

SAMUEL CRAIG, Senior

**Pioneer to Western
Pennsylvania**

AND HIS DESCENDANTS

**COMPILED BY
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**PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
GREENSBURG, PA.**

1915

Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Craig lived at one time on the farm in Unity Township, Westmoreland County,

now in possession of Edward S. Craig, as Alexander Craig owned that farm and the adjoining one now owned by A. S. Machesney. In 1792 they were living near Crooked Creek, as they were there March, 1792, when their second son was born. Two days after his birth, the mother awoke screaming, and when her husband inquired about the cause of her trouble, she replied that she had dreamed that an Indian was standing beside her, with a tomahawk raised ready to kill her. He then told her that it was useless to conceal the truth longer, that there were Indians in the neighborhood, and they were in danger. She was then carried into a canoe and taken to a place of safety.

In February, 1794, Alexander Craig purchased the "Loveday Allen Farm", situated on the western side of the Loyalhanna, in Salem Township, Westmoreland County, from Samuel Wallace, a merchant of Philadelphia; the deed is dated February 11, 1794; Samuel Wallace had bought it from a woman named Loveday Allen in 1769. Here he made his home the remaining years of his life—almost forty years, and the farm is still in possession of a descendant. The first house in which they lived on this farm was a log cabin built by the men in one day; they sawed out the logs where the door was to be, and Mrs. Craig went in and leveled the floor with a hoe. About 1797, a large stone house was built, Mr. Craig choosing for its site a spot which he said was "a great natural situation for a house", and which stood until 1858, when it was taken down, having become unsafe; the present brick house occupies the same site.

Alexander Craig was a surveyor of land, and did much surveying in Western Pennsylvania, and this gave him opportunities to acquire many tracts of land, and he became an extensive land owner, not only in Westmoreland, but in Armstrong, Clarion and Indiana Counties. He had also land in Crawford County which was

“donation land” given him because he had been a Revolutionary soldier.

It is recorded that settlements began to be made in Clarion County about 1800, and that a band of emigrants from Westmoreland went there under the influence and patronage of General Craig.

He was agent for the Northwestern Land Company for the sale of their lands in Northumberland, Mifflin and Huntingdon Counties, and also acted as agent for the heirs of Governor Mifflin, who owned a great deal of land in what was then called the “backwoods.” A letter which is a fine specimen of penmanship, written by a son of Governor Mifflin, reads as follows:

“Columbia 1 m 11th 1815.

Respected Friend:—

Thy brother-in-law, Peter Wallace, forwarded thy letter of 28th Nov. from Harrisburgh, and by a messenger sent to him, I have received sixteen hundred and sixty-five dollars remitted by him; but as thou omitted to mention the sums paid by the different purchasers, I cannot tell to which of us it belongs, and must therefore let it remain in bank, until I hear from thee again. Thy brother-in-law informed me he did not intend visiting home during the adjournment of the Legislature at Christmas. I must therefore request thee to look out for some other conveyance, by whom thou may remit any other monies thou may have received since.

I have not received any answer from my sister respecting the tract John Bell lives on—

I have sold about sixty acres of my farm fronting on the road for fifty thousand dollars for the purpose of extending the Town laid out by my two brother-in-laws, James and William Wright; it is called Wrightsville; it has a front of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles on the river, and extends one mile on the road to York, to the west of my farm. The new bridge across the Susquehanna is finished connecting the two towns of Columbia and

Wrightsville together. Columbia has also had a large addition to it laid out, and sold off in town lots. The towns are both rapidly increasing the number of inhabitants. The lots from 50 to 60 feet front and 150 deep—the original cost of which were \$180.00, have since sold from \$500.00 to \$2000.00, according to their situation. Mechanics who have not the funds to both purchase and build, take lots on ground rent at from \$1.00 to \$2.50 per foot front.

If Providence once more blesses us with peace, and the government reverts from the heads of the "Atheists and Madmen" who so mismanage it, to the Disciples of Washington's principles, it will become one of the most flourishing inland situations in the United States. It is now and it always must be the common thoroughfare from Maine in the east to Georgia in the south; hundreds of wagons with dry goods (since the horse marine navigation commenced) from Boston, Salem, New York, &c., have passed here bound for Carolinas and Georgia, and have returned from thence loaded with bales of cotton for the manufactories in New England. Hence the reason for all the specie being drained from the southern banks, and accumulated in those to the eastward; and thus unforeseen to the darkened minds of Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and all the atheistical gang, has Providence suffered the evils which they would have maliciously inflicted on New England, by embargoes, non-intercourse, &c., recoiled upon themselves; and in the end will drive them from the direction of the government into obscurity; from which by the blessing of the Almighty upon our country I hope they will never rise again.

Please to write by the return of the mail and mention by whom and how much each purchaser has paid of the money thou remitted by P. Wallace.

I am Thy obliged friend
Jona'n Mifflin."

Thomas Mifflin, a nephew of the Governor, visited General Craig in 1825 and after his return home sent presents to Mrs. Craig and daughters, consisting of books and solid silver belt clasps, two sets of the latter are now in possession of the writer.

In 1830, owing to advanced age and failing health, General Craig did not wish to continue to act as land agent, and when their business relations were about closing Mr. Lloyd Mifflin wrote to him, and closed his letter in the following way: "Altho I have never had the pleasure of thy personal acquaintance, yet from the length of time our family have had the benefit of thy attention to our business in thy neighborhood, and from the respectful terms in which I have always heard thee spoken of by such of my relatives as are acquainted with thee, the present prospect of our correspondence being ere long brought to a close, feels to me like dissolving my connexion with an old and highly esteemed friend.

I am very respectfully,
Thy friend,
Ld. Mifflin."

Although General Craig transacted much business for himself and others, he never had a law suit, and often used his influence successfully in preventing litigation among his neighbors.

After the trouble with the Indians was over he often met them when out surveying or when engaged in other business, and he had sympathy for them and treated them with kindness. Knowing that the "whites" generally were prejudicial against them, and seized every opportunity to disoblige them, once as he was walking beside one of our rivers, he saw an Indian canoe tied to a tree, and believing that if almost any other white man would see it, that he would destroy it, he wrote his own name on the side of it, and sunk it into the water. Sometime after he was in a store in Pitts-

burgh when several Indians came in; one of them heard him named, and walked up to him saying, "Alexander Craig, you a good man, you no destroy Indian canoe." His intercourse with the Indians made him acquainted with some of their remedies, one of which he put into practice on at least two occasions. Their remedy for the bite of a snake was to kill it, take out its entrails and apply to the wound. He was bitten by a copperhead one year, and by a rattlesnake another year, and the first did not entirely heal until after he had been bitten by the other when there was a complete recovery.

Alexander Craig was an expert marksman, and once when in the camp of Corn Planter—the celebrated Seneca chief—they spent some time shooting at mark, and to the surprise of all he excelled Corn Planter in the contest, who concluded that there must be some "witchery" about the gun and for that reason bought it. (Mrs. M. C. Craig.)

In an old Day Book that is still in existence, kept by Robert Beattie who had the first store known to have been in New Alexandria, is the following entry dated February 8, 1797:

"Col. Alex'r Craig, Cr.

By 49 lb. Deer Skins 5 1-5 d. s.

1 Bare Ditto..... 15."

He was an expert swimmer, and saved a number of people from drowning.

After the organization of Congruity Congregation the Craigs became adherents of that church. Alexander Craig did not connect himself with the church by membership, but was constant in his attendance at church, until the infirmities of age deprived him of that privilege, and then his Bible was his constant companion. Mrs. Craig was a member of that congregation for about forty years. One time when they were approaching the church, he was carrying a blue silk umbrella that had been sent as a present to Mrs. Craig from the east, and they met a man who recalled that he was a survey-

or, and pointing to the umbrella asked "Is that the thing ye survey the land wie?" It may have been the first umbrella that had been seen at Congruity.

While Alexander Craig did not have the advantage of a liberal education, he was fond of reading, had a retentive memory, and his mind became well stored with useful knowledge; he was a man of good judgment, was truthful, honest and generous.

He lacked one inch of being six feet in height, and in the vigor of manhood was muscular, strong and active; a man of fine personal appearance and of fine manners. He was called the "pretty backwoodsman" by Eastern Pennsylvanian friends, and "handsome Aleck" by his own relatives.

Alexander Craig was in failing health for several years and died October 29, 1832, having almost completed his seventy-seventh year, and was interred in Congruity cemetery, four miles from New Alexandria, Penna. Mrs. Craig survived him almost twenty years; died November 19, 1852, when in her eighty-seventh year.