

Early Meek Settlers Of S. W. Pennsylvania

By Christopher A. Meek

In 1769 the Proprietor of Pennsylvania opened the area of S. W. Pennsylvania to settlers¹. Ownership of the area was also claimed by Virginia and control of the area alternated between the two states. The dispute was not settled until 1786 when Virginia ceded the land to Pennsylvania. Virginia took part of West Augusta County and divided the area into Yohogania, Monongalia and Ohio Counties. However, the area of S. W. Pennsylvania was more commonly known as Westmoreland Co., PA which was formed in 1773 from Bedford County.

Washington County was formed in 1781. Fayette County was formed in 1783. Allegheny County was formed in 1788 and Green County was formed in 1796. To the West of Washington County and East of the Ohio River was Ohio Co., VA which later became part of West Virginia. This area was subdivided into Ohio, Brooke, Marshall and Hancock Counties.

In 1769 the area was inhabited by Indians and under attack by the British and French². Forts were established to protect the western frontier and the settlers. In this relatively small hostile area many men named Meek brought their families and established new lives.

In 1902 H. B. Meek published his genealogy and described the 16 children of Jacob Meek, son of Adam Meek³. While there is much controversy regarding the validity of his claim subsequent researcher identified 8 of the supposed sons of Jacob Meek as residents of early S. W. Pennsylvania. Carleton Meek expanded on the unverified genealogy of H. B. Meek in 1962 and provided details on Joshua, John, Jacob, Jeremiah, Nathan, Basil, Isaac and Samuel⁴.

What the early authors did not understand was that there were far more Meek families than they knew about not only in S. W. Pennsylvania but the country as a whole. They clearly combined information on different men with the same name, made mistakes and drew conclusions that were not supported by the facts. They provided no evidence that the 16 supposed children of Jacob Meek were in fact siblings or even related to each other.

The purpose of this paper is to detail the facts that are available from official records about the men named Meek who settled in S. W. Pennsylvania in the 1770's. It includes adult men who appeared in the records about 1783. It will be shown that there were far more adult men named Meek than the early authors understood. However, it will also be shown that there is little evidence that the eight men named above were brother or even related.

This paper will not consider any undocumented genealogies as sources although the author is well versed in what is available. Only official records or fact otherwise supported

¹ The History of Allegheny Co., PA, by Samuel Durant, 1876

² The History of Washington Co., PA, by Boyd Crumrine, 1882

³ A Meek Genealogy, by H. B. Meek, 1902

⁴ Meek Genealogy, by Carleton Lee Meek, 1962

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by hard evidence will be utilized. Known records that are available include tax list, deed records, slave registry and military records. This paper also ignores variations on the spelling of the name Meek especially the name Meeks. The differences in spelling vary from one source to another regardless of how families ended up spelling their name.

Allegheny County

Joshua Meek

Joshua Meek was born in 1731 according to his tombstone. He came to the area in 1774 according to his Virginia land grant. He was listed in the 1783 tax list of Robinson TWP, Washington County. This area became Moon TWP, Allegheny County. He died in Allegheny County in 1818. He married his known wife, Margaret Mitchell, in 1789. It is speculated that he was married before this and may have had unknown children. Some of his children remained in Allegheny County. His sons by Margaret Mitchell were Joshua, Jeremiah and Bazel.

John Meek

John Meek came to the area in 1773 according to his Virginia land grant. He is also named in the 1781 and 1783 tax lists of Robinson TWP, Washington Co., PA. He owned land adjoining Joshua Meek. He sold his land 9 Nov 1789 and Joshua signed the deed. John moved to Henry Co., KY in 1789. He died there in 1803. His sons were John, Basil, Joshua and Jeremiah.

Jacob Meek

Jacob Meek came to the area in 1773 according to his Virginia land grant. He is also named in the 1781 tax list of Robinson TWP, Washington Co., PA. He owned land in the immediate vicinity of Joshua and John. He sold his land 25 Dec 1889 and is listed in the 1790 census of Allegheny County. Jacob moved to Henry Co., KY about 1793. He moved to Wayne Co., IN and died there in 1840. Through his pension application it is known this Jacob Meek was the same person in Henry Co., KY and Allegheny Co., PA. His pension record also states that he was **born in Elkridge, Howard Co., MD in 1755**. This area was originally part of Anne Arundel County. His sons were John, Jeremiah, Joshua, Isaac and William

Jeremiah Meek

A man named Jeremiah Meek owned land next to Jacob Meek in modern day Allegheny County. He sells this land in 1779. It is not known what happened to this person. However, he was likely either Jeremiah of Westmoreland County who died in 1782 or Jeremiah of Morgan TWP, Washington County in the 1783 tax list. Therefore this listing is only informational and he will be listed under Westmoreland County. It is not known if he ever lived on the land in Allegheny County.

Basil Meek

Basil Meek born in 1740 served in the Virginia Army at Ft. Pitt. Also, a son Jesse was born at Pittsburgh in 1780. Basil owned land in York Co., SC before he was in Allegheny County and returned to York County after leaving S. W. Pennsylvania. He moved to Henry Co., KY before 1810 where John and Jacob had already settled. According to his pension application Basil was **born in Maryland**. His known sons were John and Jesse.

H. B. Meek did not include this person in his list of supposed sons of Jacob Meek. He may not have known about him or thought he was his own ancestor Basil born 1763.

Westmoreland County

Jeremiah Meek

Little is known about the men in Westmoreland County. Jeremiah died in 1782. Deed records from Mt. Pleasant TWP suggest he lived next to Joshua, John and Jeremiah Jr. and it is speculated that these men were his sons. Ralph Cherry was given a letter of administration for his estate. It is believed that Jeremiah was the father of Anne Meek, wife of Ralph Cherry⁵. It is not clear if Ralph Cherry was the primary administrator of Jeremiah's will. It would seem more likely that one of the men named Meek would have been the administrator.

Joshua Meek

Joshua Meek was closely associated with the Cherry family who came from Berkeley Co., WV. In 1768 a Joshua Meakes was listed as a chain carrier for a survey done on behalf of Thomas Cherry and others in Berkeley County. He was listed in the 1773 tax list of Mt. Pleasant TWP, Westmoreland Co., PA. Deed records place his property next to Jeremiah and John Meek. Joshua Meek migrated to Fairfield Co., OH with Ralph Cherry about 1799. He died there in Fairfield Co., OH 1801.

Joshua Meek is likely the person listed in the 3 Oct 1782 slave register of Nottingham TWP, Washington Co., PA. History books mention the house of Joshua Meek on Raccoon Creek in 1781. There is no reason to assume that there was a third Joshua Meek in the area.

John Meek

John Meek was listed in the 1783 tax list and owned land next to Jeremiah and Joshua. Ralph Cherry, son of Thomas, signed the deed dated 10 Jun 1772. John does not appear in another record

⁵ Roots of the Cherry Tree by Majorie Loomis Cherry, 1955

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Jeremiah Meek, Jr.

Jeremiah Meek owned land next to Jeremiah, Joshua and John. He may be the person listed in the 1783 tax list of Morgan TWP, Washington Co., PA. However, that person is listed separately as there are other possibilities for his identity.

Jacob Meek

Jacob Meek was mentioned in the 1883 tax list of Tyrone TWP, Westmoreland County. He may not be that closely associated with the others men in Westmoreland County. It is noted that there was a person named Isaac Meek in Tyrone Township in the 1773 tax list.

Note:

The men in Westmoreland County are sometimes confused with the men in Allegheny due to the similarity of their names. There is at least a possibility that Jeremiah Meek who died in 1782 in Westmoreland County was the same person who sold land in Allegheny County dated 1 May 1779 that was located next to Jacob Meek.

Washington County

Samuel Meek

Samuel was born about 1732. He was first mention in the 1781 tax list of Bethlehem Township. He remained in the area and died in 1799. All of his sons were adults in 1783. His sons were John, Samuel, William, Richard and Jacob. They migrated to Ohio and are not duplicated in this paper.

Nathan Meek

Nathan Meek was listed in the 1783 tax list of Morgan TWP, Washington Co., PA and the 1782 military roster. He witnessed the will of William Iiams on 20 Feb 1795. He moved to Pulaski Co., KY before 1798. He moved to Jennings Co., IN but died in Pulaski Co., KY in 1827. His sons were Jeremiah, Nathan, David, Samuel, William, Lewis and Richard.

Basil Meek

Basil Meek was born in 1763 and is included in the list because of the close tie to Nathan. He was the direct ancestor of H. B. Meek. It may be that he was not listed in the early records due to his age. He moved to Pulaski Co., KY before 1798. However, he settled briefly in Clark Co., KY where he was the bondsman for a son of Paul Hulse from Berkeley Co., WV. Paul Hulse was married to Nancy Meek one of the supposed children of Jacob Meek. Thus there was another possible connection to Berkeley County. Existing genealogies state that Basil was born in Hagerstown, MD. Pension records have been cited as the source for this but those records cannot be found now. Basil died in 1844 in Woodford Co., IL. His sons were Joseph, Daniel, Henry, Joshua, Noel and Jackson.

Jacob Meek

Jacob Meek was listed in the 1783 of Bethlehem TWP, Washington County. He was not the son of Samuel Meek as that person is also listed in the tax list. Little is known of this person. It is **speculated** that he may have migrated to Pulaski Co., KY or Cumberland Co., KY before 1800. Around 1800 there was a man named Jacob Meek in Pulaski County with Nathan and Basil.

Jeremiah Meek

Jeremiah Meek is listed in the 1783 tax list of Morgan Township where Nathan is listed. He may be the same person as Jeremiah Jr. in Westmoreland County. Nothing else is known of him. However, there were 2 men with the name Jeremiah Meek in the 1801-1804 records of Pulaski Co., KY along with Nathan and Basil. It is **speculated** that he may have migrated with Nathan and Basil to Pulaski County.

Isaac Meek

There was an Isaac Meek in the 1774 tax list of Tyrone TWP, Westmoreland County. He would have been born before 1756. It is not certain that this was the same man listed in the 1783 tax list of Washington County. He would have been born before 1765. The name continues in records of Washington County through 1810. Isaac Meek listed in 1810 census of Armwell TWP, Washington County would have been born before 1765. This was clearly a different person than the Isaac Meek who settled in Ohio Co., VA and later Jefferson Co., OH. Unfortunately, little is known of him or his descendants.

There was also an Isaac Meek listed in the 1810 census of Morris TWP, Greene County born after 1765. This is likely the same person listed in the 1820 and 1830 censuses of East Bethlehem TWP, Washington County. He may have been a son of the older man named Isaac.

Robert Meek

Robert Meek was listed in Cecil TWP., Washington County. He probably resided in Ohio Co., VA or Brookes Co., VA. Unverified genealogies give his date of birth as 1732. His name alone seems out of character with the other Meek names in S. W. Pennsylvania. The name Robert does not appears in the other families of S. W. Pennsylvania. He may be the progenitor of the extended family that after moving to Ohio settled in S. E. Iowa.

Elisha Meek

Elisha Meek was born about 1760 but does not show up in the records until the 1800 Green County census. However, it is thought that he might be a son of one of the other men. He died in 1843 in Greene Co., PA. His sons were John, Elisha and Jacob.

Ohio Co., Virginia

Isaac Meek

Isaac Meek was born in 1746. He lived in Ohio Co., VA as early as 1775. He moved to Jefferson Co., OH in 1798. He is listed in various military records. He may be the person listed in the 1774 tax list of Westmoreland County. However, that is uncertain since it is known that there was another person named Isaac Meek that resided in Washington County. He was said to have been born in Anne Arundel Co., MD. However, this is far from certain. His sons were Sylvester, Moses, Joshua, James, John, Jacob and Aaron.

Harrison Co., Virginia

There was also a man named Isaac Meek in the area that is now Harrison Co., WV. He would have been born before 1760. His land grant was dated 1778 and he sold his land in 1790. His wife was named Rebecca. It is speculated that he was Isaac Meek born 1710 who was the son of Guy Meek. However, this has not been proven. It is uncertain if this man was connected to the men in S. W. Pennsylvania. However, it is apparent that there was a third man named Isaac Meek not far from the other two who lived in S. W. Pennsylvania.

Summary

The records reveal that instead of 8 men named Meek in S. W. Pennsylvania listed by H. B. Meek there were as many as 18 different men with that name. It is presumed that some of them will be found to be sons of the other men. However, there are obvious examples where two men with the same name resided in the same area who could not have been brothers. Unfortunately, there is little evidence to define the relationship between the different men in this area.

One thing that is noticeable in the names of the men of S. W. Pennsylvania is that many families named their sons John, Joshua and Jeremiah. John is the most common name with seven sons given that name. At least four and possibly six men named their first born son John. This may not be significant because John was a common name. However, the only settler with that name was John of Westmoreland County and he was likely a son of Jeremiah. Six sons were named Joshua and five were named Jeremiah. Again this may not be significant since the names Joshua and Jeremiah were each used more than once for the settlers. While two settlers and three sons were named Jacob that names was not as predominate in the families as the other names. The only clear naming pattern for these men was that they did not name their first son after themselves.

The Meek families in S. W. Pennsylvania can be roughly grouped by geography. The men in Allegheny and Westmoreland Counties appear to constitute one major group. The men in Washington County and Ohio Co., VA constitute a second major group. There is nothing in the records of S. W. Pennsylvania to indicate a relationship between any of the men.

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It appears that both of the two groups had some sort of connection to Berkeley Co., WV and neighboring Washington Co., MD. In an aside it is noted that a person named Lewis Meek resided in Berkeley County. Lewis Meek was one of the names of the supposed sons of Jacob Meek from the early book by H. B. Meek.

Subsequent to this article's initial writing genealogical proof has surfaced to establish that Basil Meek born 1740, John Meek born 1754, and Jacob Meek born 1755, all from Allegheny, were brothers⁶.

Maryland Connection

Jacob Meek of Allegheny County was born 1755 in Elkridge, MD in modern day Howard County according to his pension record. This area was part of Anne Arundel County in the 1700's. Basil Meek was born 1740 in Maryland according to his pension record. He entered the Army at Winchester, VA which is very near Berkeley Co., WV and not that far from Hagerstown, MD.

There is a documented association between the Meek family of Westmoreland County and the Cherry family. There are some records to indicate that Joshua was in Berkeley Co., WV prior to coming to S. W. Pennsylvania. Anne Meek, wife of Ralph Cherry was said to have been born in 1750 although this is not proven. A Fairfield Co., OH history book states that the parents of Anne Meek Cherry were Jeremiah and Sarah Meek. While history books cannot always be relied on for accurate information this must be considered a strong possibility. The Cherry family came from Maryland.

Isaac Meek born in 1746 was said to have come from Anne Arundel Co., MD although this is not proven. Basil Meek born in 1763 was said to have been born in Hagerstown, Washington Co., MD although this is not proven.

Nathan witnessed the will of William Iiams on 20 Feb 1795 in Washington Co., PA. A different William Iiams married a daughter of Elisha Meek who lived in Green Co., PA. The Iiams family lived in Washington Co., PA, Washington Co., MD and Anne Arundel Co., MD. Basil Meek born 1763 witnessed the marriage bond for a son of Paul Hulse in Clark Co., KY. Paul Hulse came to Clark Co., KY from Berkeley Co., WV.

DNA Evidence

The Meek/Meeks Y-DNA Project has now tested descendants of 8 ancestors who lived in S. W. Pennsylvania. The results support the genealogical record indicating that Basil, John and Jacob were brothers. In addition DNA indicates that they shared a common ancestor with Jeremiah Meek of Westmoreland Co., PA through his son Joshua.

In addition DNA results prove that Samuel, Isaac, Nathaniel, Basil born 1763 and Elisha shared a common ancestor. It does not reveal any information about how they were related. The ancestor Robert Meek does not share a common ancestor with either of the two groups.

⁶ The Meek/Meeks family of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Kentucky by Christopher A. Meek, 2007

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Just as important the DNA project has shown that a significant number of other ancestors that could not have been related to the men in S. W. Pennsylvania. There are still a few known Meek ancestors who are not represented in the project including Guy Meek.

Conclusion

This article was originally written before DNA and even before some of the genealogical information presented was available. Its purpose was to show that there were more men named Meek in S. W. Pennsylvania in the later part of the 1700's than the early authors ever imagined. Some of those ancestors are well known and a few are just a name in the records. Hopefully this information will help others as they build their family tree.

It is important that as we move forward that there is a concentrated effort to search for factual information and not rely on unsupported genealogies. In many cases the information is contained in various books of abstracted record where the records themselves no longer exist. Libraries probably contain family records that can support theories or lead to new areas to research. Every small piece of data adds to the collection of reliable information that will eventually help find the answers

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