



A section of old Lancaster County, PA with approximate locations of the farms settled by Graham families c. 1720-1730. (The formation of Dauphin and Lebanon Counties and the existing boundary shown on the map came later.) Our Graham ancestor lived on Farm no. 1. His brother James Graham, Sr. (c. 1690-1745) lived on Farm no. 2. Farm no. 3—John Graham, probably Elizabeth’s brother. Farm no. 4—James Graham, probably the son of James Graham Sr. Farm no. 5—Sarah Graham, widow of John Graham who died in 1737. Farm no. 6—John Graham (c.1710-1780) and his wife Elenor, likely related to the Grahams on farm 1 & 2. Farm no. 7—Michael Graham (c. 1710-d. aft 1777 N.C.)

CHAPTER 1

Our Early Graham Ancestors

*Here is a list of good people whose good works have not been forgotten.
In their descendants there remains a rich inheritance born of them.
Their descendants stand by the covenants and, thanks to them,
Their offspring will last forever, and their glory will not fade.*

Adapted from Ecclesiasticus 44

The massive Scotch-Irish migration to colonial America, which began before 1710, contained numerous Graham families. The Scotch-Irish are those people whose forebears had lived in Scotland but migrated first to Northern Ireland and then, a generation or more later, to America. In both migrations, the Scotch-Irish were seeking better standards of living and, in some cases, more freedom of religious expression.

Early in this migration to the colonies, several Graham families settled on what was then the western frontier of Pennsylvania—in Lancaster County, east of the Susquehanna River. Some of these Grahams, and/or their offspring, are listed on Pennsylvania land and probate records starting around 1730. Most of the people on this frontier, however, had been on their farms for several years before legal records were formalized. Thus, no record exists for many of the older men who went early to the frontier and died there before c. 1730.

Traditional stories, passed down within our particular branch of the family, hold that several Graham brothers came to America from North Ireland. Through extensive research, Bulls concluded that at least two of these Graham brothers settled before 1730 in Lancaster County, Hanover Township, some ten to 15 miles east of what is now Harrisburg.

There is no written record of when these brothers came into Pennsylvania or if they lived elsewhere in America before establishing themselves in Lancaster County.

All of the Grahams on the Pennsylvania frontier and their Scotch-Irish neighbors had roots in Scotland, and, wherever they settled, they established Scottish Presbyterian churches. Along the frontier, churches were formed every ten miles, following a determination that no one should ride a horse more than five miles in any direction to attend worship services.

Thus, on the Pennsylvania frontier in this period, Presbyterian congregations were organized in the communities known then as Middle Octoraro, Chestnut Level, Donegal, Derry (now "Hershey"), Paxtang (in the eastern part of Harrisburg), and Hanover. The Hanover Presbyterian Church (also called "Manada"—or "Monnoday", the Indian name for a nearby creek) was on Bow Creek below the Manada pass through the Blue Mountains. It is about ten miles east of Harrisburg.

The Grahams of primary interest to this narrative were associated with the Hanover Church, shown in Figure 1 (next page) as it appeared in the 19th century. The main church building was torn down in 1875 or 1876, but its remains are to be found behind a gasoline station about 100 yards north of the Grantville Exit on Interstate 81. The walled cemetery is still there, with grave markers dating to around 1750. The old manse stands about 100 yards north of the cemetery. It was built in 1777 on the grounds of the original log house, which was occupied by Rev. Richard Sankey, the first pastor. This house has been modernized and is occupied today. The nearby spring house contains rocks in its foundation that were placed there c. 1735 by the founders of the community and the church.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to the roots of these early settlers in Pennsylvania. Solid evidence tells us that some of these Grahams and their Scotch-Irish neighbors fled from Scotland to Northern Ireland around 1690. This date represents approximately the end of a long series of uprisings by Scottish Covenanters, who left the established Presbyterian Church in protest against political and religious conditions in Scotland that they considered oppressive. They held their religious services in open fields, and they took up arms against the British crown.

The Covenanter wars, which drove many a Lowland Scot to refuge in Northern Ireland, were appropriately called the "Killing Times". Some historians present the Covenanters as vicious zealots; however, they were martyrs to their 18th-century descendants in America.

Many Covenanters, including some Grahams ⁷, were slaughtered in the "Killing Times" by the king's troops. On some occasions, these dragoons were led by John Graham of Claverhouse—the Viscount of Dundee. This John Graham was called "Bonnie Dundee" by those who admired him, and a rousing Scottish ballad, "Up with the Bonnets of Bonnie Dundee", hails him as a conquering hero.

Dundee was no hero to the Covenanters, who called him "Bloody Clavers". Even into the 20th century, Scotch-Irish folk in rural America are said to have scolded their babies at night, saying: "Behave yourself, or Clavers will get you." ⁸

Many of the attitudes formed in Scotland during the "Killing Times" were carried forward to America, where a century later the Scotch-Irish were very responsive to the national call for independence from the British crown.

Substantial historical evidence exists that many of the Scotch-Irish settlers in Pennsylvania between the Paxtang (now called "Paxton") and Hanover churches were only one or two generations removed from the "Killing Times". ⁹ A Covenanter circuit rider named John Cuthbertson served many members of his flock in the Paxtang-Hanover community, and some of his parishioners were named Graham. At least one family was named "Maharg", which is "Graham" spelled backward. The name "Maharg" suggests some man's contemptuous decision not to carry forward the family name of "Bloody Clavers".

Cuthbertson's records of baptisms and marriages among his parishioners are extant, but no projected ancestor (for Graham/Bulls) is numbered in this flock.¹⁰

Nonetheless, the ancestors of the Grahams on the Pennsylvania frontier were probably involved in the Covenanter rebellions in Scotland. History shows that once they were settled in Northern Ireland, many Scottish Covenanters found the traditional Presbyterian Church again to their satisfaction. Thus, many Covenanters returned to the established church, while separating themselves, in a religious sense, from friends and relatives who remained hard-core Covenanters and carried this off-shoot denomination to America. In Pennsylvania, the Covenanters organized themselves under the banner of the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The Scotch-Irish came to America in family groups, and they often settled on adjoining or nearby farms on the frontier. Here, they raised children who often married their first cousins or nearby acquaintances, who were frequently relatives. Thus, early frontier Presbyterian congregations comprised tight family groupings.

In this essay, only two families named Graham are of primary importance. One was headed by James Graham, called "James (Sr)" here for clarity; the other (after c. 1730), by John Graham. James was both the uncle and the father-in-law of John.

According to existing land records, these two Graham men were living on separate farms in Hanover Township (then Lancaster County) by c. 1730. James (Sr) and most likely his brother, John's father, whose first name is unknown, settled on these two farms by about 1720.

The Hanover Presbyterian Church was established in 1737 on land immediately north of John Graham's farm. On August 30, 1739, the Donegal Presbytery met for the first time at the Hanover Church, and Rev. Richard Sankey was ordained. Among the other ministers present: Rev. John Thomson, Sankey's father-in-law.¹¹

James Graham (Sr) died in 1745, leaving a will¹², and his farm, according to Anglican law, passed to his oldest living son. This son was also named "James", and he is called "James (Jr)" in this text. At the time of his father's death, James (Jr) was an adult; thus, he was able to take legal title to the land. Bulls projected James (Sr) and James (Jr) as our most distant forebears in America. Unfortunately, this has not been proved with absolute certainty.

In his will, James (Sr) named sons James and Samuel and sons-in-law John McClure and Hugh Semple, both neighbors.

Reverend Richard Sankey and Patrick Watson (probably a Graham relative) were named as executors of James (Sr)'s will, but they renounced in favor of James (Jr) and his mother "Anne".

On November 13, 1745, an inventory of the personal effects left by James Graham (Sr) was signed by William Watson (a neighbor in the Hanover Township and probably a Graham relative) and by James Dixon.¹³ Dixon, who was born in Ireland, married Jane Graham—widow of John Graham (d. 1743) and daughter of James Graham (Sr). Accordingly, in the year that James (Sr) died, James Dixon was his son-in-law. This historical information helps to demonstrate a close relationship of these two Graham families and their neighbors.

William Watson will become important later in this narrative.

Hugh Semple, who died in 1749, willed a brown coat to "my brother-in-law, James Graham" and a great coat "to my brother Samuel Graham". This reestablishes the relationships in the will of James (Sr) and tells us that James (Jr) was alive in 1749.

Let us now consider the other Graham family of importance: John Graham, who died in 1743, left his estate to his wife Jane, to two minor sons, William and John (called here "John (Jr)"), and to one child still in the mother's womb. Reverend Richard Sankey and James Dixon¹⁴ witnessed John Graham's will, and Sankey and Brice Inniss were named executors.