18th Century Cumberland County

Cumberland County Pennsylvania was not officially established until 1750. Up until that time it was explored and settled as part of Lancaster County. This new area of the western frontier was known for agricultural purposes as the Valley of the Susquehanna, opposite Harris' Ferry. It was also known by its Indian name Kittochtinny, or Endless Mountain. In the 1710 to 1775 era, over 200,000 people emigrated from Ulster [[1]](#footnote-1)to the 13 Colonies, from New Hampshire to Georgia. The largest numbers went to Pennsylvania. From that base some went south into Virginia, the Carolinas and across the South, with a large concentration in the Appalachian districts; others headed west to western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and the Midwest.[[2]](#endnote-1)

There were no records of settlers in this region before 1729. Shippensburg and Carlisle both started about 1724 to 1730. “… In a letter written from Shippensburg by James Magaw, May 21, 1733, he describes the new settlement, saying, "We have now eighteen cabins built here now, and it looks like a town, but we have no name for it. I wish you would see John Harris at the ferry and get him to write to the Governor to see if he can't get some guns for us; there's a good number of Indians about here; and I fear they intend to give us a good deal of trouble and may do us a great deal of harm. We were three days on our journey coming from Harris’s Ferry here. We could not make much speed on account of the children. They could not get on as fast as Jane and me." [[3]](#endnote-2)

Shippensburg was not formally laid out until 1737 when Edward Shippen was granted patent rights. The town as it now stands is on an original part of the Shippen tract of over 1,200 acres. With the exception of York City, Shippensburg became the second oldest town west of the Susquehanna River, and the oldest in the Cumberland Valley. Around 1736 William Penn authorized the purchase of Cumberland Valley from the Indians, and to grant the settlers licenses to buy the land. On October 25th 1736, the land was purchased from the Indians, and in January 1737 the Land Office was opened to arrange for the sale of land. These land grants were known as the Blunston Licenses. Francis Grimes (Graham) was the only Graham known to have made a purchase of land under the Blunston Licenses. [[4]](#endnote-3)

“…Another important fact connected with the history of this place, is that it was on the line of traders path from Harris Ferry westward, to Fort Bingham, in Juniata County, located at the base of the north side of the Tuscarora Mountain. From the best information obtainable, it is certain that this path extended from the Conococheague settlement, through Croghan's Gap, into Shearman's Valley, thence westward, leading to a point at Bingham's Fort, in Juniata County...” [[5]](#endnote-4)

End Notes

1. Ulster is one of the four traditional Irish provinces, located in the north of Ireland. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hanna, Charles A., The Scotch-Irish: or the Scot in North Britain, North Ireland, and North America, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1902, pg. 163, Cumberland County Historical Society and Hamilton Library 21 North Pitt Street. Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-2945. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
3. Early History of Shippensburg: Cumberland/Franklin Counties, PA, Chapters I and II of the "History of the Messiah Evangelical United Brethren, Church, 1866-1966, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania", by Rev. D. Homer Kendall, Pastor, 1966, Cumberland County Historical Society and Hamilton Library 21 North Pitt Street. Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-2945. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
4. Francis Graham (1734-1777) Cumberland County Pennsylvania, Boog Graham, 479 County Line Road, York Springs PA 17372. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
5. The Frontier Forts in the Cumberland and Juniata Valleys, By Jay Gilfillan, Pages 611-618, Fort Robinson, Juniata County, Historical Map of Southwestern Pennsylvania, by G. D. Albert & L. W. Fogg of the Old Forts' Commission Report, Volume II, Darlington's 1755 Map from “Fort Pitt and Letters From The Frontier, edited by Mary C. Darlington, 1892, Cumberland County Historical Society and Hamilton Library 21 North Pitt Street. Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013-2945. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)