

# Old and New Westmoreland

Genealogical and Personal History under Editorial Supervision of

CAPT. FENWICK Y. HEDLEY

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Edward Cook, after having visited Western Pennsylvania in 1769 or 1770, and finding farm land to his liking in what is known as Rehoboth valley, located in the "Forks of the Yough," returned to the Cumberland valley, and brought his wife to Western Pennsylvania in December, 1771. In 1772 he began building a stone house, which was not completed until 1776. This house is certainly one of the oldest, if not the oldest, stone house of its size in Western Pennsylvania, and is unique in one respect, in that it is built of native Westmoreland county limestone. In addition to the tract of about two hundred acres which he settled on first, Edward Cook later patented or purchased many more acres of land in Rehoboth valley, and also some lying on the Monongahela river below Fayette City, formerly Cookstown, the site of which was formerly owned by Colonel Edward Cook. When he died he left to his son, James, his only child, close to two thousand acres of land, all of which was not only fine farming land, but was also underlaid with the best of the Pittsburgh coal vein. In addition to clearing and farming the vast tracts of land he had taken up, Edward Cook also conducted a store in one of the rooms of the old stone house, and like all the large landholders of his time had his own distillery. Doubtless due to the fact that he was one of those early settlers who believed that Virginia's claim for the greater portion of Western Pennsylvania was a valid one, he had slaves, all of whom were registered, but they were gradually freed under the Abolition Law of 1782.

He was a staunch Presbyterian, and not many years after the founding of Redstone Church, which church gave its name to the first presbytery west of the Allegheny mountains, he gave the ground on which was afterwards located Rehoboth church, this being the second Presbyterian church between the Yough and Monongahela rivers. He was one of the first elders in Rehoboth church, and was the first delegate to the General Assembly from Redstone Presbytery. His activity as a pioneer in the early days is shown by the following record: He was justice of the peace and common pleas of Westmoreland county, being appointed by the Governor, January, 1775, and first styled "President Judge" at the January session, 1776. He was a member of the provincial conference held at Carpenter's Hall, Philadelphia, June 18, 1775; a member of the committee of the provincial conference held in Philadelphia, June 18, 1776; a delegate to the convention of July 15, 1776; appointed in 1777 by the General Assembly as one of the commissioners from this State to meet those from other States who assembled at New Haven, Connecticut, November 22, 1777, to regulate the prices of commodities; a sub-lieutenant in Westmoreland county, appointed March 21, 1777; a justice of the peace in Westmoreland county, appointed June 11, 1777; appointed by the Assembly, December 16, 1777, to take subscriptions for the Continental loan; commissioner of exchange for Westmoreland county, appointed April 5, 1779. Before him as President Judge and his associates justices of the Court of Quarter Sessions, this court was held in January, 1778. He was again appointed sub-lieutenant of Westmoreland county, June 2, 1780, and a commander of a battalion of rangers for frontier defense in 1781; county lieutenant of the militia of Westmoreland county, appointed January 5, 1782; "Dedimus Potestatem" for Washington county, appointed July 24, 1782. As justice of Westmoreland county he was holding court at Hannastown with his associates when Hannastown was attacked and burned by the Indians, on Saturday, July 13, 1782, as shown by the court records which the excited inhabitants had not forgotten to take from the log court house to the stockade when the alarm was given. At the time of the Whiskey Insurrection,

in 1794, his sympathies at first were with those who complained of excise grievance, though in the end he was largely instrumental in ending the insurrection, always counseling moderation, and active in preventing outrages during this period. He was chairman of the Mingo creek meeting called by the insurrectionists, and was also chairman of the meeting called and held at Parkinson's Ferry, on August 14, 1794. This meeting was attended by two hundred and sixty delegates from four western counties, and had as its secretary, Albert Gallatin. Largely through his efforts, and those of Gallatin and Brackenridge, the insurrectionists were brought to see the serious nature of their revolt against the United States Government.

Edward Cook died in 1808, and his wife died in 1837, both dying in the stone house in which they had moved, as they always stated, in Independence Year. They had but one child, James Crawford, born in 1772, died in 1848.

The stone house occupied by Colonel Cook was on more than one occasion visited by George Washington on his visits to his plantation at Perryopolis, Fayette county, Pennsylvania. On one of these visits to his plantation he rode over to the Cook mansion, and, standing on the old doorstep, addressed a large body of settlers of the immediate vicinity, who were drilling in a nearby field under Colonel Cook as lieutenant of the county militia. Later, also, this house was visited by General Lafayette on his trip to the United States after the Revolutionary War. The house was apparently looked upon by many settlers in the immediate vicinity as practically fireproof, as many of them left with Colonel Cook valuable deeds and other papers. The house is still standing, in good condition.

A list of slaves, as recorded in the recorder's office of Westmoreland county as the property of Edward Cook in 1808, is given in another part of this history.

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