “holdens” as shown in Figure 2.

The Scotch-Irish of New Munster

The Scotch-Irish who purchased land in New Munster as a collective group in 1714 were Matthew Wallace, John Wallace, and various members of the Alexander family: James (farmer), Arthur (farmer), David (weaver), James (weaver) and son Moses, and Joseph (tanner) and son James. In addition John MacKnitt, then of Back Creek in Cecil County, was granted power of attorney by Thomas Stevenson to act on his behalf in the sale of the parcels on the west side of the Elk. These same individuals, except for James Alexander (farmer), were involved in the subsequent purchase of lands from Thomas Stevenson in 1718, and were also joined by Elias Alexander, and Mary, widow of James Alexander (carpenter).

This group of Ulster Scots originated from Somerset County where their families had first settled after emigrating from Donegal, Ireland. The Alexanders were most likely from Raphoe, and the Wallaces from parish of Clonleigh (Lifford). Some of the names they chose for their land patents in Somerset (Raphoe, Kirkminster, Castle Finn, all from Donegal) reflect this. John McKnitt was also an Ulster Scot who, by family tradition, married Jean Alexander as his first wife, and arrived in Somerset with her around 1684, very close in time with other Alexander family arrivals. They and other Scotch-Irish families had followed the lead of Rev. Francis Makemie, the acknowledged patriarch of the Presbyterian Church in America, and Rev. Francis Trail of Lifford, Donegal, who arrived in Somerset in 1683. Makemie’s advent in Somerset was the result of a letter from Colonel William

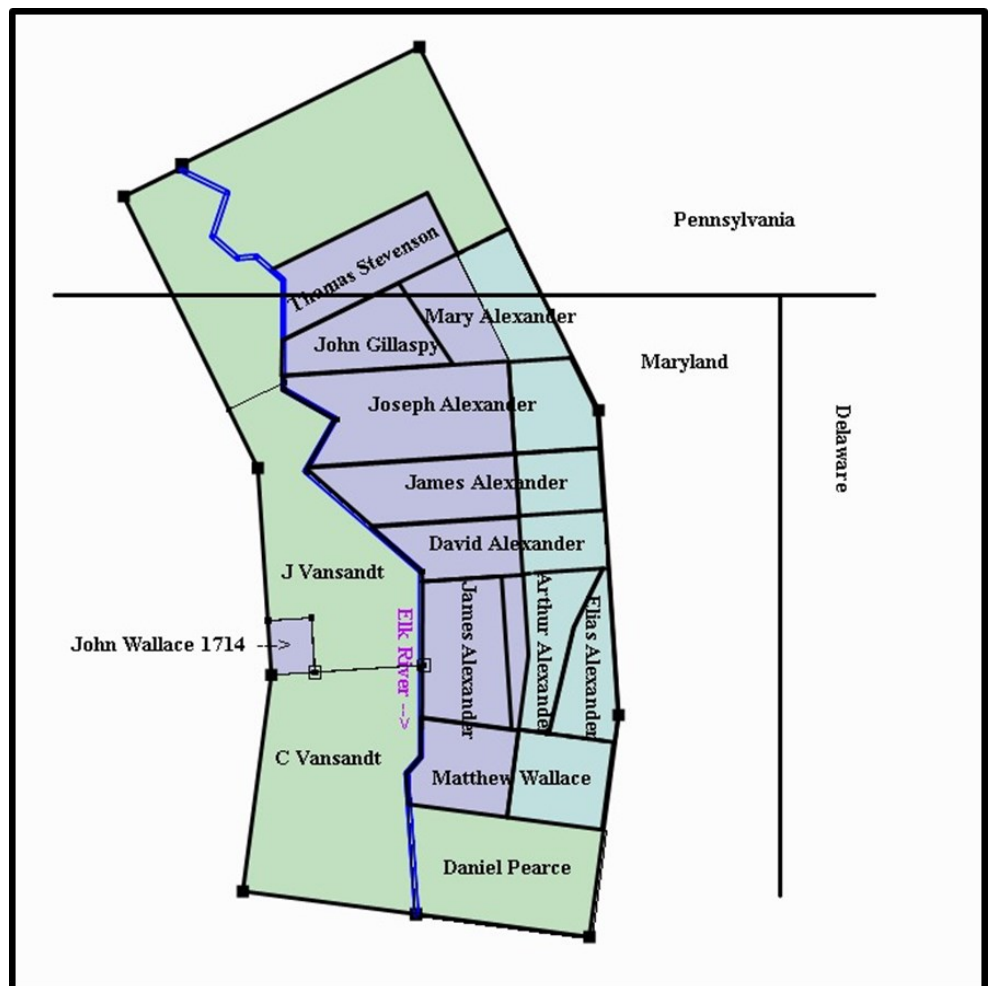


Figure 2. Scotch-Irish “Holdens” of New Munster, 1714-1718; blue shaded area is the 1714 parcel with boundaries based on the additional parcels conveyed in 1718 shown in grey.

Stevens, a leading County Commissioner, to the Presbytery of Laggan, in Donegal, asking that they supply a “godly minister” to Somerset to look after the needs of the populace. This is described at length in Torrence’s well-known history of Somerset. Makemie’s arrival initiated a brief, but pronounced, influx of Scotch-Irish to Somerset during the period 1683 to 1690, a particularly bleak time for the Presbyterians of Ulster. This did not last, however, since the victory of the William of Orange’s forces at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 radically improved the prospects for this group back in Ireland, and quickly slowed the movement to a trickle.

Date of the Scotch-Irish Arrival in New Munster

There is no single record to pinpoint the date when the Alexander-Wallace group relocated to the northern Chesapeake region, but there are several records which provide insight. Certainly they were not in Cecil in 1683 when O’Dwire made his reference to other Irishmen since Somerset records make it clear that they were still there at least through the 1690’s. Moreover, if they had initially settled on Daniels Toas’s lands in New Munster under a lease arrangement at an earlier date, then one would expect some evidence of their presence among the numerous debts and payments listed in Toas’s probate account (Jan 1692/3), but no Alexanders, McKnitts, or Wallaces are mentioned in it. John McKnitt was still in Somerset in January 1701/2 when he was fined for concealing his son as a taxable after reaching age 16.

A likely time frame for the advent of these families into New Munster is 1706-08. The Somerset land records show Matthew Wallace disposing of his lands there on 15 March 1707/8, but he had already left Somerset by that time, since he needed to appoint William Alexander, Jun., to act as his attorney in the transaction. The power of attorney is recorded in Somerset, but it was drawn up by New Castle County officials and identifies Wallace as “now of Newcastle,” as of 1 December 1707. It is definite, therefore, that he had moved northward by then, but had not yet settled on the New Munster tract in Cecil County. Wallace seems to have been the leader of the families settling at New Munster since the 1714 deed lists him first, using the title “yeoman”, and identifies the entire group several times as “Matthew Wallace & Company.” It seems likely that the rest of the group had arrived there with him as their leader.

Matthew and several other Wallaces were among a small group of Presbyterians from Newcastle who signed a petition to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in February 1705/6 which reads as follows:

We undersubscribers and the greatest number of us born and educated in Ireland under the ministry of Mr. William Traill presbyterian minister formerly at liford are by a Divine providence settled with our families at Newcastle and about it in the province of pensilvania. ... we are in fear dayly to be cast desolate and to our great grieffe we and our posterity left as a prey to superstition and heresies Therefore though it may be unusuall yet out of pure necessity and consideration of our souls circumstances we do most humbly address ourselves to you as unto our mother church and to solicit your advice in this our uncertain condition and if there can be any supply granted for our small congregation which is the custom of other persuasions to doe for them of their way


Indeed, just two years later in 1708, the Presbyterian Church at Head of Christiana gathered for the first time as a congregation. This church is barely a mile downstream from New Munster; it is where the Alexander and Wallace families worshipped and served as elders for many years, and where many of them are buried.

Afterward

Although the Scotch-Irish families were clearly established in New Munster by this point many legal difficulties occurred over the next two decades because of the improperly settled will of Daniel Toas. Daniel’s daughter Sarah was an equal legatee and should have received her share of the inheritance. Her husband,

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Peter Massey, petitioned the Assembly in 1717 to revoke the earlier act which they had passed in Robert Roberts's favor. This led to a bizarre series of legal actions which are recorded in the proceedings of the Maryland Assembly. The details are spelled out in the longer version of this article which will be found in the New Munster file at the Cecil County Historical Society.

The great Scotch-Irish migration from Ulster to America commenced at this very time and continued off and on until the American Revolution. The initial wave is usually dated as beginning in 1715. Newcastle and Philadelphia became major ports of entry for this movement and this was not a matter of chance. An Ulster-Scot, Presbyterian infrastructure was already in place right here to welcome and support these new immigrants. This area was their initial beachhead and New Munster was at ground zero. The people living here would have been among the first local residents encountered by the new

arrivals. One can imagine the interchanges and discussions between them and their newly arrived brethren about the challenges and promises of the American frontier. Many of the next generation New Munster families chose to join this growing stream as it pushed its way westward through Pennsylvania to the Appalachians, then down the great wagon road into the valley of Virginia and into the Carolinas. The Alexanders became one of the most prominent families in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, as was the author's family, the Polks, whose first home in America was an 80 acre parcel of New Munster purchased from David Alexander in 1727 by William Polk, great-grandfather of President James Knox Polk. These were the people who declared their independence from Great Britain in May 1775, a year before the rest of the colonies, and were dubbed the "Hornets Nest" by Cornwallis during his abortive campaign through the area in 1780. In this way the true Irishmen of New Munster, Ulster-Scots transplanted from Donegal, played a special role in the history of our country. ✨