

Pennsylvania's Warrantee Township Maps

Pennsylvania's warrantee township maps represent a valuable research tool for the amateur and professional historian alike. Available through the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) they were constructed in the 1940s from original drafts then available at the Pennsylvania Land Office. Characterized by their complexity, the hand-drawn and hand-detailed maps are a tribute to the meticulousness and patience of the people who created them. Aside from their artistic value, the maps are a treasure trove of data, as they record information such as the names of original applicants; acreage and location of tracts; dates of application, warrant, survey, and patent; and the names of patentees.

Used in conjunction with other land office records available at PHMC's website, individual maps are useful for amateur historians searching for the location of a particular family. Moreover, when a chart marks the trees that served as corner posts for individual tracts, one can figuratively replant an ancestor's ancient forest. Using this information in tandem with modern forestry texts and selected works of fiction, it is possible to imagine the pioneers' sense of wonder—or dread—as they encountered the primeval forest. Place names on the warrantee maps offer further evidence of the physical environment. Details about native fauna are revealed in designations such as "Deer's Watering Place," "Wildcat Hollow," and "Pigeon's Roost." Marrying these names with early accounts of regional wildlife allows us to bring extinct species back to life.

For historians who study land ownership and settlement patterns, the entire collection is a gold mine. As an example, by examining the township maps for the Lykens Valley in northern Dauphin County, one could determine that the earliest settlers located close to the Susquehanna, along the creek bottoms, or within access to the old Tulpehocken Trail. In what was perhaps a typical settlement pattern, farmers arriving later purchased what were probably less desirable parcels. Notably, the Lykens Valley maps reveal a cluster of warrants filed for land in the eastern end of the valley after coal was discovered in the region.

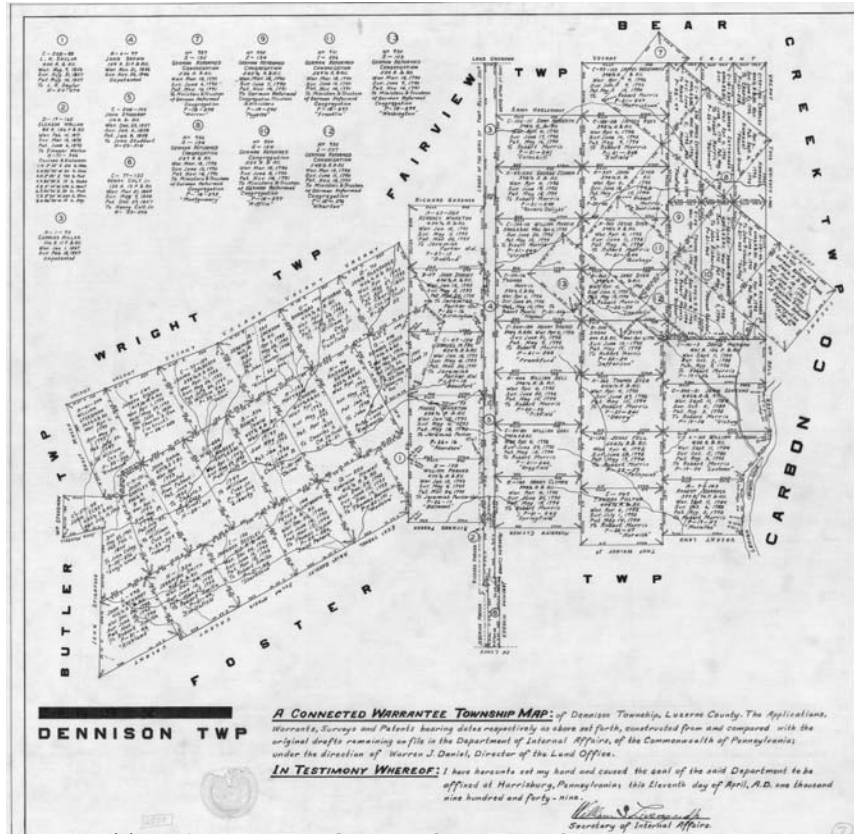
Using other methodologies, a researcher could compare maps for regions purchased in different periods. In Upper Paxton Township in Dauphin County, where settlement began around 1765, the parcels were



Upper Paxton Township, Dauphin County. Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Available at <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-522/WarranteeTwpMaps/r017Map2671DauphinUpperPaxtonWeb.pdf>.

laid out in an irregular pattern, and the size of individual lots remained small to medium—ranging from about fifty to three hundred acres. Compare that with Dennison Township in Luzerne County, where settlement began in 1790. We discover that Dennison Township was laid out in a grid pattern and that our Revolution's financier, Robert Morris, was the original owner of almost half of the land.

With hundreds of warrantee township maps available, the possibilities for their use are limited less by imagination than by the amount of time a researcher has to study them. Access to the maps and terms of use infor-



Dennison Township, Luzerne County, Courtesy of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Available at <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-522WarranteeTwpMaps/r017Map2877LuzerneDennisonWeb.pdf>.

mation may be found at http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/land_records/3184.

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