

Emigrant Letters 1819

*Letters from The British Settlement in Pennsylvania :
To Which are added
The Constitutions of the United States, and of Pennsylvania ; and extracts from the laws
respecting Aliens and Naturalized Citizens*

C. B. Johnson, M. D.

1819

•

The British Emigrant Society to Their Countrymen.

The British Emigrant Society, established in Susquehanna county, have read with much attention the following letters from one of their members. They have carefully examined the statements contained in them, and fully concur in opinion as to their correctness.

The object of the Society has been to secure an eligible situation for their countrymen ; and by obtaining a large tract of land, to enable them to settle together, and, at the same time, to procure the land at a low price. In this, they have been met by the liberality of the proprietor, who was pleased with their intentions, and desirous of promoting them. As the Society disclaim all speculations, they invite their countrymen to the spot, which they have selected, on the terms of their contract ; requiring only, as a claim to the privileges which it offers, that those who come, shall bring with them a good moral character.

From the following work it will be seen, that in Susquehanna county the first crop usually pays more than all the expenses of clearing and fencing the land, and of sowing, harvesting, and threshing the grain. Consequently the clearing of land is a profitable business. That land increases rapidly in value. That the difference or saving of expense of a family of seven persons, young and old, which together with the sundry articles taken with them, should weigh a ton and an half, going to Susquehanna county ; and the same family going to the state of Illinois, in the western part of the United States, is sufficient to purchase one hundred and twenty acres of land in Susquehanna county, under the Society's contract.

That the saving of a mechanic, with a family of common size, between the expense of maintaining it in Philadelphia, or in Susquehanna county, will in one year, purchase an hundred acres of land.

That the produce of the farmer in Susquehanna county would sell for double the amount it will bring in the Western states.

That the work of the mechanic is proportionally more valuable.

That all imported articles are cheaper than in the Western states.

That the settlement is removed from all danger, in case of war.

That it has the advantage of provisions, already raised within itself.

That materials for building, and for furniture, are abundant and cheap.

That taxes are scarcely worth naming, and that there are no poor.

That the situation is particularly eligible, from its vicinity to good markets ; the soil of a good quality, the water excellent, and the climate healthy.

The Society have laid off ground for a town, on one of the turnpikes, which pass through their purchase- A half acre lot on the turnpike, cleared, will be given, free of all expense, to each of the first fifty mechanics who shall build a house on the same and commence his trade. Every person in the town is at liberty to build his house or shop on such a plan, and of such a size, as may best suit his convenience or his purse ; but as a handsome house may be built at as small an expense as an homely one, the Society require that the fronts of all the houses and shops, &c. erected in the town, shall be built on the designs furnished by their architect, who will be careful to accommodate them to the sum which each person may be desirous of investing in his buildings. The front must be painted. The sides, back and interior, may be finished, or not, as the person concerned shall desire. By this regulation, the Society hope to unite utility and beauty in their establishments. Ground has been given for the situation of public buildings, and a fund appropriated for them, which it is believed will be sufficient for their erection.

It is the wish of the Society to introduce a sufficient number of good farmers, to cultivate the ground, in the manner which English farmers are accustomed to, and to settle industrious mechanics in towns, in numbers sufficient to consume the farmer's produce. Factors will be established in the cities of Philadelphia and New York to whom wagons will be regularly sent with such of the manufactured articles, as it may be desirable to sell in those places ; and for the purpose of bringing back such imported articles as shall be necessary for their consumption. The advantages of such an arrangement for both farmers and mechanics, must be very apparent. Many of those articles of light carriage, on which thousands of mechanics and manufacturers are employed in the metropolis, can be made at the Society's establishment, sent to the city, and sold at a less price than they can be afforded by those who make them there. The superior comforts of the mechanic, who has his own house, his own garden, pasture and wood lots, over him who is pent up in the city, throughout the year, and lives at great expense for house rent, fuel, &c. are very obvious. The manufactured articles disposed of in the country, are generally sold at a higher price than they bring in the city. But in case of the country being overstocked, the Society contemplate an arrangement with their factors, which will enable them to make advances, if the articles sent to them shall arrive at any time when the markets are dull, so that the members of the Society will have a further advantage in their sales, over those who manufacture the same articles in the city.

It will be readily seen, that the result of this arrangement must be a good market in the farmer's neighbourhood for all his produce, and the profitable sale of all the result of the mechanic's labour. Instead, therefore, of the necessity of taking to the cities such heavy articles as flour, beef, butter and cheese, they will appear there, metamorphosed into some of the light effects of the mechanic's skill. If the affairs of the Society shall be conducted with a well-ordered exactness, and if the spirit of harmony shall preside over the conduct of their members, as there is good reason to hope, the Society may look forward with confident expectation to a British settlement of unexampled prosperity, where the farmer's industry, stimulated by an exemption from his former burthen of taxes and tythes, shall be rewarded by

increasing comforts, and the consciousness of being able to bring up his children with a good education, and to leave them with ample possessions; and where each mechanic, surrounded by his garden, his pasture and wood lots, may rival the prosperity and ease of the farmer.

The Society wish sedulously to guard their countrymen from coming to them with the absurd hope of finding a place where idleness may repose itself, while the earth shall produce its fruits spontaneously. They know that many have been led to the United States by such visionary expectations ; but such persons they do not wish to see, and would not receive as their associates ; the happiness and prosperity of the Society must depend on the industry and general good conduct of all its members.

It will be readily seen, that the result of this arrangement must be a good market in the farmer's neighbourhood for all his produce, and the probable sale of all the results of the mechanic's labour. Instead, therefore, of the necessity of taking to the cities such heavy articles as flour, beef, butter and cheese; they will appear there, metamorphosed into some of the light effects of the mechanic's skill.

LETTER I.

*British Settlement, Susquehanna county, Pennsylvania,
30th Dec. 1818.*

My Dear Friend,

MY last letter was dated at Philadelphia, a short time after my arrival there, and detailed the few occurrences of my voyage, and the favourable impressions which were made by the appearance of that city. You will have seen by that letter, that my intentions with regard to a settlement in the western part of the United States, were much affected by the unfavourable accounts which I had received from some of our countrymen, who had returned from thence, after a journey of nearly three thousand miles, (going and coming) by land. I was, indeed, so disheartened by these representations, that I was almost tempted to commence the practice of my profession in Philadelphia, and give up all thoughts of the country. You will, however, be surprised to find this letter dated from Susquehanna county, in Pennsylvania, instead of Philadelphia, Illinois, or Indiana.

This intention of encountering so toilsome a journey, in order to judge for myself of the "Western Country," as it is here called, was formed very much on the principles of "Hobson's choice ;" for in some way, which is to me now unaccountable, we had been led into an opinion, that the only part of the United States for an Englishman to go to, was the western wilderness. Of the error of this opinion I was convinced in a short time after my arrival, by an inspection of the farms in the neighbourhood of Philadelphia, and a reflection on the great advantages of vicinity to markets ; advantages which readily saw a farmer must relinquish, who settles in any part of the United States, *beyond the mountains*. At this period, I met with a little work published by Mr. Cobbett, since his last visit to this country, called "*The First Part of a Year's Residence in the United States of America,*" which I send you with this. You will find in it a diary of the weather, together with many useful practical observations, detailed in a plain and easy manner. Mr. Cobbett has shown the advantage of farming *on this side of the mountains* ; and while I felt growing disposition to avoid the *prairies*, or flats, of the Illinois, our friend S—— mentioned to me, that the lands of

Susquehanna county, in this state, and within a short distance of Philadelphia and New York, had been very favourably spoken of by Mr. V——, a highly respected gentleman of Philadelphia, of whose philanthropy and benevolence most of the Englishmen who arrive there can bear witness. Mr. S—— directed me to a Mr. Young, an Englishman, then in Philadelphia, who had been to what he called Mr. Rose's settlement, in Susquehanna county, and who could therefore give me correct information about it. I called on Mr. Young, and found his account to be very favourable respecting the soil and climate ; and that he intended to settle there. Mr. Y. described the land as being of a good quality, the country healthy, the water plentiful and excellent, and the timber of great variety : that there were about five hundred families, mostly from the New England states, on Mr. R.'s tract ; a number of grist and saw mills, and four post-offices on it : that Montrose, the seat of justice for the county, was 170 miles from Philadelphia, and, by a turnpike now making, it would be about 130 miles from New-York : that measures have been also taken for making another turnpike in nearly a due south direction to Philadelphia, which will lessen considerably the present distance : that the Susquehanna river was navigable from the vicinity of the tract to Baltimore : the price of the lands on the turnpikes was six dollars, and for those back from them, five dollars per acre : that the title was indisputable, and a deed of general warranty given : that several of the settlers on the tract, who were desirous of getting their neighbours to settle near them, and who were, doubtless, good judges of land, had given a Statement of the quality, from which he had, when on the spot, copied the following :

“ We, the subscribers, have purchased farms on the lands of Robert H. Rose. The soil is, generally, of a good quality, deep, and lasting ; and the situation very favourable, on account of a market for our produce. (Signed by)

Daniel Gaige, Alpheus Finch, Isaac Howard, Mortimer Gaige, Abraham Gaige, Joseph Whipple, Philip Griffeth, Peleg Butts, Charles Davies, Christian Shillop, Nathan Brewster, John Griffiths, Jonathan Ellsworth, Henry Ellsworth, Jacob Bump, George Bump, Bela More, Joseph Addison, Charles Chalker, Daniel Chalker, Seth Baldwin, Richard Daniels, Ephraim Fancher, Zephania Cornell, Benjamin Fancher, Caleb Bush, Asa Baldwin, Samuel Baldwin, Thurston Carr, Isaac Soule, Hiel Tupper, Jabez A. Birchard, David Owen, Jeremiah Glover, Albert Camp, H. P. Corbin, D. Taylor, Lemuel Walbridge, Lemman Turrel, Camfield Stone, Philo Bostwick, Salmon Bradshaw, Billings Babcock, Robinson Bolles, Zenas Bliss, Jon. C. Sherman, Philo Morehouse, Reuben Faxen, Darius Bixby, Asahel Southwell, Asa Brown, Edward Cox, Peter Brown, Daniel Chamberlain.”

All this seemed to be good authority, and as there were at that time in Philadelphia, many of our countrymen, whose object was, like our own, the selection of an eligible spot for their abode, it was thought prudent to call them together, and unite the information we had received of various places, in the hope of being able to choose that one which would be best for a “ British settlement,” and in which could be combined advantages for both farmers and mechanics.

For this purpose, a number of persons interested, met at the Chester and Montgomery hotel, in Philadelphia, a house kept by Mr. Davis, an Englishman. The impressions amongst all who met, appeared to be very unfavourable to a settlement in the Western States, in consequence of the various information that had been received, from different sources, as well as from several of our own countrymen, who had returned dissatisfied with the privations of society, and the loss of many comforts to which they had been accustomed, which they found they would be compelled to endure in a settlement there.

At this meeting, it was deemed to be of great importance to find a suitable situation for the contemplated establishment, *on the eastern side of the mountains*, and within a reasonable distance from some of the seaports, in which all the surplus produce of the mechanic's labour might be vended, where the toil of the farmer would be rewarded by a good price for his produce, and where, in consequence of the country not being filled with settlers, land might yet be had at a low price.

I found the favourable impression I had of Susquehanna county, corroborated by the information which several who attended this meeting had received of it ; and it was resolved unanimously, that a letter should be written to Mr. Rose, to ascertain the terms on which he would sell his lands to a society of British emigrants. The time that elapsed before the receipt of his answer, was spent by me in endeavouring to add to the information I had acquired of the United States generally, and particularly, in reading the journals of different persons who had travelled over the western parts of them, on the waters of the Ohio and Mississippi, to which my attention had been directed previous to my leaving England. I found these, generally, to represent those portions of the country in terms very different from the language of Mr. Birkbeck, whose "Notes" had been in some degree, the occasion of my voyage across the ocean. On receiving an answer from Mr. Rose to our communications, a meeting of the British emigrants was again convened, and it was determined that a committee of five, (of whom I was one,) should immediately proceed to Susquehanna county, and examine the lands carefully, ascertain the quantity which could be procured, and on their return, make a report of the situation, soil, water, &c. and of the various advantages or disadvantages, which it would offer to the contemplated settlement. In pursuance of this resolution, we came here, and diligently and carefully investigated the different objects to which our attention had been directed, and which, as you will have perceived, were precisely the same as those on which my instructions had been founded, before I left my native land. The result of the investigation by the committee was, an unanimous opinion in favour of this place, as affording all the essential requisites for a British settlement.

We were treated with much kindness by Mr. Rose, who was pleased with our objects, which he thought would be very useful to the county, and even to the state ; and with this view he gave us a contract for his lands, at a price much below what he had sold for some time past, and lower than any other land is selling in the county. Since his settlement in this county, he has made it a rule to sell to none but actual settlers, and in his contract with us, he has enjoined a perseverance in the same rule, and the obligation, that for twelve months from the date of our contract, we shall keep the land open, on the same terms we received it, for any of our own countrymen who may be desirous of joining us, and who shall bring good moral characters with them. These were precisely the intentions of the meeting in Philadelphia, which in seeking a place of settlement for British emigrants, disclaimed all objects of speculation, and sought only to procure an eligible situation, in all the benefits of which their countrymen might participate. The committee were, therefore, much pleased that Mr. Rose had taken the same view of the subject, and advised the measures on which they had previously resolved.

The following are the terms of our contract, made 15th, Nov. 1818, in distinct propositions, with a view either to the whole or a part of the lands, about forty thousand acres, as shall be found most convenient to the society.

For the whole—

1st. Four dollars per acre, [18 shil. stg.] one tenth part paid, and the remainder with interest, in nine equal annual instalments : or, 2d. Three dollars fifty cents per acre, one fifth part paid, and the remainder in four equal annual instalments ; or 3d. Three dollars per acre, to be paid within one year.

Or, in parts to suit individual settlers—

The lots on the turnpikes, five dollars per acre : the lots back from the turnpikes, four dollars per acre. Interest to commence at this date, one eighth part of the principal to be paid within twelve months, and an eighth part annually afterwards. If the whole of the price of any lot be paid for within the first year, *an abatement of one dollar per acre to be made*. The society to proceed to settle their members on the latter terms ; but to have the privilege of closing the contract for the whole, should they be desirous of doing so, according to either of the three first propositions ; provided their desire be expressed to that effect within twelve months.

It should be particularly noticed in this negotiation, that we sought the proprietor, and that he neither laid in wait for us, nor did he allure us by captivating accounts of Elysian fields. We found in him a gentleman of elegant manners and known integrity ; who offered the best recommendation of his lands in the simple fact that he had built an elegant mansion in the midst of them, and had resided there for several years.

I shall now proceed to lay before you all the information that I have acquired respecting the soil, climate, manners, &c. of this interesting section of the United States.

LETTER II.

Selection of Settlement, &c.

IN the selection of a place of residence in a new country, it is very important to take into view the ultimate market for the farmer's produce. While the country is settling, there will be no difficulty on this score ; for the encreasing population will demand all the supplies that can be raised. But the prudent settler will look beyond that period, and consider what he is to do, when every one shall raise more grain than he will be able to consume. In that case, vicinity to market, and facility of transportation, are all important. The immense distance which grain has to be sent from the western states, occasions the expense to be so great, as to reduce extremely the profits of the farmer. This is particularly the case in all articles of much weight, and all the farmer's produce comes within that description ; so much so, indeed, that one bushel of wheat here, is worth one and an half in the western part of this state, and two, or more, in the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois ; the only important market for those states is New Orleans, the distance to which is upwards of one thousand miles from the near-est part of Illinois, and still further from Indiana and Ohio.

The same cause which tends to *lessen* the value of the articles, which the farmer raises in the western states, and which *he has for sale*, operates equally to increase the dearness of those which are imported, and which *he has to purchase*. The shop-keeper, who is at a great distance from the place, where the articles he deals in are procured, will add to the price,

when he disposes of them, the additional expense of bringing, and the time lost in procuring them. To him, who is obliged to take a journey of a thousand miles to procure the articles that are to fill his warehouse, the cost and the trouble must be very great ; and that cost and trouble he expects to be paid for, by the consumer. The journey which he is annually compelled to take, is a very serious one, compared to that of the shop-keeper of Susquehanna county, who can go to New-York and back again in four days. The latter, in consequence of his situation, can trade with a smaller capital than the former ; because he can, at any time, procure a supply of those articles of which he is in immediate need ; while the former can lay in a supply only once a year. All these difficulties are to be paid for by the farmers and mechanics, who consume the articles imported ; and the difference to them, in the course of a twelve-month, by *receiving less for the articles they sell, and paying more for those which they purchase*, will be found to be very great. It is not merely the quantum he shall raise, but the sum he shall get for it, which, constitutes the farmer's advantage. It is not simply to get enough to eat and drink, that is to bound the desires of the farmer ; it is to procure the means of converting his log cabin into a handsome and convenient house ; to erect a large barn for his grain. and suitable buildings for his cattle ; to educate his children, and, as he grows old, to enjoy the satisfaction of finding that his industry has supplied the comforts of life, and enabled him to satisfy the wants of society—wants to which we are indebted for the amelioration of mankind. Perhaps it is even worse for the morals of the settler, distant from a market where he can exchange the articles in which he abounds, for those of which he is in want, that he is placed upon a fertile soil. The fertility gives him abundance ; and he cannot dispose of his surplus. The consequence is, a want of stimulus to industry. He finds, that the labour of three days in the week, will support his family, and he will not work six ; for the produce of the other three, will be of no service to him. He cannot build his house, his barn, nor his granary with it. Hence, he becomes Idle. He finds neighbours like himself. He takes his gun, and goes into the woods to hunt, or to some neighbouring log house at which whiskey is sold, and where he is sure to find persons in his own situation, led there by the same feelings which govern him ; with those he consumes his time, shooting at marks, or matching his miserable horse to run against some other miserable horse ; and thus the day, that in more fortunate situations would have been spent in healthful industry, is squandered in riot and intemperance. It is reasonable to expect such consequences to flow from the situations I have mentioned ; and such, I have been assured by intelligent travellers, is the case. I do not rest on the narration of our own countrymen, who have returned dissatisfied with the western wilderness ; American travellers themselves, are obliged to acknowledge the universal prevalence of these ruinous habits. That we should find a proneness to quarrel in minds that have thus shaken off the salutary restraints of society, is to be expected. Even Mr. Birkbeck, who has been so fortunate as to find quarrelling rare, mentions the case of a member of a religious community, who “ on being brought before the spiritual court, for indulging a propensity to boxing, and hearing all the arguments derived from texts of Scripture, which oppose that unchristian practice, declared that he should not like to live longer than he had a right to knock down any man who told him he lied.” Mr. Schultz, in his description of the country near St. Louis, on the Mississippi, in the immediate neighbourhood of Illinois, mentions that it is a very unpleasant “ place of residence, as the continual broils and quarrels amongst the workmen, as well as the proprietors, keep up a constant scene of warfare. You would certainly feel yourself in very suspicious company, were you to discover that most of those amongst whom you were, wore a concealed dagger, and sometimes even two, one in the bosom, and another under the coat ; whilst others carried a brace of pistols in the girdle behind the back. I have heard of a number of quarrels since I have been here, and of two or three being wounded by pistol shot, but no lives were lost ; which has rather been owing to a precipitancy of firing, than want of inclination to kill. It is

not always that an honourable challenge takes place on account of an affront or difference of opinion ; but an instantaneous plunge of the dirk, or a pistol to your face, is the first signal of war. They have however become so naturalized to these *ideal dangers*, that of three shots made within two yards of the object, none was followed by any thing more serious than the loss of three fingers on one hand, and a hole through the lower part of the crown of a hat, grazing the skin and hair. This bad, or good luck, is owing to the activity of the antagonist, who is generally aware of his opponent's intention, and prepared to knock his pistol up with his own, as soon as it is presented. Rifle barrell'd pistols are altogether used at this place, and likewise at Ge nevieve ; and pistol shooting at a mark for wagers, seems to be a very general kind of amusement among the people."

Much more of this kind might be quoted from American authors, and I should prefer quoting from them ; for we cannot suspect them of having any intention to deceive, especially when they speak against the habits of their own countrymen, in particular places ; but I have already adduced enough to convince you that the western part of the United States is a place, if report speak correctly of it, that would promise nearly as much work for a surgeon as a physician. At any rate these representations from so many sources, were sufficient to induce me to set my face another way, and to make me seek to discover a place, where a husbandman might find sufficient inducements to call forth his industry

“ and hear
At distance safe, the human tempest roar,
Wrapt close in conscious peace.”

This is completely the case in Susquehanna county, where, I am informed, that during the late war between the United States and Great Britain, “ its disturbances were known only by the arrival of the mail.” [1] How different is this from the frontier situation of the western states, whose infant settlements are always exposed to the scalping knife of the savages ! In my estimation of the advantages which different places might offer to settlers, *security* would be a most important consideration. That desideratum is, I think, possessed in the greatest possible degree by this place, which is equally remote from dangers by sea and by land ; being surrounded on all sides by countries thickly populated. A perfect wilderness should be avoided by an Englishman. The Americans alone appear calculated to *commence* a settlement. They make excellent pioneers, and overcome difficulties in the “ wild woods,” which an Englishman could not encounter. A journey of two or three days to a mill, is nothing to them ; even a journey of a thousand miles, is but as a step to visit a friend. It is fortunate for a country, possessing such a boundless territory, the arm of one of whose rivers extends to a distance as great as from my native place to the one in which I am now writing, that her children are of so erratic a disposition, as to consider her amplitude as a narrow limit. But although all this is extremely well for an American, it is much better for English settlers to confine themselves to a reasonable distance from the seaports ; and to endeavour to procure a situation in a country, in which the toils of a first settlement have already been encountered and overcome.

For this reason it is, that my selection has been made of lands interspersed in all irections, with improvements, where good roads are already made, and where grist and saw mills, and other machinery are erected.

In the immediate neighbourhood, for which the company have contracted, there are five grist mills, and thirteen saw mills. The great advantage of these, and of the roads, which are

made in all directions through the lands, I need not mention. The English farmer having been accustomed to good roads at home, can ill brook those which he will find in any wilderness. Here are turnpike roads leading to the two most important cities of the United States, laid out and much labour done on them ; and there is every prospect that they will be completed in another season.

There is a point of time in the settling of new countries, in which purchases by such a company as ours, can be best made. To a *perfect wilderness* there is an objection, in the difficulty and uncertainty of forming a settlement ; and many would find it very unpleasant to endure the privations which must necessarily be experienced by a residence there. When nearly all the land is settled, the small remainder is held at a high price ; but at an intermediate point of time, when a considerable part of the land is occupied, the quality of the soil, and the real value of the country ascertained, the difficulties of the first improvements overcome, grain raised, mills built, roads made, and the necessaries, and many of the comforts of life to be obtained—this is, undoubtedly, the most eligible time for a man to pitch his tent ; for the land which has not yet been appropriated, may generally be had at a price very low, in proportion to its real worth, estimated by the farmer's profit,—which is its intrinsic value.

I have mentioned the settlements or improvements, with which the lands contracted for by the society are interspersed. The greater part of these can be purchased, at a fair price, from the present occupants who, being paid for what they have done, are ready to commence anew. It may be better for many emigrants to purchase these improvements, than to take new lands. They can be had in farms of various sizes, from twenty to an hundred acres of cleared land, with a house and barn. These buildings are, in general, made of logs, and when that is the case, are of little value ; but in some instances they are of a better kind, being made of framed timber, and boarded.

The sum at which improvements are estimated, depends upon the care with which the lands are cleared, and the kind of house and barn on them, in addition to the price of the land. As a general rate, a farm of one hundred acres of land, one half of it cleared, with a common log house and barn on it, would be estimated at from 225*l.* to 270*l.* or from one thousand to twelve hundred dollars. This however, may alter very soon ; and will be likely to increase rapidly, in consequence of our settlement, and the money which will be brought into the country by us. Such is the price at which improved lots (of which I have made several purchases) are at present sold. By the purchase of an improvement, an emigrant will at once be able to keep his cattle and horses ; he will have pasture, meadow, and plough land ; and can purchase new lands adjoining, and increase his clearings to what size he pleases. In this manner he may commence his farming with very little of the inconvenience, and all the advantage of a new settler ; and the new lands which he can purchase on the terms of the society's contract, will answer for the establishment of his family around him. I have devoted, and shall continue to devote, much of my time to the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of the extent, quality, and value of these improved lots, amounting to several hundreds, in order to point out to those of our countrymen, who prefer making purchases of that kind of property, such as will best suit their different tastes ; so that each one may be accommodated in the way he prefers ; and I shall spare no pains in the business, for I have the welfare of the settlement very much at heart, which derives the more interest from its being the first BRITISH SETTLEMENT, attempted on a large scale, in the United States. It will therefore be useful for all those who are desirous of purchasing improvements, to make their applications either through the society at Philadelphia, or directly to me at this place. I can then make the desired

purchases for them, or provisional contracts, to be ratified within a reasonable length of time, after the applicants shall have seen and approved of the lots.

BOUNDARIES.

LETTER III.

Boundaries—Face of the Country—Soil—Forest trees—Bushes—Cultivated fruits— Minerals &c.

SUSQUEHANNA county is situated in the 42d degree of north latitude, on the line which divides Pennsylvania from the state of New-York. It commences about six miles from the Delaware river, and runs west thirty-four miles, and south twenty-four miles. On the north it is bounded by the state of New York ; on the south by Luzerne county ; on the east by Wayne county ; and on the west by Bradford county.

The face, of the country is very picturesque. There is no flat land ; it is all in undulations. Rivulets and springs are in the greatest abundance. There is no farm, and scarcely a field, without a stream or spring in it of excellent water, and as clear as crystal. There are no stagnant waters, no swamps, nor marshes, nor *musquitoes*, which abound so much in many other parts of the United States.

The soil is deep—that is, generally, from one to two feet ; in some places, three or four feet. Beneath this, there is an inferior stratum, or sub-soil, composed of clay and extremely fine siliceous sand, intimately commingled. By us it would be called Stony ; but the stones lie almost entirely on the surface, are easily removed, and will be very useful for buildings and walls. I have taken particular notice where trees have been taken out by the root, and at the sides of the turnpike roads where the ditches are dug, that it is rare to find any stones beneath the surface. I am told that some of the settlers from the eastern states, who have been accustomed to stone walls round their fields, say that there are not stones enough ; I should be satisfied with less. Of the fertility of the soil, the usual crops offer a strong evidence ; for if a farmer in England was to put his grain into the ground, in the manner it is generally done here, I should calculate upon his having a very diminutive harvest. In this county there is little or no alluvial soil deposited by the overflowing of the rivers or brooks. It is a common remark, and it accords with my own observations, that the soil is deeper on the tops of the hills than in the vallies. As it does not wash off, the hills retain all their native fertility. You see no traces, or furrows, worn by the waters. In the western part of the United States, where extensive flats of alluvial soil are formed on the rivers, the hills are proportionably poor, being robbed of the soil, which is deposited on the flat, or bottom. In most of the waters of the western states, during floods or freshets, there is a reflux, or eddy, formed at the margin of the usual water courses, and the soil brought down from the hills is deposited in the greatest abundance on the bank, which usually confines the current ; consequently, the bank is higher than the land back from the river, where the bottom joins the hill. The result is, that when the river retires within its banks, an extensive, but narrow, pond is left along, the base of the hill ; and as the hot weather gradually dries it up, a pestilential miasma is formed, which produces bilious and intermittent fevers, and all their train of horrors. In Susquehanna county nothing of that kind is founds I cannot learn of a single instance of fever and ague having occurred within it. I see no sallow, sickly looking complexions. Every log hut abounds with

children, whose brown faces indicate health and hardihood. This is a bad place you will say for my profession. I am very happy that it is so. I came to seek for land ; and shall be more pleased to practice farming than phlebotomy. I do not, however, intend to give up my profession till one of my sons shall be able to take it off my hands ; for physicians are necessary evils in all countries.

I have measured many of the forest trees, in order to be exact as to their height. It is, in general, about eighty feet. Many are much higher ; but that is the common altitude. The white, or silver pine overtops all the other timber, and grows to the height of one hundred and fifty feet, and from six to twelve feet in circumference. The hemlock spruce also grows to a large size ; but not so high as the pine. The diameter of the beech is from one to two feet ; the birch, larger. Chesnut is found nearly twenty feet in circumference, very straight, and sixty feet to the lowest limbs. White oak, nearly as large. The wild cherry grows large, and furniture is made from it resembling mahogany. The curled maple affords also a beautiful wood for furniture, of the fine and silky appearance of satin wood. I have observed the following kinds of timber, viz. beech of two or three varieties ; sugar maple (*acer saccharinum*) and several other species (as the *acer Pennsylvanicum, rubrum, &c.*) ; hemlock spruce (*pinus—abies Atrericana*) ; chesnut, different from the English, the nuts small, but very good ; cherry of two kinds (*prunus cerasus Virginia et montana*) ; white and black ash ; oak ; white pine ; linden (*tilia*) ; elm ; button wood (*platanus occidentalis*) ; cucumber tree (*magnolia acuminata*) ; crab apple ; dog wood (*comus Florida*) ; hickory (*Juglans alba ovata*) ; black walnut (*juglans nigra*) ; butternut (*juglans oblonga alba*) ; hornbeam (*caprinus ostrya*) ; locust (*robinia*) ; wild plum ; poplar ; tulip tree (*liriodendron*) ; sassafras ; and service tree (*sorbua Americana*). Among the bushes are blackberries of several kinds, currants, gooseberries, raspberries, elder, hawthorn, laurel, leather wood, (*dirca paluatris*) ; hazlenut, sumach of two kinds, and the rose. You will observe that the currants, gooseberries, and raspberries all grow wild in the woods. There is also a small grape which ripens late, and is acid : perhaps those of a more generous kind would flourish if they were cultivated.

The hills in this county are all covered with timber. You see none bare. Along the Susquehanna river, there is a belt of oak timber which extends back from it for three or four miles ; you then pass into what are called *the beech woods*, which are composed of various kinds of timber, but take their name from that which predominates. In the latter the soil is much superior to the former, both as to depth and quality ; the oak lands having a thin and gravelly soil, while the beech timber grows in a deep loam. From the ashes formed by burning the timber in their clearings, the new settlers might derive a handsome profit, by the manufacture of pot and pearl ashes ; but this is neglected, and the ashes are suffered to be blown away by the winds, or washed off by the rains. Great profit might also be made by the manufacture of sugar, from the sap of the sugar maple ; [2] and it is now made to an extent equal to the wants of the country ; but it might be manufactured for exportation. There is a great abundance of the sugar maple in this county, and in Howell's large map of Pennsylvania, this part is designated as abounding in that valuable tree. It is one of the most beautiful of the forest. But notwithstanding its great usefulness, it is cut down indiscriminately with the others. A proof of the advantage that may be derived from it, was exemplified by one of our countrymen whom we found settled here. He purchased of Mr. Rose a lot of eighty-four acres, and before he began his work of clearing, he tapped a number of the sugar maple trees on the lot ; and the price of the sugar which he made in three weeks, amounted to two thirds of the price he was to pay for the whole lot. This you will observe was done *before a tree had been cut down on the lot*, except what was necessary to boil the sugar. Maple sugar is much like that produced from the cane ; but for many purposes I think

it pleasanter ; and the person who uses it has the satisfaction of knowing that it is clean, which, it is probable, is frequently far from being the case with that which is made by the slaves of the West Indies ; or indeed, by slaves any where. The usual time of making it is at the breaking up of winter, when cold nights are succeeded by warm days ; a season when there is but little to occupy the farmer. It is not unusual for a family to make half a ton in two or three weeks. The sugar making season seldom lasts longer than that time. One of the first things a settler should do is to plant an orchard, and in a very short time he may eat his own fruit, and drink his own cider.

In all the old settled parts of the United States, fruit is in such great abundance that the traveller is permitted to take, without ceremony, whatever he pleases.

Beer is seldom made or used in the country parts of the United States. We shall, doubtless, introduce it ; which may be easily done ; for good barley is raised here, and hops grow wild. Apples, pears, plums and cherries thrive well. Peaches are not so good as in the southern states, although the trees last longer. Perhaps the inferiority of the fruit may in some degree be in consequence of want of care respecting the kind ; for I do not find any grafted. The trees are all raised from the stones. However, as this tree was originally brought from a southern climate (*mala Persica*), the presumption is that it finds in Maryland or Virginia a more congenial situation. Susquehanna is in the secondary formation. The stone is principally grey or reddish shistose sandstone, and clay slate, in some instances mingled with a small proportion of calcareous earth ; but I believe none has been found in which the latter predominates.

On some of the branches of Wyalusing, one of the streams of this county, there is an appearance of salt ; and a small quantity has been made very pure and white. It is supposed, that it might be manufactured extensively and profitably. Some persons are now at work, in digging a well for it on the waters of Silver Creek. The salt at present used here, is brought from the salt works in the state of New York, a distance of eighty miles to the north of this, where it is made in great quantities, and sold at half a dollar per bushel.

Small specimens of iron ore have been shown to me, and there is reason to believe that more might be found if search were made below the surface. In one place, for more than a mile in extent, the needle of the surveyor's compass cannot be made to traverse ; yet no one has been at the trouble to search for the cause. I do not know of any coal in this county ; but near the southern boundary of it, coal resembling the Welch culm, or Kilkenny coal, is found in great abundance.

Susquehanna was formed into a county in 1813, and there are now within its limits, one thousand eight hundred and ninety-seven taxables ; which, at a computation of five and one third inhabitants to each taxable, and which I am informed is a common one, give ten thousand one hundred and seventeen inhabitants within the limits of the county.

From this statement you will see, that you are not invited to a wilderness.

- [1] This remark is quoted from a description of Mr. Rose's possessions in this, county, with an engraved view of his mansion, which appeared in "the Port Folio," for June, 1816. This miscellany published monthly, is edited by J. E. Hall, Esq. and was commenced in the year 1801. It may be procured in *London*, and it deserves the attention of an emigrant, on account of its sketches of life and manners and other particulars respecting this country.
- [2] See the process in Evelyn's "Sylva," vol. 1. p. 188.

Letters from the British settlement in Pennsylvania. To which are added, the constitutions of the United States, and of Pennsylvania ; and extracts from the laws respecting aliens and naturalized citizens (1819)

Author : Johnson, Charles Britten, 1788?-1835 ; Rose, Robert H. (Robert Hutchinson), 1776-1842 ; British Emigrant Society (Susquehanna County, Pa.)

Subject : Birkbeck, Morris, 1764-1825

Publisher : Philadelphia : Published by H. Hall; 209, Chestnut street, and in London, by John Miller

Year: 1819

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor: Google

Book from the collections of : New York Public Library

Collection : americana

Notes : Published by authority of the British emigrant society, Susquehanna Co., Pa. cf. Pref.

Source : Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/lettersfrombrit00birbgoog>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org

October 11 2013