Chapter One

Review of the Literature on Community History

At first glance, the Nottingham Settlement does not look like a “community.” These settlers did not live within the bounds of a village or town, and no extant document of incorporation or organization survives, if it ever existed. Yet a number of common experiences defined these individuals and their families as a community in the southern backcountry during the eighteenth century. Created by historians, the field of community studies includes an eclectic mix of social science disciplines that analyze social organizations, their members and their interactions. Historians of the colonial period utilize the techniques of social history to investigate the composition and relationships of colonial communities in discrete geographical locations and time periods. Relying on methods employed in sociology, geography, psychology and archaeology as well as history, they develop new insights based on common denominators within the community.¹

Early community study projects in the 1970s focused on colonial American Tidewater communities located on or near the Atlantic coast, especially in New England, Pennsylvania and Virginia. A decade later, research extended to those communities in the frontier region known as the backcountry, which includes both the Piedmont and Mountain regions of the thirteen colonies.

A community’s location dictates how the historian will approach its study, the research methods employed and the likely results. When investigating communities in the southern backcountry, historians consider varying combinations of key common denominators, such as property (landownership, material possessions and wealth), kinship, heritage and religion, which bind the individuals and their families into a community.

**Property (Landownership, Material Possessions and Wealth)**

Unlike the New England colonists whose settlements centered on a town or township, the settlers living in the middle colonies created communities within larger, more dispersed areas of settlement. The inhabitants of New England communities generally emigrated to America as groups from adjoining areas in Britain and practiced a form of communal government based on shared political and religious beliefs that psychologically bound them to their location. Pennsylvania and Maryland immigrants with more diverse ethnic backgrounds tended to seek farmland they could afford and personal opportunities for prosperity first within those colonies and later further south in Virginia and the Carolinas.

In *The Best Poor Man’s Country* (1972), historical geographer James Lemon explores the democratic and independent nature of settlers living in early southeastern Pennsylvania—how they used the land and their ability to prosper from its use. Utilizing land records and tax assessments, Lemon examines the cultural groups that settled in Pennsylvania (particularly the counties of Chester and Lancaster), their local

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governments, and their land use patterns. Lemon maintains that early immigrants (those arriving before 1750) were “largely from the middle stratum of western European society.”3 Whether German-speaking, English or Scots-Irish, the immigrants who came to Pennsylvania shared a quest for independence as it was developing in Europe’s towns and countryside during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. According to Lemon, this desire for independence encouraged settlers to regard “individual freedom and material gain over that of public interest.”4 Contrary to William Penn’s initial concept of communal farming and a local government that reflected colonial New England’s township model, Pennsylvania’s settlers “lived on their own farms” and created county-based governments.5

Expanding on the independent nature of the “middling sort,” Lemon discusses the premise that Pennsylvanian society and its practices in land organization (individual versus community owned) encouraged settlers, regardless of cultural background, to move freely both within the colony and further south into Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas. Motivations for moving varied. Settlers migrated to land occupied by others who shared a similar language, culture, and religion. Pennsylvania’s population grew due to an influx of German-speaking and Scots-Irish immigrants which created greater demand for farmland. As the amount of land available for purchase decreased, its value rose.

Lemon also analyzes how Pennsylvanians used the land. Settlers produced a variety of grain crops, such as wheat and corn, and practiced crop rotation to increase production. Towns appeared as marketplaces and transportation hubs. Exchanged farm

3 Lemon, Best Poor Man's Country, 5.
4 Ibid., xv.
5 Ibid., 219.
products moved eastward while needed tools, food stuffs and manufactured goods moved westward. At its outer reaches the exchange system brought Pennsylvania’s farmers into the world economy.

Historian James A. Henretta, in “Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America,” disagrees with Lemon’s emphasis on the individual, arguing that “community-oriented patterns of social interaction” and existing lineal family values regarding landownership and farming “inhibited the emergence of individualism” prior to the mid-seventeen hundreds.\(^6\) Yearly subsistence took precedent over individualistic inclinations. Maintaining the family’s economic status and protecting the parents’ financial security superseded the sons’ desires.

The discussion continues in 1980 when Lemon in “Comment on James A. Henretta’s ‘Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America’” poses that “the accumulation of property” delineated the leaders (“better sorts”) from the lesser sorts.\(^7\) Lemon expounds on what he considers to be Henretta’s three premises (individual status and community, the market and ideology) and concludes that Henretta leans “toward detaching families from society.”\(^8\) Henretta, in his reply to Lemon (“‘Families and Farms: Mentalite in Pre-Industrial America’: Reply”), defends his interpretation of the farm family in pre-1750 America.\(^9\) Although he admits that Lemon in his “Comments” adjusted much of what he (Henretta) found unacceptable in Best Poor Man’s County,


\(^8\) Ibid., 696.

Henretta continues to disagree with Lemon’s analysis of the farm family, the “chronology of historical change,” and the effects of the “cultural environment” on their lives.\textsuperscript{10}

In “Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania: The Case of Chester County” (1986), Lucy Simler counters Lemon’s claims, arguing that tenant farmers were more common in colonial Pennsylvania than owner farmers, and that economic changes during the eighteenth century created a surge and subsequent decline in tenancy before the Revolutionary War.\textsuperscript{11} Declaring “smallholding meant upward mobility,” she attributes a decrease in the number of smallholding owners to the lack of opportunity to change economic status to that of middling farm owner.\textsuperscript{12} Simler supports her argument with a study of one township in Chester County, Pennsylvania, utilizing land records, tax schedules and plat maps to differentiate between tenants and landowners.

George W. Franz, in \textit{Paxton: A Study of Community Structure and Mobility in the Colonial Pennsylvania Backcountry} (1989), relies heavily on landownership to determine the characteristics of one mid-eighteenth-century community in Lancaster County.\textsuperscript{13} He claims that conditions in Paxton resulted in an \textit{ad hoc} community that provided its inhabitants with “no sense of communal identity” and promoted an “individualistic [attitude] at the expense of community solidarity.”\textsuperscript{14} He argues that the lack of an effective political structure, the temperament of the settlers, the style of landownership

\textsuperscript{10} Henretta, “‘Families and Farms’: Reply,” 697–98.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 563.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 7, 8; Franz defines Paxton’s ad hoc community as “one in which the community structure and its institutions were minimal and latent and functioned effectively only in times of crisis or in order to meet a specific problem.”
practiced, and the economic and social structure of the community contributed to members’ participation in the “Paxton Boys” march on Philadelphia in 1764.\footnote{This popular protest of the colonial government’s failure to protect the backcountry from possible attacks by Native Americans took its name from Franz’s subject community.}

Although Franz uses extant tax lists, probate and land records as well as manuscript collections located in Pennsylvania to determine and identify the community’s identity, Franz fails to develop a fuller picture of the Paxton community. Surprisingly, he ignores kinship, the dominant approach in mentor Philip Greven’s work, which would have supplemented his emphasis on landownership and prevented him from presenting a one-dimensional view of Paxton.\footnote{This published version of Franz’s 1974 dissertation was written under the direction of Philip Greven, whose community study of Andover, Massachusetts, (\textit{Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts}) in the early 1970s became one of three works to set the early standard for community studies. I discuss Greven’s book on pages 23–24.}

Franz’s dependence on old secondary source material weakens his argument further and ignores methods employed by social historians of the 1980s.

The desire of settlers in the mid-Atlantic region to own land rather than lease it led to their search for economic independence in the southern backcountry. In \textit{Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography} (1964), historical geographer Harry Roy Merrens paved the way for later geographers to write about the history of the land, not just the people who occupied it. He proposes that investigating the changes generated by man upon North Carolina’s geography supplements the traditional historical research and supports scholars’ interpretation of colonial American history.\footnote{Harry Roy Merrens, \textit{Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century: A Study in Historical Geography} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964).} Merrens divides the book into three sections, discussing the land itself, the people who settled within the colony and their economic practices.
Producing topical (e.g. distribution of settlers, taxables, and crops) and historical maps from court and probate records, tax lists, travel accounts, customs reports, and period newspapers and geographies, Merrens examines the history of landownership of North Carolina, as well as the state’s geological composition. He tracks the flow of population into the region and the location of ethnic groups through demographic information found within colonial records and migration patterns identified by historians. And, he illustrates how North Carolinians utilized the land—the methods employed to clear forest, brush and grass; the agricultural practices employed within specific regions of the colony; and the existence of trading centers (urban versus decentralized trade) based on location. Because his focus covers the colony as a whole, Merrens does not investigate the lives of individuals in any one region or community.

Robert D. Mitchell argues in *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (1977) that “commercialization influenced land utilization” in backcountry Virginia, transforming communities from subsistence farming to commercial farming for national and international markets. Using land conveyance records as well as scholarly works, Mitchell examines the landowning practices, population characteristics, and economic development of the Shenandoah Valley during the eighteenth century. He addresses the methods of landownership and land speculation, arguing that “the economic motivations of frontier settlers” went “far beyond the needs of immediate sustenance,” and proposes that the economic development of the region was three-fold. Subsistence farming provided for the needs of the local community. A

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19 Ibid., 59.
surplus of cash crops (wheat, hemp, tobacco) prompted the creation of county seats and towns, enabling trade along the Valley. The need to dispose of these surplus commodities outside of the immediate community led to the improvement of transportation systems and an increase in trade both nationally and internationally.

Mitchell’s discussion covers the geography, population, and economics of communities rather than the situations of their individual inhabitants. As a result he barely scratches the surface of information available on community life. With the exception of the American Revolution, Mitchell does not consider the effects of outside events upon the community’s commercial development, and his isolated view of community lacks comparison with similar communities throughout the backcountry.

In *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746–1832* (1974), Richard R. Beeman argues that the culture of the backcountry in Virginia did not mimic that found in the Tidewater but was no more backward in its practices than the Tidewater counties that considered themselves more civilized. Using legislative, probate, tax and land conveyance records, local Anglican Church histories, and Baptist Church minute books, he claims that political, economic and ethnic differences influenced the Virginia backcountry and created a unique “southern” culture or identity. He supports his claims by examining Lunenburg County and comparing it to Richmond County in the Tidewater.

Beeman finds that the Lunenburg County authorities and Anglican Church leaders lacked the power to control the community. The Lunenburg landholding gentry did not have the same political sway or authority as Tidewater gentry. The ethnically diverse

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backcountry settlers refused to participate in the established Anglican Church and ignored the attempts of Anglican Church leaders to influence local affairs. These settlers’ evangelical practices threatened the formal “Anglican-gentry style of religious and social organization.”

Dissenter congregations “acted as a substitute for and supplement to the legal agency of the county court.”

According to Beeman, the tobacco culture adopted by backcountry Virginians demanded that the community fully embrace slave labor and limited the availability of inexpensive land. The lack of affordable land forced less affluent farmers to migrate, leaving only landowners with slave labor and creating a “middle-class, slave-based society.”

Beeman also explores the attitudes of the non-English settlers who migrated south from Pennsylvania into the county, claiming these Scots-Irish and German-speaking settlers chose to live their lives based on their ethnic cultures rather than abide by the English culture of the Tidewater region.

Several flaws arise within Beeman’s presentation. In an effort to negate the idea that the term “backcountry” referred to the cultural backwardness of the region, Beeman emphasizes how Lunenburg compared with the Tidewater culture rather than fully exploring the “frontier” nature of the community. Although he calls attention to the use of slavery, Beeman does not scrutinize further the slave culture which might have reinforced a major aspect of the emerging “southern” identity.

Relying heavily upon Mitchell’s chapters on landownership and speculation, Warren Hofstra maintains in *The Planting of New Virginia* (2004) that the Shenandoah Valley landscape evolved from open-country farms to urban-centered communities.

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22 Ibid., 108.
23 Ibid., 176.
because of the presence of the particular settlers who migrated there in the early eighteenth century. Employing economic concepts and models as well as land conveyance and court records and first-hand accounts, he supports his evolution of landscape thesis by examining the broader political situation, the effects of an “exchange economy” on the land, the transformation of local government, and the interaction between land use and the world economy. Specifically Hofstra analyzes the Opequon community, employing economic concepts pertaining to “central-place” theory which postulates that a central market location allows trade to evolve from subsistence to surplus production. In Opequon this change from subsistence farming to commercial farming (specifically that of wheat and other grain) facilitates the adaptation of an exchange economy to a cash-oriented society.

Hofstra also analyzes the material culture connected to the community—from the initial landowners’ recognition of the qualities of natural resources to their buildings and belongings—and discusses the colonial government’s involvement in planting settlers on family-sized farms (compared to the larger “plantation” holdings in the Tidewater), the burgeoning economic activity (local, inter-colonial, and imperial), and the incorporation of economic practices like the slave labor.

Hofstra initially connects landscape transformation to kinship and ethnicity, but then places less emphasis on the community’s initial familial and religious affiliations and relies instead on economic and political circumstances to support his thesis, providing occasional glimpses of individuals to substantiate the broader context. Although he acknowledges that African/African-American slaves lived in the Opequon

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community, he only briefly mentions their role in the community’s increasingly grain-based economy of the latter half of the eighteenth century.

**Kinship**

When United States historians embraced and shaped the field of community study as a part of social history less than a decade before the United States Bicentennial, they initially studied the earliest communities in America. John Demos and Philip J. Greven, Jr., in two of the better-known community studies published in 1970, focus on New England towns.\(^{25}\) Although both authors approach their respective seventeenth-century communities using demography in addition to other social science research methods (e.g., economics, social psychology, and anthropology), kinship relationship is a common factor apparent in both Demos’ *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (1970) and Greven’s *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (1970).

Relying heavily on probate and land conveyance records, Demos and Greven each explore the importance of the family and its affect on the community.\(^{26}\) While Demos examines material culture (houses, furniture and clothing), household structure (kinship), and stages of human development (primarily Erik Erikson’s eight stages of man) and their effects on the community “to know average people in the everyday routine of their lives,” Greven studies multiple generations in one town to determine if changes in


\(^{26}\) Greven also supplements official documents with genealogies produced by Andover family historians. He does not reflect on the credibility of these genealogies as sources, but accepts them based on the reputation of the New England Historic Genealogical Society in Boston where the genealogies reside.
demography, landownership and family life are as important to understanding colonial culture as political events.\(^{27}\) Both authors argue that early Americans were geographically mobile as community members were constantly in search of land.

In 1984, Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman published *A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650–1750*, a look at kinship relationships and community associations in a southern Tidewater community.\(^{28}\) The authors argue that unlike New England’s communities, residents of colonial Middlesex County based their community on personal and social interaction rather than religious ideology. To prove this thesis, the authors created more than twelve thousand biographies covering one hundred years of social history by “record stripping” or taking discrete pieces of data from multiple primary sources such as records related to birth, marriage, probate and land conveyance.\(^{29}\) The Rutmans present their materials as if they were “visitors to the early Chesapeake” rather than “an invisible . . . omniscient narrator.”\(^{30}\) Striving to provide a different view of a seventeenth-century colonial community, the Rutmans reconstruct individual lives to understand the community as a whole.

Daniel Snydacker’s article “Kinship and Community in Rural Pennsylvania, 1749–1820” (1982) explores multiple landowners’ bequests and their effects in York County.\(^{31}\) Snydacker suggests that a Pennsylvania landowner’s options for deciding who inherited his estate exceeded early historians’ views that the division of both land and personal property depended upon whether the oldest male child (primogeniture) or all


\(^{29}\) Ibid., 1:31.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 1:13.

heirs (partible heritance) received property. Instead, landowners in York County considered the financial welfare of widows (or widowers) and (minor) children and weighted their bequests according to the needs of family members, church and neighbors.

Snydacker chose York County because it contained three of Pennsylvania’s main immigrant groups and their respective churches: German-speakers and the Lutheran Church (as well as the Moravian Church); the Scots-Irish and the Presbyterian Church; and the English and the Society of Friends (Quakers). Using probate records, he compares the effects of kinship on bequests within five congregations. He advances his supposition by exploring how landowners within these ethnic and religious groups (primarily the German-speaking and Quaker groups) distributed their landholdings among their spouses and children. Snydacker reveals a “network of obligations” that protected not only those family members who would have been left destitute if excluded from inheritance but also the community that would have been compelled to provide for them.32

In Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland (1991), Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard and Lorena S. Walsh explore the “yeoman planter society” and the agricultural practices found in the seventeenth-century Tidewater region.33 Here the authors’ compile their related findings and together with records associated with Cole’s plantation “show how ordinary people tended their fields, grew their crops, [and] cared for their livestock” before the transformation of Maryland’s

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33 Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, Lorena S. Walsh, Robert Cole’s World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), xvi; For a list of journal articles and published essays written by the three authors, consult the notes section of Robert Cole’s World ([269]-337). The authors refer often to their previous works on colonial Maryland’s economic and social life.
agriculture into the slave-based society of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The authors investigate not only the agricultural and social practices of the community surrounding Cole, but also the idea that “Maryland’s entry into its ‘golden age’” of the seventeenth century finds its foundation in the practices of settlers during Cole’s shortened lifetime.

Because Cole left no personal clues about his life, such as diaries or letters, the authors rely heavily on the existing probate and land conveyance records. Cole’s early death provides an unusual wealth of information about the man’s plantation and the agricultural practices employed by the guardian of his minor heirs. Additionally, the estate records kept by the guardian and submitted to the court supply a view of a Tidewater community based on a dependence on neighbors rather than just immediate family. To supplement the official records and illuminate further Cole’s “world,” the authors compiled brief biographies for the family members, servants and neighbors.

In the southern backcountry, kinship influenced decision-making as well. Peter N. Moore, in World of Toil and Strife: Community Transformation in Backcountry South Carolina, 1750-1805 (2007), a study of the Waxhaw region, claims that external events and forces worked upon the community’s “insular” nature to change its inhabitants from subsistence farmers before the Revolutionary War to southern plantation owners afterward. To support his claim, Moore utilizes land conveyance, marriage and cemetery records to explore the effects of kinship within this backcountry community—how it molded and influenced the community and then diminished in importance when

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34 Carr, Menard, and Walsh, Robert Cole’s World, xvi-xvii.
35 Ibid., 152.
36 Peter N. Moore, World of Toil and Strife: Community Transformation in Backcountry South Carolina, 1750–1805 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007).
the second wave of immigrants arrived. Conversely, relying on first-hand accounts, personal papers, colonial records and published histories, he demonstrates how the lack of kinship connections affected those considered outsiders like the Catawba Indians, the “second” wave immigrants, African-American slaves and British soldiers and Loyalists during the Revolutionary War.

Marriage and religious association among the initial wave of settlers to the Waxhaw area determined where community members purchased land as well as the extent of their participation in one of Waxhaw’s Presbyterian congregations. Two appendices support the author’s claims regarding kinship and the Waxhaw community. One appendix reinforces the theory of previously existing connections between settlers by comparing surnames found in land conveyance records in the Waxhaw community against baptismal records listed in an Augusta County, Virginia, Presbyterian Church. A second appendix lists marriage partners and their Presbyterian congregation based upon marriage and cemetery records.

**Cultural Heritage**

When discussing the characteristics of southern backcountry communities, historians also consider the extent to which a shared cultural heritage impacts a community. Issues related to emigration to colonial America and the customs and practices associated with specific European locations (from which settlers and their ancestors migrated) affected community life in areas such as education, family life, and the law and provide context within which to understand individuals’ decisions.

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37 Augusta County, Virginia, is considered an earlier home of the first Waxhaw settlers.
Regarding Irish emigration in general (and Scots-Irish emigration specifically) to
colonial America, scholars such as L. M. Cullen and Marianne S. Wokeck generally
agree that eighteenth-century Irish immigration matched that seen by the Irish during the
nineteenth century. Cullen in “The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth
Centuries” (1994) declares that this earlier migration was more complex in number and
destination than that of a later period. He claims that the mobility of the seventeenth-
and eighteenth-century Irish emigrant can be “explained by a mix . . . of dynamism,
persecution, and poverty.” To support his thesis, Cullen explores the link between those
who immigrated to Ireland and those who left, the reliability of estimates of previous
migration from Ireland to America, the connection between military service and the
desire to migrate, the effects of the linen crisis, and the need for employment. Because
early Irish emigration was largely undocumented, Cullen depends on military record
groups (from both Britain and other European countries) as well as the findings published
in current scholarship on Irish emigration to colonial America.

While Cullen furnishes possible reasons for emigrating to colonial America,
Marianne Wokeck’s “Irish and German Migration to Eighteenth-Century North
America,” a chapter in Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives (2002),
proposes that the eighteenth-century German and Irish migration “reveal[s] the forces

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39 Ibid., 114.
that created, shaped, and guided distinctly ethnic waves of voluntary migrants.”  

Comparing the similarities and differences of Irish and German-speaking immigrants, Wokeck explores the social (single vs. families) and economic (“lower sort” vs. “middling sort”) status of the immigrants, the manner in which they traveled (pre-paid passage vs. indentured servitude upon arrival), the informal structure of “sending societies” (such as the merchants who furnished transportation to America), the existing connections between parties on both sides of the Atlantic, and the geographical and governmental circumstances in Europe which either promoted or hindered migration.

By examining the conditions surrounding emigration to America and the experiences confronted by both ethnic groups, Wokeck provides a more complete understanding of what transpired among eighteenth-century Irish and German-speaking immigrants and how particular experiences influenced the actions of first-generation immigrants as well as their children and grandchildren.

Settlers characterized as “Scotch-Irish” appear throughout many of the communities formed in the southern backcountry. The accepted label for people originally from Northern Ireland is in some dispute. Early Americans used the term “Irish” for anyone who arrived from a port in Ireland regardless of ethnic origin (Irish or Scots) or religious affiliation (Catholic or Protestant). Since the late seventeenth century, historians frequently use the term “Scotch-Irish” to identify those immigrants from the north of Ireland who shared a Scottish, Presbyterian heritage. The term (“Scotch-Irish”)

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42 Ibid., 394–402. Wokeck bases her findings on scholarly works covering a wide spectrum of eighteenth-century Irish and German (and Swiss) immigration. See the notes to chapter 5 in Coerced and Free Migration.
gained acceptance by nineteenth-century Ulster-American Protestants as a means to
distinguish themselves “as different from and superior to the overwhelmingly Catholic,
impoverished, and often Irish-speaking [Great] Famine refugees.” Today European
scholars use the term “Ulster Presbyterian” to differentiate between the inhabitants of
Ireland’s predominantly Protestant province and the rest of Catholic Ireland. Although
“Scotch-Irish” is still used today, the more accepted term is “Scots-Irish.” In order to
distinguish the Scots-Irish ethnically from other British subcultures, modern scholars
have studied the history and characteristics associated with the group.

Maldwyn A. Jones, a British scholar of American immigration and the
Commonwealth Professor of American History at University College in London from
1977 to 1988, documents in “The Scotch-Irish in British America” (1991) the uniqueness
of the Scots-Irish and their characteristic traits and historical background on both sides of
the Atlantic Ocean. Debunking commonly-held suppositions about the Scots-Irish,
Jones adds to James G. Leyburn’s The Scotch-Irish: A Social History (1962), an older
work on Scots-Irish identity and the ethnic group’s history, by relying on works
published between 1965 and 1990. Jones reflects on what recent scholars have written
about the Scots-Irish and then provides viable alternatives to strengthen his assertion
regarding the existence of an ethnic group based on “an autonomous Ulster Scottish

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44 Recent scholarship has begun to refute the idea that those who emigrated from Ulster created a unique ethnic group. For a comprehensive social history discussing the “Scotch-Irish,” read James G. Leyburn’s The Scotch-Irish: A Social History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962). David Hackett Fischer’s Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) provides an anthropological view of those considered “Scotch-Irish,” discussing such practices as language, architecture, sociological practices and attitudes (including family, gender, and death), religion, food, and dress.
culture, distinct from that of Scotland ... [and] the rest of Ireland.” He explores and exonerates the creation of the designation “Scotch-Irish,” based on the ethnic group’s common geographic, religious and linguistic background, and the term’s subsequent use in America. The form of Presbyterianism practiced, the adapted agricultural and architectural style acquired after immigration, and the impact of their language upon those around them accords the Scots-Irish the ability to create an ethnic culture distinct from either Celtic-speaking southern Ireland or the Scots while maintaining “certain aspects of their Old World style of life.”

Patrick Griffin, on the other hand, uses the term “Scotch-Irish” only to state its inability to convey who the Scots-Irish are as an ethnic group. In his desire to identify the Scotch-Irish as those who “played a formative role in the transition from an English to a British Atlantic,” Griffin disputes the idea that Protestants transplanted to northern Ireland created a unique ethnic group separate from the rest of the inhabitants of Ireland. He abandons the use of “Scotch-Irish” and replaces it with “Ulster Presbyterian” in his *The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (2001). Utilizing eighteenth-century Irish and American Presbyterian Church records, court records, and tax lists, as well as pamphlets and books published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Griffin maintains that Ulster Presbyterian immigrants exemplified the adaptive nature of the British world during the eighteenth century by discussing their migration from Scotland to Ireland to America, the influence of Reformed Protestantism upon the choices they made.

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47 Ibid., 313.
made, and their desire to be considered “British” rather than Irish. He relies heavily on the influences of the Ulster Presbyterian Church to support his claims.

Along with Griffin, Ned C. Landsman also identifies Ulster immigrants based on their religious affiliation rather than their supposed Scottish heritage. In “Religion, Expansion, and Migration: The Cultural Background to Scottish and Irish Settlement in the Lehigh Valley,” Landsman proposes that “while cultural backgrounds certainly played an important role in shaping the kinds of questions that various groups addressed, and consistently brought specific kinds of issues to the fore, they often left participants an array of choices and alternatives.”

Designating inhabitants of Ulster as “Irish Presbyterians,” Landsman relies on scholarly works to discuss three premises which motivated this group—mobility, a “common participation in empire and expansion” and a Presbyterian identity.

Both the Scots and Ulster Scots shared a tradition of migration which in turn led to their willingness to migrate to America and other lands. Landsman speculates that this mobility stemmed from economic need and financial opportunity for both the lower and middling classes. The ability to retain pre-existing ties from one community to another allowed them to create “interlocking settlements and extended family networks in which the movements of neighbors and kin among the different locales served as an important foundation of community.”

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50 Ibid., 107.

51 Ibid., 109.
important link in this network as well. He characterizes this brand of Presbyterianism as “one that combined personal piety with a taste for education and letters, and a common imagery of martyrdom and resistance” along with “a marked degree of moral certainty about the status of their communities.”

Religion

As demonstrated in Griffin’s and Landsman’s works, ethnicity and religious affiliation go hand-in-hand. Scholars commonly associate the Presbyterian Church with the Scots and Scots-Irish while both the Lutheran and Moravian Churches correlate to German-speaking people. Religious affiliation may also influence migration patterns, whether transatlantic or intercolonial. This association also affected community actions and contributed to successes (or failures).

In The Frontier in the Colonial South: South Carolina Backcountry, 1736-1800 (1997), George Lloyd Johnson, Jr., investigates religion, commercial agriculture and transportation networks, “three concurrent forces that contributed to the early development of cohesive communities.” He examines the Upper Pee Dee River Valley, which encompasses slightly more than 2,000 square miles, much of which was settled by Welsh immigrants from Pennsylvania associated with the Baptist Church. Through church, probate and land conveyance records, Johnson dispels “the old popular stereotype that the frontier was primarily settled by a few poor plain and rustic folk.” Johnson’s emphasis on a common religious affiliation among the settlers supports his claim that

52 Ibid., 117.
53 George Lloyd Johnson Jr., The Frontier in the Colonial South: South Carolina Backcountry, 1736–1800 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997), [1].
54 Ibid., 31.
Baptist attitudes based on Calvinistic theology concerning predestination influenced the community’s acceptance of slavery, the community’s antipathy toward lawlessness, and ultimately the region’s economic growth.

Recent backcountry studies on religion in North Carolina focus primarily on the Moravian Church, one of North Carolina’s larger dissenting denominations. Daniel B. Thorp in *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (1989), S. Scott Rohrer in *Hope’s Promise: Religion and Acculturation in the Southern Backcountry* (2005) and Jon F. Sensbach in *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (1998) each utilize the wealth of records kept by central North Carolina Moravians to show their participation in the southern backcountry.\(^{55}\) Thorp supports his claim that the Moravian community in North Carolina “sought to preserve their identities and advance their interests through peaceful, controlled contact with one another” by investigating their geographical, religious and demographic boundaries and their involvement in the marketplace, law and politics.\(^{56}\) He notes that the Moravians came to North Carolina to isolate themselves from the outside world. Yet, they engaged in trade and business on a limited and controlled basis with neighboring communities, “chos[ing] willingly to participate in its [the outside world’s] legal, political, and economic systems, though they were determined not to endanger the distinctive culture of their community by doing so.”\(^{57}\)


\(^{56}\) Thorp, *Moravian Community*, 4.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 5.
Relying on both Moravian Church records (minutes, correspondence, and journals) and local county records (land conveyance, tax, marriage and probate), Rohrer maintains that both before and after the group migrated to North Carolina the Moravian Church’s emphasis on evangelism brought outsiders from a variety of ethnic backgrounds into the initially German-speaking community, which in turn led to the community’s gradual assimilation into American culture. Focusing on the county congregations, he shows the effects of intermixing German-speaking Moravians with Anglo-Americans. Assimilation through marriage between German and English speakers led to blended traditions of language, landownership and land distribution. Acculturation also resulted in the Moravians’ increased ownership of slaves.

Sensbach focuses solely on the enslaved African/African-Americans’ experience as members of the Moravian community before the antebellum period. Based upon both published and unpublished records found in the Moravian archives, including memoirs, official diaries kept by the community administrators and short biographies of enslaved members, Sensbach argues that the status of enslaved African/African-Americans altered as North Carolina became more southern in its culture. At first, slaves shared a modicum of religious and social equality with their Anglo-German owners. Some held membership in the church, and in the early years they “worked and worshiped side by side” with their Anglo-German brethren. By the nineteenth century, encounters with the outside world introduced racism to the community and divided it into two racial groups.

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58 Sensbach, *Separate Canaan*, xviii.
The Nottingham Settlement as a Southern Backcountry Community—A Summary

The literature represented here demonstrates that “community” can be expressed in a variety of manners. The definition of a southern backcountry community is not limited to the use of one discipline, but includes a combination of shared experiences (e.g., landownership and material wealth, kinship, cultural heritage, and religion). The men and women associated with the Nottingham Settlement, although not formally organized as such, created a community based on many of the shared experiences explored in the literature above. Because documentation produced by the Settlement’s pioneering generation, such as diaries and church records, does not survive, any investigation of the Nottingham Settlement’s pioneering generation must depend on extant county and colony records. The limited information found in land conveyance, court, poll tax and probate records, along with family histories, becomes the sole means of scrutinizing the community as a whole. Historians then must interpret these records based on the research and analysis provided by modern backcountry scholars and their writings.

First and foremost, the Settlement was based on landownership and proximity. Much of what is known about the community’s make-up and beginning stems from land conveyance records. Extant copies of the Granville survey books and original land grants record the designation of thirty tracts of land to the Settlement and in turn establish its geographical perimeters. Whether individuals and families owned one of the thirty tracts or purchased land nearby, landownership was one of the factors which determined one’s inclusion. County deed books provide evidence of members’ continued presence in the area as well as the extent of their landholdings.
In keeping with Lemon’s *The Best Poor Man’s Country* description of the independent nature of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania’s settlers, the Settlement’s pioneering generation formed a community based on individual land ownership of large tracts rather than community ownership organized by township. Lemon also provides motive for settler’s relocation to North Carolina in his discussion of the increased demands for farmland in Pennsylvania and its inherent consequences—decrease of available land and rising values.59 As well, Simler’s “Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania,” explains the Settlement’s members’ land purchasing activity decades after their arrival in North Carolina. If upward mobility equaled an increase in landholding, then an opportunity to own more acreage explains, in part, the pioneering generation’s land purchasing activity.

The backcountry studies authored by Merrens (*Colonial North Carolina in the Eighteenth Century*), Mitchell (*Commercialism and Frontier*), Beeman (*The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*), and Hofstra (*The Planting of New Virginia*) provide economic reasons for the Settlement’s apparent emphasis on landowning. Merrens reinforces Settlement members’ use of landholdings, while Mitchell, Beeman and Hofstra support the pioneering generation’s increase in material wealth due to landownership, as presented in probate records.

Secondly, kinship and acquaintance (both before and after their arrival in North Carolina) bound Nottingham Settlement families into a community. Without surviving birth, marriage or death records, historians of the Settlement must rely on family histories, probate records and land conveyance records to connect members of the pioneering generation. Both *A Place in Time* and *Robert Cole’s World* support the

development of the Settlement as a community based on kinship and social connections. Meanwhile, Snydacker’s (“Kinship and Community in Rural Pennsylvania, 1749–1820”) and Moore’s (World of Toil and Strife) views on kinship’s influence on a community itself fortify the Settlement’s informal (community) structure.

Thirdly, the Nottingham Settlement’s pioneering generation shared both a cultural heritage (Scots-Irish) and religion (Presbyterian Church). The wealth of literature surrounding both subjects explores the external forces which potentially affected Settlement members’ decisions and bound the families into a community.

Due to a lack of extant records for those Scots-Irish who migrated to America in the eighteenth century, historians must depend on other sources to support claims of ethnic origin. In the case of the Nottingham Settlement and its pioneering generation, local and family histories verify members’ ties to Ulster, Ireland. Both Cullen’s (“The Irish Diaspora of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century”) and Wokeck’s (“Irish and German Migration to Eighteenth-Century North America”) discussions on the Scots-Irish migration in the 1700s furnish insight into the Settlement’s pioneering generation’s (or preceding generations) reasons for emigrating and the process by which they may have traveled to America. Authors Jones (“The Scotch-Irish in British America”), Griffin (The People with No Name), and Landsman (“Religion, Expansion, and Migration”) provide a better understanding of a “Scots-Irish” heritage in the eighteenth century linked to Presbyterianism and mobility based on economic need and financial opportunity—which help define the Settlement’s identity.

While these scholars discuss the effects of Presbyterianism upon the eighteenth-century Scots-Irish immigrant, their discussions of the Presbyterian Church’s influence
do not cover the experiences of those living in the southern backcountry. A look at other religious groups in the colonies not only offers a broader view of religion in the southern backcountry but also endorses the experiences of the Settlement’s pioneering generation (as presented in the church-related histories of the Presbyterian Church established by the Settlement). In *The Frontier in the Colonial South*, Johnson highlights a South Carolina Baptist community similar to the Nottingham Settlement—both communities observed a Calvinistic theology and accepted slavery as an economic institution. Although Thorp (*The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina*), Rohrer (*Hope’s Promise*) and Sensbach (*A Separate Canaan*) each explore the Moravian Church in North Carolina, their discussions shed light on the religious climate of the Carolina backcountry during the pre-Revolution years of the Nottingham Settlement’s existence.

The extant records for defining the community of the Nottingham Settlement are limited in nature. Land conveyance, court and probate records, while sometimes incomplete, document the group’s existence and the lives of the individuals involved. Although local and family histories assist in completing some biographical information for the pioneering generation, the Settlement’s historians must look to modern scholarship to bridge the remaining gaps. Studies of southern backcountry communities (similar to the Nottingham Settlement) not only validate the Settlement as a community but also enhance and support the actions of the Settlement’s pioneering generation.