

# The Brownlee History



The Brownlees were Lairds of Torfoot in Lanarkshire, Scotland. When John, the 3rd Laird died in 1747, his eldest son, Thomas, became the new Laird. Sometime between this date and 1751, John and Archibald, two of the younger sons (some say there was a third), came to America and settled in Lancaster Co. PA. Archibald was married to Margaret Hamilton and his family was all born in Scotland. The name of John's wife is unknown, but they had children after arriving in Lancaster Co. Both John and Archibald were involved in the Martic Forge there.

Archibald and his family moved to Westmoreland Co. - in what is now Washington Co. - prior to the Revolution and Archibald died there in 1788. His family stayed in the area for several generations, and members of the family still live there.

It is not clear where or when John died, but at least three of his children - James, John and Margaret - moved to the Westmoreland/Washington Co. area. James served in the Revolution from there but left the county about 1800 to run a flatboat down the river to New Orleans. He died in Indiana in 1827. John served in Capt. Joseph Irwin's Co., which was raised in Westmoreland Co., and later moved to Brooke Co. (W)VA. Margaret married James Leeper, who died in Westmoreland Co. in 1777. Margaret died there abt 1829.

Early Westmoreland Co. records also include a Hugh, Joseph, and Thomas Brownlee. Joseph and his young son, John, were killed by the Indians in the raid on Hannastown, and his wife, Elizabeth and daughter, Jane, were taken to Canada as prisoners where they were sold to the British and then exchanged and returned to Westmoreland Co. a year later.

Were Hugh, Joseph, and Thomas members of this Lancaster Co. family? No documentation has been found to determine their parentage.

Joseph Brownlee served in Capt. Joseph Erwin's Company during the Revolutionary War. This company was raised in Westmoreland County, PA, and joined the regiment at Marcus Hook. It was subsequently included in the Thirteenth Pennsylvania Regiment, then in the Second, and finally discharged at Valley Forge, Jan. 1, 1778, by reason of expiration of term of enlistment.

Engagements were Long Island, White Plains, Trenton, Princeton, Quibbletown, Brandywine, and Germantown. Joseph was commissioned Third Lieutenant on April 15, 1776, Second Lieutenant on Oct 24, 1776, and First Lieutenant on April 18, 1777. He was captured at the Battle of Long Island on July 27, 1776, and exchanged December 9, 1776. He resigned June 22, 1777. Joseph married Elizabeth Guthrie in 1775. They had two children, John and Jane. The death of Joseph Brownlee can be found in several different printed sources. Some of these sources, notably the History of Westmoreland County Pennsylvania by John N. Boucher, identify the Brownlee killed by the Indians as John. However, in Boucher's Old and New Westmoreland, he is identified as Joseph. The confusion may result from the fact that a John Brownlee served with Joseph in Irwin's Company in the Revolution. Or, because the young son who was killed with Joseph was named John. But extensive research shows that it was Joseph who died at Hannastown. Joseph was a well known Indian fighter on the Frontier. As one source states, "He did not discriminate between a good and a bad Indian, thinking perhaps that there were none of the former class." In a letter from Col. Brodhead dated Nov. 2, 1780, he named Lieutenant Brownlee as one of several men who attempted to "destroy" a group of Delaware Indians under Brodhead's protection. On July 13, 1782 Joseph and his family were attending a wedding at Miller's Blockhouse at Hannastown in Westmoreland Co. PA when the Indians attacked. Several of the guests, including the Brownlees, were captured. One of the captured women happened to address Joseph by name. The Indians, upon finding out who he was, killed him with a hatchet blow to the head, and then killed his three-year-old son John who he was carrying on his back. The Indians also killed another woman, identified in one account as Mrs. White, assuming she was Joseph's wife. Elizabeth and Jane, who was only four months old at the time, were taken to Buffalo and Niagra. There the Indians planned to torture them to death, but a British soldier, whose family was being detained by American soldiers, convinced the Indians to sell them instead. Elizabeth was sold to British officers for \$20 and Jane for \$10 and 2 gallons of rum. They were then taken to Montreal where they were exchanged and returned to Hannastown in July 1783. After her return from captivity, Elizabeth married William Guthrie in Jul 1784 at Hannastown. He was killed by a fall from a wagon 10 Mar 1828. She d. 11 Feb 1842. Jane married James HUGLE and moved to Muskingum Co., Ohio. The bodies of Joseph and the other slain captives were buried where they were found on what was later the Meckling farm. Joseph Brownlee owned a 150 acre tract of land in Hempfield Township in Westmoreland Co. which was sold in 1786 to pay his debts and support his surviving child. Hugh Brownlee, possibly Joseph's brother, was appointed as one of the administrators of his estate, but had died by Feb 1785.

Contributed by Betty Rudolph