

## **Blackburns in Menallen**

*By Kevin Howley*

Now that ancestral properties of the Blackburns in Adams County, Pennsylvania have been clearly identified, the question still remains - when did they arrive to that county? Early Blackburn historians had made the assumption that the date of the warrant for the land upon which they had settled was the indicator - that being 20 Aug 1745. In the June 2005 issue of *Blackburn Beginnings*, current-day historians provided some evidence that the Blackburns probably arrived before 1740. Some additional information uncovered since last year could lead one to believe, however, that the Blackburns moved to Menallen Township almost immediately after their arrival in North America. Quaker records indicate that the Blackburns were received into membership at New Garden Monthly Meeting (Chester County, Pennsylvania) on 30 Oct 1736.

During those days, one indication of where you lived and who your neighbors were was your signature on a marriage certificate at the Monthly Meeting where you were a member. From 1736 to 1746, the Blackburns were clearly continuous members of the Society of Friends as demonstrated through the certificate which transferred their membership from New Garden Meeting to Sadsbury Meeting on 27 Dec 1746 [received at Sadsbury on 5 Jan 1746/47.] The meeting minutes noted, "John Blackburn produced a certificate from New Garden Monthly Meeting for self, wife and children not named." It is interesting to note that, during that ten-year period, the names of Blackburn family members do not show up on recorded marriage certificates in the verge of New Garden Monthly Meeting even though they were active members. This absence suggests that they were probably living someplace else.

In thinking about timing, it should be noted that several families received a license for land in what is now Adams County as early as 1735, the family of Moses Harlan. [Moses was the father of Rebecca Harlan, who later married John Blackburn Jr. (2).] It appears that the Harlan family may have moved to Adams County shortly thereafter.

The only other known child of Moses Harlan was another daughter by the name of Mary. Mary married John Cox on 9 Oct 1735 at New Garden Meeting. By early 1736, Mary and John had gotten themselves in trouble with the meeting. At Meeting for Business on 24 Apr 1736, it was noted that Mary (Harlan) Cox had already given birth to her first child in a timeframe "sooner after marriage than is usual for an honest woman to do." Members were appointed to address the concern and ask for an acknowledgment of the "error" of their ways.

At Meeting for Business on 29 May 1736, Mary presented her paper of acknowledgment. However, John was away from home as noted in the following account:

"Isaac Jackson gives this meeting an account that he spoake to John Cox as desired and that he signified to him that he would send a paper to the next meeting to Condemn his action but he being back in ye woods making a settlement at present so has done according to expectation."

This statement indicates that John was probably in Adams County making final arrangements for his property, which is now in Huntington Twp. John made his report in June. It then appears that John, Mary and their oldest son, Jacob, moved to the region west of the Susquehanna shortly thereafter. This provides a timeline that makes it absolutely possible that, upon their arrival in October 1736, the Blackburns immediately moved out to Adams County.

In researching this information, another interesting bit of information arose relative to the relationship between Rebecca Harlan and John Blackburn Jr. (2). Their first daughter, Margaret was born on 16 Dec 1740 on the property of Moses Harlan. Previous assumptions, then, had

been that John Blackburn Jr. and Rebecca Harlan had probably married sometime in late 1739 or early 1740. However, at the Meeting of Business held at New Garden on 26 May 1744, John Blackburn Jr. appeared in person, having made the trip from Menallen Twp. At that Meeting, John provided a paper "acknowledging carnal knowledge with his wife before marriage." The date of marriage of John Blackburn Jr. and Rebecca Harlan is still not known, but by May 1744 Rebecca had already given birth to two children and was pregnant with her third. Rebecca and John were certainly married under the care of local Friends in Menallen Twp. before that date, however, otherwise both John and Rebecca would have been removed from meeting for having married out of disunity with Friends. Given the distance at which Friends were living and the fact that no local meeting was established in the township until the mid-1740s, records may be lost forever. This distance also probably explains why it took four years for Friends in New Garden to find out what was going on out in the woods.

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