

**SAMUEL CRAIG, Senior**

**Pioneer to Western  
Pennsylvania**

**AND HIS DESCENDANTS**

**COMPILED BY  
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It is said that Samuel Craig and family started from New Jersey to Western Pennsylvania in 1766, but when on the mountains the Indians stole their horses and cows and they were compelled to return to a settlement. This settlement was probably in Lurgan Township, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, which was situated in that part of the county which was afterward included in Franklin County, as Lurgan Township, is given as Samuel Craig's place of residence when he bought his land in what is now Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

In December, 1769, Samuel Craig bought a tract of land on the eastern side of the Loyalhanna in what was then called the "Derry Settlement", from Thomas Burbridge, of which business transaction the following is the Article of Agreement copied word for word and letter for letter, as recorded in Deed Book A, page 435, Westmoreland County Records.

"Article of Agreement made and concluded on the Fifteenth day of December One Thousand and Seven Hundred and Sixty-nine by and between Thomas Burbridge of the County of Cumberland at the Loyalhanna of the one part and Samuel Craig of Lurgan Township of the County of Cumberland of the other part. Wit-

nesseth that whereas that Thomas Burbridge hath set over and delivered unto Samuel Craig one certain tract or survey of land lying at Loyalhanna at the mouth of crab tree run Containing Three Hundred acres more or less for the sum of Twenty Pounds lawful money of Pennsylvania to be paid part in money and part in merchantable goods to be paid at or upon the Tenth of January next and said Craig is to Deduct out of the aforesaid sum so much as will pay the surveyor for surveying of said Tract and at Payment of said sum said Burbridge is to give said Craig a sufficient Bill of sale for said tract and for the true performance of each and every of these articles we do bind ourselves our Heirs, executors administrators or assigns firmly by these presents in the Penal sum of Four Hundred Pounds money of Pennsylvania each one to the other and in whereof we do set our hands and seals the Day and Date above mentioned.

Thom's Burbridge (SEAL)  
Samuel Craig (SEAL)"

Sealed and delivered in the presence of Laurence Irvin Michael Horner John Craig.

"Westmoreland ss Be it remembered that on the 2nd day of February, 1785, the within named Thomas Burbridge came personally before me the subscriber one of the Commonwealth Justice of the Court of Common Pleas of the said county and he acknowledged the within instrument of writing to be his act and Deed and Desired that the same may be Recorded as such.

Given under my hand and seal the Day and year above written.

Recorded February 4, 1785.

John Moor Esquire."

In or near 1772—exact date unknown—Samuel Craig brought his family to live on this land and their cabin home was situated near the Loyalhanna opposite the mouth of the Crab Tree.

The early settlers were in constant dread of the Indians, and in 1774 there was great alarm in this region, and petitions were sent to Governor Penn from different places in Westmoreland County asking for protection, among them one from the house of John Shields which was signed by John Shields, Arthur Denniston, John Denniston, Samuel Craig, John Craig, Alexander Craig, Thomas Burbridge and others. A small fort was erected on the hill near the present residence of the Matthew Shields heirs, on land owned by John Shields, and called "Fort Shields", and here the people fled in times of danger. Not far from this fort, on land afterward owned by Alexander Craig, a young man was buried who had been killed by the Indians. For many years a heap of stones marked his grave.

When the colonies were beginning to resist the excessive taxation of the mother country, and our patriotic "backwoodsmen" held their memorable meeting at Hannastown May 16, 1775, and drew up the Resolutions that have since been called "Westmoreland's Declaration of Independence", they proceeded to organize militia to drill for service should it become necessary to battle for their rights. In the 1st Battalion Westmoreland County Provincials, Colonel John Proctor, Commander, were Samuel Craig and his three sons, John, Alexander and Samuel, Jr., (all the family who were able to bear arms). Samuel, Sr., was Lieutenant and Color Bearer, and his son Alexander held an office now unknown. These soldiers were ordered east in 1776 and suffered great hardships in that terrible march through an almost trackless wilderness and participated in a number of hard fought battles under General Washington, but in the latter part of 1777 many of them were sent back to protect the frontier from the depredations of the Indians, and served along the Western Border until the close of the Revolution.

An extract from a letter dated November 15, 1897,

written by Dr. Egle, State Librarian of Pennsylvania, is as follows: "Samuel Craig, Sr., was commissioned Lieutenant in July, 1776, in Col. John Proctor's Battalion of Westmoreland County Militia."

After his return to Western Pennsylvania he, under an order, was for sometime acting Commissary and the duties of his office called him to Fort Ligonier. Before starting it is said he refused a guard, saying, "They would think the old man was cowardly", and he never reached Ligonier, as he was taken prisoner on Chestnut Ridge.

In a diary kept by Thomas Galbraith at the building of Fort Ligonier is the following entry: "Nov. 3rd, 1777, Monday. They likewise found a mare belonging to Samuel Craig who had been going to Ligonier for salt on Saturday, Nov. 1st, 1777. He is supposed to be taken prisoner as his body could not be found." (Frontier Forts of Pa., Vol. 2, page 244.)

In the writings of Mrs. Margaret C. Craig, relating to the capture of her grandfather, is the following: "He was taken prisoner by the Indians on the Chestnut Ridge, his beautiful bay mare was found dead perforated by eight bullets. Fragments of paper were found strewn along the path to indicate the direction taken by the Indians. All efforts of his family to ascertain his fate were unavailing. Some exchanged prisoners reported afterward that an old man who was a prisoner with them would have been exchanged at the same time if he had not been sick and unable to travel; it may possibly have been Mr. Craig."

NOTE.—Since the foregoing was published the writer has learned that a grandson of Samuel Craig in the state of Indiana met an exchanged prisoner who told him that Samuel Craig and he were exchanged at the same time and that Samuel Craig died in Philadelphia when on his way home.

The place of Samuel Craig's capture is believed to have been on the western slope of the Chestnut Ridge about eight or nine miles south of the "packsaddle" on the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The History of Westmoreland County recorded that the Proctors, Lochreys, Craigs and Sloans were among the early members of Unity Presbyterian Congregation. For several years prior to the erection of a church building, preaching services were held in "Proctor's Tent", and it is probable that there Samuel Craig may have heard the few sermons it was his privilege to hear after his arrival in the Derry Settlement.

Of his traits of character we know little except from inference, and this would indicate that he was a man of bravery and resolution; the fact that his sons were men of upright character, noted for honesty, truthfulness, and other noble qualities, would be an indication that their father not only possessed these characteristics but had trained his children in the paths of rectitude by precept and example. However, we are told a story of him that by way of jest he could draw on his imagination. There had been a political meeting in "Denniston's Town" (now New Alexandria), held by the party of opposite political views from himself, and he told that as he was going home after dark that night, he saw an object lying in the road and stirred it up with his staff, when it proved to be "His Satanic Majesty." He said to him, "Why are you lying here, why are you not in Denniston's Town attending to business?" And Satan replied, "Oh, there are Squire ——— and others (giving the names of prominent men) attending to my business for me, so I do not need to trouble myself." But we can

"No further seek his merit to disclose  
Nor draw his frailties from their dread abode."

On April 25, 1783, Letters of Administration were granted on the estate of Samuel Craig, deceased, by the Register of Wills in and for Westmoreland County,

Pennsylvania, to Jane Craig, his widow, and John Craig, and their bond taken in 500 lbs. In the settlement of the estate the older sons relinquished all claim to the land their father had owned, as they said they were able to provide for themselves and the land was divided between the younger sons.

Thomas Burbridge, the man from whom Samuel Craig bought his land, arranged to have his home with the Craigs, and lived with them for many years, working with them and for them, and also hunting with them, and remained with them for seven years or more after the capture of Samuel Craig, but at length he disappeared and they were never able to discover what became of him. (See "History of the Backwoods" by A. W. Patterson, 1843.)

It is said that the first settler on the land afterward owned by Samuel Craig was William Burbridge, who came there shortly after the capture of Fort Du Quesne by General Forbes, who made what was called a "tomahawk improvement." He is said to have been killed by an Indian, with whom he was on friendly terms, because the Indian coveted a fine rifle owned by Burbridge. After the death of his brother, Thomas Burbridge obtained possession of his claim, and after the opening of the land office April 3, 1769, for the sale of land in this "New Purchase", became the legal owner. Thomas Burbridge was one of the original owners of at least part of the land within the present limits of New Alexandria before it came into the possession of Alexander Denniston.